



# Padres Press Clips

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# Keith Law's 2019 ranking of all 30 MLB farm systems

While these rankings are ultimately subjective -- this is, after all, my opinion of each system's relative merits -- I base them on as broad a collection of information as I can. I've seen many of these prospects, I've talked to many scouts and executives about prospects, and I've talked to team officials about their own systems.

Within each system, I'll rank at least 10 prospects, but these rankings consider everything in each system. Most teams have more than 10 players within their minor leagues who project to be better than replacement-level big leaguers, and all of those guys count. Players who have lost Rookie of the Year eligibility (more than 130 at-bats, 50 innings or 45 days on the active 25-man roster) do not count toward these rankings.

I'd rather have potential stars, even if there's some risk involved, but there's also real value in being able to provide your own fifth starters or utility players without having to pay for them on the open market. That means some teams here toward the top of the list got "credit" for 20 or more players in their systems, whereas those in the bottom third top out around 15 names.

I do favor prospects with higher upsides (or "ceilings") over those with less potential to become stars but higher probability of reaching the majors in some role. Few clubs are able to afford stars on the open market, so developing your own is critical for half or even two-thirds of the franchises in baseball. And if you have a prospect who projects as a star, you have the currency to acquire almost any major leaguer you want. The teams in the top 10 have potential stars and a lot of second-tier prospects with future big league value, while the teams in the bottom 10 don't have much of either, with two clubs lacking any top-100 prospects at all.

I'm most surprised by how unbalanced the farm systems across the game are right now. The top four were easy for me to choose, and the bottom six were too, but there are gulfs between them. To some extent, this is a natural outcome of the process of building a good system, contending, and then graduating or trading off your best prospects to enhance or extend your window of success.

We're also seeing more teams concentrate wholeheartedly on their farm systems, however, to the detriment of the big league club -- it's not "tanking" the way it exists in the NBA, but it is the baseball equivalent. A strong farm system is good only to the extent that it leads to major league wins.

## 1. San Diego Padres 2018 rank: 3

The Padres are poised to sit at or near the top of these rankings for quite some time, even though they'll likely lose at least three top-100 prospects to graduations this year (Fernando Tatis Jr., Chris Paddack, [Luis Urias](#) and maybe Logan Allen), with the 2016 international class still just barely getting to full-season ball, another solid draft class last year and the sixth overall pick this year. The system remains deep in shortstops and power arms, with guys like Luis Patiño emerging from nowhere -- he's gained about 12 mph in two years -- while many of those 2016

signees haven't even begun to fill out physically. The Padres are going to start winning more games in 2019 and especially 2020, so there will soon come a point where all this prospect depth could fuel major league trades rather than boosting their farm system rankings.

# Why Harper (or Machado) to the Padres isn't as crazy as you think

David Schoenfield

ESPN Senior Writer

To his credit, Bryce Harper has at least had some fun with his free-agent status. When TV analyst Tony Romo correctly predicted the Patriots' movements and plays multiple times during the AFC Championship Game, Harper tweeted, "Confirmed: Just called Tony Romo to see where I'm going to play next year." When the Twitter handle for MLB The Show asked, "Which team in the NL East would go furthest with Bryce?" Harper responded with a thinking emoji.

## ESPN+: Keith Law's top 100 prospects

What maybe isn't so amusing for Harper is that with spring training kicking off in two weeks, he remains unsigned. While the Phillies and Nationals remain the most visible landing spots, there is apparently a new team in the mix, as Harper will meet with Padres officials Thursday in his hometown of Las Vegas. While we don't know how serious the Padres' intentions are, they've now been linked with Manny Machado, [J.T. Realmuto](#) and Harper with increasing intensity the past few days. It seems they want to do something big.

Harper to the Padres makes more sense than it may appear at first glance:

- San Diego is close to home for Harper.
- The Padres have lots of prospects on the way, so you can read the tea leaves and see a bright future. They need a foundation piece -- especially since it isn't [Eric Hosmer](#).
- There would be much less media to deal with than in D.C. or Philadelphia (let alone New York or Los Angeles, one-time potential Harper destinations).
- [Franmil Reyes](#), [Hunter Renfroe](#), [Wil Myers](#) and [Franchy Cordero](#) are not roadblocks to signing Harper. Please. Sure, the Padres have a glut of corner outfielders, but none of those guys came close to Harper's .393 OBP last year, or will come close in 2019 or any other season. In fact, the Padres were dead last in the National League with a .297 OBP. They need Harper.
- In fact, if they sign Harper, a couple of those corner outfielders could be used as trade bait for a third baseman or as part of a Realmuto deal. (The Padres would also likely send along [Francisco Mejia](#) in such a trade with the Marlins.)

A lot of these same arguments can be made about Machado, and with the Padres having a clear opening at third base, you can argue he's a better fit. It would seem, however, that Harper -- as a West Coast guy who has spent his entire career in the NL -- is a more likely bet to choose San Diego.

Now, of course, the question that always arises in these situations: money. Will the Padres spend it? One of the crafty things owners have managed to spin on fans is the idea of limited resources as an excuse to limit spending. Keep this in mind: According to MLB's own public statement, overall revenue across the majors increased \$300 million in 2018 while payroll decreased \$18

million. That increased revenue is not going to the players. That revenue doesn't include funds that can be hidden, such as from teams' local TV deals. Many teams own a stake in their regional sports network, including Padres CEO Ron Fowler, who has a 20 percent stake in Fox Sports San Diego.

In other words: Money is out there if teams want to spend it. In the Padres' case, the team recently shared some financial numbers with Kevin Acee of the San Diego Union-Tribune. The Padres claim that only a \$35 million cash call from ownership and a \$68 million payment after MLB sold BAMTech allowed the team to break even. (The article didn't define over what period of years "break even" referred to.)

Back in 2015, when then-rookie general manager A.J. Preller conducted his offseason frenzy that included trading for [Matt Kemp](#) and Craig Kimbrel and signing [James Shields](#), the Padres went from 77 wins to ... 74. In the Union-Tribune article, the Padres say they increased payroll \$40 million that offseason, but saw just a \$15 million increase in ticket and merchandise revenue. That winter's poor results seemed to have scared off Fowler. "I didn't need much change in my belief, but it convinced me that the business model didn't work," Fowler said. "We had a blip in terms of revenue ... [and] we dug a big hole for ourselves."

According to Cot's Contracts, the Padres' payroll was only \$25 million higher in 2015, but the point is that this all sounds like owner-speak for why they don't want to risk spending the money on free agents. Of course, this is the franchise that gave \$144 million last offseason to Hosmer, so who knows.

Anyway, Cot's projects the Padres' current payroll at ... just \$80 million. They do have the long-term commitments to Hosmer (through 2025) and Wil Myers (through 2022), but with so many incoming prospects, their roster is going to be full of dirt-cheap youngsters. Even with Harper at \$30 million per season, the payroll would still sit below last year's \$130 million figure.

So, there is room for Harper. There is room for Harper and Realmuto. Or Harper and Dallas Keuchel. Or Harper and Mike Moustakas to play third base. How about this lineup once Fernando Tatis Jr. -- Keith Law's No. 1 overall prospect -- gets called up, maybe after the All-Star break:

2B [Luis Urias](#)

C J.T. Realmuto

RF Bryce Harper

LF Wil Myers

1B Eric Hosmer

3B Mike Moustakas

SS Fernando Tatis Jr.

CF Manual Margot

Pitchers Chris Paddack and Logan Allen are just about MLB-ready and could join the rotation at some point this season, while others like MacKenzie Gore and Adrian Morejon are further away. That's why a veteran leader like Keuchel makes sense.

In the end, it's all part of the big question: How much do the Padres want to win? Because signing Bryce Harper will make them a better -- and certainly more interesting -- team. Fowler's group purchased the Padres in 2012 and he has yet to see his franchise have even a winning

season. But maybe it doesn't matter: The value of the franchise has grown from its \$600 million purchase price to an estimated \$1.2 billion.

# Rich in prospects and low in payroll, Padres are an intriguing Bryce Harper suitor

By [Dave Sheinin](#)

January 31

Last week, just days before their reported meeting Thursday with free agent outfielder [Bryce Harper](#) in his hometown of Las Vegas, the San Diego Padres landed a major-league-leading 10 players on MLB.com's list of the top 100 prospects in baseball. Fully half of them are expected to reach Petco Park in 2019. The Padres are a franchise on the rise. The only question is when they will arrive.

Jumping into a massive contract with a free agent such as Harper would not be the typical play for a team that hasn't made the playoffs since 2006 and is coming off a 66-96 finish in 2018. But from the Padres' viewpoint, Thursday's meeting, first reported by *The Athletic*, comes at the intersection of ambition and opportunity. Maybe their true target-year to contend in the National League West should be 2020, but that doesn't mean they can't take steps to hasten the process.

The extent of the Padres' interest in Harper is still unknown, but what is known is that the market for the 26-year-old outfielder has not materialized in the way many in the industry expected. With many of the game's biggest spenders sitting out these sweepstakes, the other known suitors for Harper are the Washington Nationals, Philadelphia Phillies and Chicago White Sox. Spring training camps open in about two weeks, and Harper doesn't seem particularly close to signing.

Do the Padres merely sense an opening if the price on Harper has dropped, or are they prepared to go dollar-to-dollar with a team, the Phillies, whose owner has famously declared a willingness to be "a little stupid" with his spending this winter — not to mention another team, the Nationals, that already offered Harper a \$300 million deal last fall? That answer might become clear in the coming days and weeks.

What is already clear is that the Padres are in an enviable position. Not only do have all those prospects coming — led by 20-year-old shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr., the No. 2-ranked prospect in the game — but they also have just \$74 million committed to their 2019 payroll, according to Spotrac, which ranks 25th in the majors and is some \$30 million less than what they spent on 2018 payroll. After 2020, their payroll commitments drop below \$50 million annually.

"We've never set a specific time frame" for contention, Padres General Manager A.J. Preller told reporters earlier this winter. "We know we're going to have a lot of our [prospects] here over the course of the next two years."

The conservative play for the Padres, coming off 96 losses, would be to give their young core another year to develop and go big next winter, when players such as [Nolan Arenado](#), [Anthony Rendon](#), [Gerrit Cole](#) and [Chris Sale](#) become free agents. But it's also possible the Padres see typical market-drivers such as the New York Yankees, Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Angels, Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs in the same holding pattern, and figure this is the time to strike.

On the basis of need, it would make more sense for the Padres to sign shortstop/third baseman [Manny Machado](#) — the other top prize on this free agent market. While they have a glut of outfielders on their 40-man roster, they are still looking for a solution at third base, and perhaps not surprisingly they have been linked to Machado in recent weeks.

But one of the benefits of having one of the game's best farm systems is that you don't always have to operate based on immediate and obvious need. If the Padres prefer Harper to Machado, they could easily put together the package of prospects — and/or big league outfielders — necessary to fill their glaring hole at third at some point down the road.

It also wouldn't be unlike Preller to be aggressive in the marketplace. In his first offseason in the job, he acquired [Matt Kemp](#), [Craig Kimbrel](#), [Wil Myers](#), [James Shields](#) and [Justin Upton](#). Just a year ago, he swooped in to sign first baseman [Eric Hosmer](#) to an eight-year, \$144 million contract in mid-February. This winter, in addition to their interest in Harper and Machado, the Padres have been linked to Miami Marlins catcher [J.T. Realmuto](#), one of the top assets available on the trade market.

The Padres may also be sensing a window opening in the NL West, where the San Francisco Giants and Arizona Diamondbacks appear to be rebuilding, the Colorado Rockies can see their own window beginning to close, and the Los Angeles Dodgers are trying to do something that hasn't been done by an NL team in 75 years — return to the World Series for a third straight year.

A year ago, the Atlanta Braves, another prospect-rich franchise with a sunny future, saw their young core — led by top prospect [Ronald Acuna Jr.](#), the eventual NL rookie of the year — blossom en masse a year ahead of schedule, and ascended from 72-90 in 2017 to 90-72 and the NL East title in 2018.

The Padres can't assume the same will happen behind Tatis and the rest of their young core in 2019. But from where they sit, at the intersection of ambition and opportunity, signing a slugger such as Harper could bring that bright future that much closer to their reach.



# Is Bryce Harper a Better Fit for the Padres or White Sox Than a Contender?

By **TOM VERDUCCI**  
February 01, 2019

Until the next mystery team reveals itself, Bryce Harper is either returning the Nationals or choosing to play the next decade or so from among three of the four worst teams in baseball over the past six years. Combined winning seasons for the White Sox, Phillies and Padres in that time: zero.

At least eight teams have expressed interest in Harper, according to a source familiar with his free agency. But those teams among them who simply are doing due diligence or hoping to get Harper on a short-term deal—buying his prime years without the strings attached of paying a mid-30s Harper—are likely to remain on the periphery.

The Padres seemed to be a surprise suitor when team officials met with Harper and his agent, Scott Boras, Thursday in Las Vegas. But history—and Boras’ own trail of clues—tell us we shouldn’t be surprised that the bottom teams in baseball, not those at the top, are competing for a marquee player.

You can deconstruct Harper all you want by his WAR, the fashionable trend these days even in front offices these days. If you believe in WAR, Harper ranks 86th over the past three years, and you’d be better off with players such as Corey Dickerson and Cesar Hernandez.

## **DICKEY: Are the Padres Legitimate Players for Harper, Machado?**

But baseball is more than WAR. It is an entertainment business. It’s about selling tickets, attracting viewers and promoting a brand. Nothing sells better than winning, of course, but winning can be fickle when it comes to championships. Over the past six years the Yankees and Nationals combined to field 12 winning teams but won one postseason series.

The star player can enhance the brand with or without a championship. And Harper, 26, brings to free agency two key pieces of leverage we haven’t seen like this since Alex Rodriguez in 2000: youthfulness and star power. And that is how Boras has been selling Harper: a franchise-changing player.

“He will pay for himself, independent of a great performance,” Boras said back at the winter meetings, noting how the Nationals improved their attendance by 38% and tripled their television ratings in the seven years Harper played in Washington.

It’s too simple to ascribe all of that growth to Harper, but there is no doubt he was a big part of it. Harper is the most recognizable face in baseball.

Now consider what Harper might do for the Padres. Unless you're a prospect junkie, it's hard to find a less relevant franchise in baseball this side of the Marlins. Here is why the Padres need Harper. The Padres:

- Have not had a position player start the All-Star Game since the late Tony Gwynn in 1998.
- Have not had anybody hit 32 home runs since Adrian Gonzalez in 2009.
- Fell from ninth to 22<sup>nd</sup> in local TV ratings from 2015–18 while losing nearly half their viewership (from 44,000 households to 23,000).
- Have not fielded a winning team or had any of its players receive even a single MVP or Cy Young Award vote in the six full seasons under the ownership of Ron Fowler.
- Have lost 848,216 paid fans since Petco Park opened in 2004.

The Padres actually have stabilized their attendance in recent years after the novelty wore off Petco. But take a look at this: the worst winning percentages in baseball over the past six seasons—since Fowler bought the Padres—and the effect on attendance for those teams in that time:

#### **WORST WINNING PERCENTAGE IN MLB, 2013–2018**

<b>TEAM</b>	<b>WINNING PCT.</b>	<b>ATTENDANCE</b>
1. White Sox	.431	-357,138
2. Phillies	.438	-1,407,594
3. Marlins	.442	-1,408,340
4. Padres	.444	+44,855
5. Reds	.445	-717,895

The Reds are so frightened about losing relevancy in Cincinnati that this winter they patched a 95-loss team with loads of veterans, many of them on one-year contracts. The Marlins are in Year 2 of a teardown. And the other three teams at the bottom of Major League Baseball are hoping Harper brings them relevancy. “I don’t think any player ever has had such close connection with franchise value, attendance and TV ratings,” Boras said at the winter meetings.

#### **VERDUCCI: Why Baseball Is Becoming a Gig Economy**

When you pay more than \$200 million for a free agent, you better be paying for more than WAR. That’s why teams near the bottom often have been most aggressive when luring the most expensive free agents:

#### **MOST EXPENSIVE FREE AGENTS TO SWITCH TEAMS**

<b>PLAYER</b>	<b>CONTRACT</b>	<b>TEAM</b>	<b>RECORD</b>
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Alex Rodriguez	\$252M	2000 Rangers	71–91
Robinson Canó	\$240M	2013 Mariners	71–91
Albert Pujols	\$240M	2011 Angels	86–76
David Price	\$217M	2015 Red Sox	78–84
Max Scherzer	\$210M	2014 Nationals	96–66
Zack Greinke	\$206.5M	2015 D-backs	79–83

Harper doesn't immediately make the Padres a contender. But if you are to believe the hype about their prospects, they could be one soon. MLB.com last year rated San Diego as having the best farm system in baseball. The three previous teams identified as "farm system champions" all were in the playoffs either that year or the following year (Cubs in 2015, Dodgers in 2016, Braves in 2017).

Harper would get the Padres to contention more quickly, especially if they also were to sign Mike Moustakas (like Harper and Eric Hosmer, a Boras client) and trade from their outfield surplus. What Harper would do immediately for the Padres would be to make them relevant like they haven't been in years. We're starting to see why Harper is worth more to the bottom teams in baseball than those at the top.

# ESPN's Keith Law again ranks Padres' farm system No. 1

**Jeff Sanders**

The faction of fans that rally around the Padres' status as a franchise with an over-under win total set at 78½ by BetOnline as a sign that franchise is stuck in perpetual wheel-spinning are not wrong.

The [World Series](#) is the ultimate goal.

By that standard, the Padres appear no closer than they were the start of the Fowler/Seidler era after seeing the win total slip from 76 in its first full year of ownership to 66 in 2018.

But there is no doubt that help is on the way.

MLB.com, Baseball America, Baseball Prospectus and [ESPN](#) all list nine to 10 Padres among in their updated top prospects lists.

ESPN's Keith Law on Monday even ranked the [Padres' farm system the very best in the game](#) (subscription required), up from No. 3 last year.

The gist of Monday's reveal: The organization's latest commitment to building from within (because we've been here before, right?) is poised to bear fruit ... *soon*.

"The Padres are going to start winning more games in 2019 and especially 2020," Law wrote, "so there will soon come a point where all this prospect depth could fuel major league trades rather than boosting their farm system rankings."

The Padres' standing in Law's rankings, of course, are buoyed by [shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. position as the game's top-ranked prospect](#) (well, No. 1 by Law, No. 2 to Vladimir Guerrero Jr. according to other publications), the sort of high-ceiling, high-floor talent that very well could develop into a perennial MVP candidate.

Eight other Padres prospects earned spots in Law's top-100, justifying his assumption that "the Padres are poised to sit at or near the top of these rankings for quite some time, even though they'll likely lose at least three top-100 prospects to graduations this year (Fernando Tatis Jr., Chris Paddack, [Luis Urias](#) and maybe Logan Allen)."

Those impending graduations ought to stand out to the local skeptics.

If this rebuild is indeed *different* ([Law ranked this system No. 1 in 2012](#) and we all know how that turned out), we should begin to see some sort of dividends in 2019.

Stay tuned.

# Padres need to make statement by signing Machado or Harper

**Bryce Miller**

This is your chance, [Padres](#). This is the moment, if you land [Manny Machado](#) or [Bryce Harper](#), to show a grumbling fan base with the patience of craft beer-drinking saints that things truly are different.

This is your opportunity, your gaping doorway, to trample the “no way they’ll sign someone like that” pessimism that lingers over the franchise.

There are plenty of your fans — those still buying tickets, those who surrendered already and those weighing their next discretionary-spending moves — who simply refuse to buy into this long organizational rebuild until they see the big spend on a truly big name.

We’re not talking about flailing after Matt Kemp or James Shields, 30-somethings chasing aging performance ghosts. We’re not talking about [Eric Hosmer](#), snapped up for the spot where you already were playing an All-Star — gifted, but hardly generational.

Machado is 26, a sublime talent who forgets to run out a ground ball now and again but finished in the top-six among position players for Wins Above Replacement three times since entering the league. He can anchor third base, *the* position of need for the Padres, for a very long time.

Harper, also 26, is a former MVP who is so dangerous offensively that a season with 100 RBI, 130 walks and .889 OPS can be characterized by multiple outlets as a “slump.” He’s the less savvy option for San Diego, because he’ll cost more and primarily plays right field — the team’s deepest position.

All of this hot-stovin’ is splashed across the backdrop of a [story on the organization’s finances](#) by U-T reporter Kevin Acee. The team, after eight consecutive losing seasons, says it has clawed out from under crushing debt left by previous owner John Moores.

Chairman Ron Fowler told Acee that the team is now positioned “to field a team worthy of fans’ support with the goal of competing for a World Series championship each season.”

Those are words. In truth, words Padres fans have heard. Show them that you want to shake up their dusty reality and shatter their assumptions. Make it clear, after smartly constructing an unmatched farm system, that this process sincerely owns a finish line.

The Padres also are talking again with the Marlins about [J.T. Realmuto](#), arguably the best catcher in the game. He’s the complete package that [Austin Hedges](#) isn’t and likely never will be.

The Padres recently told the Union-Tribune they ducked out of discussions because the asking price was too high, but now claim Miami has circled back.

“It went silent,” a source with direct knowledge said. “Now it started up again. Things change.”

No target, though, feels more important or makes more sense than Machado.

Rarely do you find someone so talented, so young, so contract-controllable at the position you direly need. Word came from Machado’s camp, a highly-placed source said, that he’s willing to play third base rather than his preferred spot at shortstop — opening the door for the eventual arrival of Fernando Tatis Jr.

Those whispers about potential character issues?

A source said the Padres “wouldn’t pursue him” if they thought those reached any kind of concerning level. Plus, if Hosmer is the clubhouse leader the teams claims him to be and pays him to be, he’s the perfect teammate to bend Machado’s ear.

I realize I was in a very small minority when I wrote that [the Padres should not have signed Hosmer](#). At least not for that much, for that long, at a position already where it’s easier to find defenders and already manned by All-Star Wil Myers.

All of this, however — the player, the position, the Padres financial situation — is different.

If the price for Machado lingers around \$25 million per season, as many assume, you can snag him and still not exceed baseball’s payroll average. It could get tricky when players like Hedges, Hunter Renfroe and Manny Margot become arbitration eligible. But you simply pick and choose and trade when that bridge peeks over your organizational horizon.

Payroll relief is on the way, too, when Hosmer’s contract (if he remains a Padre) drops by \$7 million per season in 2023.

The Padres wisely continue to eye other third-base options. [Mike Moustakas](#) could be serviceable, or more than that. [Marwin Gonzalez](#) could be serviceable, or more than that. Neither, though, would feel indisputably special and needle-shifting.

Padres General Partner Peter Seidler, General Manager A.J. Preller and manager Andy Green [met with Harper on Thursday](#). The team originally hoped to connect with Machado this weekend, but early next week looks more realistic.

So Padres, what’s the move? Whatever it is, you need to make sure there is one. Otherwise, the fans who haven’t caught a whiff of the postseason will feel proven right. Painfully and again. You still need a front-line starter in the short term, but that’s another discussion for another spring day.

You’ve raised the bar on expectations, through the sterling work on the farm system and stirring up possibilities with Machado, Harper and Realmuto.

Now, go ahead and do it. Pull the trigger. Change things ... for real this time.

# 50 Moments — Crowd Bolsters Padres Spirits as they Return from Chicago in 1984 NLCS

FriarWire

Feb 1

*By Bill Center*

Most of Oct. 3, 1984, was a disaster for the Padres.

The day began with the Padres losing the second game of the best-of-five National League Championship Series at Wrigley Park in Chicago after getting blown out by a 13–0 score in the opener.

Then, the Padres return flight to San Diego was then delayed on the tarmac at O’Hare Field in Chicago so that the Cubs could depart first. That indignation ate at the Padres’ party.

And upon finally landing at Lindbergh Field, the Padres learned their bus route to San Diego Stadium had been altered. They weren’t told why.

“We weren’t told about why we were being delayed or detoured,” **Tony Gwynn** said. “All we knew is that a long day was getting longer. We weren’t happy.”

Then, as the Padres neared their Mission Valley home, the reason for the delay and detour became apparent.

Friars Road was backed up due to traffic. More than 10,000 fans were in already in the parking lot at San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium to greet the Padres home. And more were backed up on Friars Road and I-15.

Eventually, San Diego police officers estimated the crowd to peak at between 12,000 and 15,000.

This wasn’t a weekend, mind you. It was a Wednesday night. A work night. A school night. And the Padres arrival was almost 90 minutes behind schedule.

Because the Padres’ return had been delayed, the throng had started partying without the team. Once the Padres arrived, the noise generated by the party woke up families on the hills surrounding Mission Valley.

“What is happening at the stadium?” inquired more than one caller to The San Diego Union.

“What I saw was a lot of hope and frustration of the (16-year) losing history boiling over,” said Gwynn. “I didn’t know if we were going to win the series, but I knew we weren’t going to lose the next day.”

The Padres did win the next day by a 7–1 count. Then **Steve Garvey’s** legendary two-run, walk-off homer in the 10th inning of the fourth game gave the Padres a 7–5 win and evened the series at 2–2. In the decisive fifth game, the Padres rallied from a 3–0 deficit to win 6–3 and claim their first National League title.

All three games were played before raucous franchise-record, sellout crowds—58,346, 58,354, 58,370—at San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium.

“They say fans can’t turn around a championship series among professional athletes,” said Padres shortstop **Garry Templeton**. “Our fans did. Not only in the stadium parking lot, but for the next three days.”

“What we witnessed that night was one of the great memories of my career,” Gwynn recalled years later. “We had lost two straight games in Chicago . . . honestly we got embarrassed. We’re down two games to nothing in a five-game series. We had one foot in the bucket.

“And there they were. Thousands of fans to welcome us home. They were celebrating us like we had won the first two games. It was unbelievable great chaos. We’re down two games to none. And we were down as a team. What we saw got to us. It got to all of us. It was crazy. We were on the verge of getting swept out of the playoffs and the fans came out to welcome us.”

“That night in the parking lot changed the series,” Templeton said. “Even before we reached the crowd, the players on the bus were talking. Steve Garvey had played in World Series for the Dodgers and he was surprised by what he was seeing.

“There were so many fans that we had trouble even reaching our cars. Once we did, we couldn’t drive out, not that anyone really wanted to . . . although it had been a long, difficult and terrible day up until we approached the stadium on Friars Road.

“I swear some of those people in the parking lot the previous night never went home,” said **Ed Whitson**, the first winning pitcher of a playoff game in Padres history.

“I was in the bullpen getting ready when I heard the roar of the crowd. I’d never heard anything like that. I honestly was wondering what had happened, was there some kind of incident . . . it was so sudden and so loud that I had to take a minute. And it never stopped after that.”



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*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)
14. 1984 Padres-Braves brawl in Atlanta (Aug. 12, 1984)
15. More than 12,000 fans greet Padres as they return home from two losses in Chicago in 1984 National League Championship Series (Oct. 3, 1984)

# Top 50 Individual Seasons

## 39. Clay Kirby, 1971 — First Padre to win 15 games and set strikeout record that stood for 27 seasons

[FriarWire](#)

Feb 1

*By Bill Center*

**Clay Kirby** was already a part of Padres history as the 1971 season approached.

On July 21, 1970, the right-handed pitcher was throwing a no-hitter against the New York Mets at San Diego Stadium when he was pulled for a pinch-hitter in the bottom of the eighth by manager **Preston Gomez**.

That remains one of the more controversial—and repeated—decisions in Padres history. Mets shortstop **Ken Harrelson** then opened the ninth with a single against Padres reliever **Jack Baldschun**.

The incident became known as “The Curse of Kirby” and the event is recounted every time a Padres pitcher threatens to throw the first no-hitter in Padres history. After 50 seasons, the Padres remain the only team in the Major Leagues without a no-hitter.

However, then 23-year-old Kirby emerged as the Padres best starting pitcher the following season as he capped the first 15-win season in franchise history with what remains one of the single greatest months.

In his last three starts of 1971, Kirby allowed three runs on 15 hits and nine walks with 36 strikeouts over 34 innings—a 0.79 earned run average and a 0.71 WHIP.

During September of 1971, Kirby flirted with two more no-hitters.

On Sept. 13, 1971, Houston catcher **John Edwards** doubled with one out in the eighth at the Astrodome to break up Kirby’s—and the Padres’—second bid for a no-hitter. Five days later, Giants’ future Hall of Famer **Willie McCovey** led off the eighth with a homer to break up Kirby’s third no-hit bid. Kirby had retired 21 straight Giants.

Kirby’s second and third no-hit bids came during one of the greatest runs ever by a Padres pitcher—which was capped on Sept. 24 when Kirby allowed one run on just eight hits and three

walks while striking out 15 Astros in a 15-inning effort at San Diego Stadium. That remains the longest outing by a Padres pitcher in franchise history.

Kirby went 15–13 in 1971 with a career-best 2.83 ERA in 38 games (36 starts). He also finished with a career-best 1,182 WHIP and a .216 opponents' batting average. He gave up 20 homers in 267 1/3 innings as he allowed 99 runs (84 earned) on 213 hits and 103 walks with 231 strikeouts.

Kirby finished second in the National League in strikeouts (7.78) and fewest hits allowed (7.171) per nine innings. He also finished fourth in the league with 231 strikeouts—which stood as the franchise record until **Kevin Brown** struck out 257 in 1998.

He ranked ninth in the league in starts, 10th in ERA and WAR (4.2) and 11th in innings pitched.

Kirby followed with another strong season in 1972, going 12–14 with a 3.13 ERA in 34 starts.

The Padres' sixth pick in the 1968 expansion draft, Kirby made his Major League debut on April 11, 1969, at the age of 20. He pitched with the Padres during their first five seasons, going 52–81 in 177 games (170 starts) with a 3.73 ERA.

On Nov. 3, 1973, the Padres traded Kirby to the Cincinnati Reds for outfielder **Bobby Tolan** and pitcher **Dave Tomlin**.

Kirby last pitched in the Major Leagues in 1976. He died on Oct. 11, 1991, of an apparent heart attack.

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*Top 50 Individual Seasons:*

39. RHP Clay Kirby (1972)

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)

# #PadresOnDeck: Cuban Pitchers Baez, Bolaños, Perez Climbing through Padres' System

FriarWire

Feb 1

*By Bill Center*

As part of the 2016 international signing blitz, the Padres added six notable players from Cuba.

We continue our four-month look at Padres top 93 prospects today with a review of three of those Cuban signees—pitchers **Michel Baez**, **Ronald Bolaños** and **Ramon Perez**.

A deeper study of the three in order of their proximity to the Major Leagues:

Michel Baez is ranked the N<sup>o</sup>72 prospect in all of the minor leagues by the MLB Pipeline. He is also ranked the Padres' N<sup>o</sup>7 prospect by MLB Pipeline and N<sup>o</sup>85 among all minor leaguers by the Baseball Prospectus.

Baez, who turned 23 on Jan. 21, is a native of Mayabeque near Havana. The 6-foot-8, 210-pound right-hander split the 2018 season between Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore and Double-A San Antonio.

Overall, Baez had a 3.69 earned run average in 21 starts last season with a 1.33 WHIP and a .242 opponents' batting average. He allowed 53 runs (43 earned) on 95 hits and 45 walks with 113 strikeouts in 105 innings. He averaged 9.7 strikeouts per nine innings with a 2.5-to-1 strikeout to walk ratio.

Seventeen of Baez's 2018 starts were with Lake Elsinore. He had a 2.91 ERA with a 1.21 WHIP and a .229 opponents' batting average. He gave up 32 runs (28 earned) on 73 hits and 33 walks with 92 strikeouts in 86 2/3 innings—an average of 9.6 strikeouts per nine innings and a 2.8-to-1 strikeout to walk ratio.

After his first professional season in the United States in 2017, Baez was ranked the Padres' N<sup>o</sup>3 prospect by Baseball America with the best fastball in the system. Baez had a 2.45 ERA with 82 strikeouts in 58 2/3 innings—or 12.6 strikeouts per nine innings—with Single-A Fort Wayne in 2017. He had a 10 1/4-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio with the TinCaps.

— Ronald Bolaños spent the entire 2018 season with Lake Elsinore, where he posted a 6–9 record with a 5.11 ERA, a 1.50 WHIP and a .282 opponents' batting average in 125 innings over 25 games (23 starts).

After debuting with Single-A Fort Wayne in 2017 and posting a 4.41 ERA in 16 games (11 starts), Bolaños gave up 84 runs (71 earned) on 138 hits and 50 walks and 118 strikeouts this season with the Storm.

The 6-foot-3, 200-pound right-hander is 22 years old. He is a native of Santa Cruz del Norte in Cuba.

— Ramon Perez is a 19-year-old left-hander from Baracoa, Cuba. He is 6-foot-1 and 190 pounds.

After posting a 2.66 ERA in 50 2/3 innings in the Arizona Rookie League in 2017, Perez spent his second professional season with Short-Season Single-A Tri-City. He was 2–1 with a 2.48 ERA, a 1.23 WHIP and a .228 opponents' batting average in 11 games (eight starts) with the Dust Devils. In 40 innings, Perez gave up 14 runs (11 earned) on 33 hits and 16 walks with 45 strikeouts in 40 innings— or 10.1 strikeouts per nine innings with a 2.8-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

# The Padres are in the mix for Bryce Harper and Manny Machado -- will they strike a deal or fall short?

San Diego has a chance to claim the oh-so-close championship of this Hot Stove season

by [Jonah Keri](#)

One of the fastest-growing mini-pockets of sports journalism over the past few years is the oh-so-close story. Sure, the story goes, Team X traded Superstar Y to Team Z, or Team A broke the bank to acquire Premium Free Agent B. But here's all the dirt about what *almost* happened. Here are the other teams that came [oh so close](#) to [reeling in the big fish](#).

As fans, we can't get enough of these tales. It's juicy gossip that can gin up otherwise dull offseasons. And it can sometimes provide a window into what teams are thinking, even when a deal doesn't quite materialize.

But there's a flip side to the oh-so-close phenomenon. Teams are acutely aware that fans often lap up these stories. So if you happen to let slip to a reporter that hey, you were in on that star player right down to the end of the bidding, you can earn the sympathy points and participation trophies that come with the territory. Hey, your favorite team has made [one interesting move in the past decade](#)? OK, but at least they tried.

All of this brings us to the [Padres](#). If there's one team with a chance to claim the oh-so-close championship of this Hot Stove season, San Diego is it.

Over the past few days, we've learned that the Padres are [interested in meeting with All-Star third baseman/shortstop Manny Machado](#). They're one of a handful of teams still [engaged in the J.T. Realmuto trade merry-go-round](#). And in the latest bit of winter intrigue, a Padres delegation led by managing partner Peter Seidler and general manager A.J. Preller [met with Bryce Harper in Las Vegas](#).

At first blush, this is spectacularly exciting news. In a sport that sees mega-revenue teams shell out for elite talent while smaller-market clubs often refuse to spend real money for stars, hearing that the Padres might be front-runners for all of these players and not, say, the [Yankees](#) or [Dodgers](#) counts as a breath of fresh air. It would be particularly welcome news for the Friars, one of the most downtrodden teams in sports, still seeking its first World Series crown as it enters its 51st season of existence.

But then you start to wonder. The Padres have been linked with other high-profile players in the past, only to come up (we were told) just short. If you're a Padres fan, should you get excited about this latest round of rumors? Or is this just another case of baseball [Kabuki theater](#)?

A year ago, the Padres were said to be one of the runners-up in the [Shohei Ohtani](#) sweepstakes - [maybe even the closest runner-up](#). When [Jake Arrieta](#) remained unsigned heading into March, suddenly the Padres [joined the chase](#). A few months later, the [Mets](#) reportedly kicked the tires on [Noah Syndergaard](#) and [Jacob deGrom](#) trade possibilities, and lo and behold, [the Padres were](#)

cited as a potential suitor. Near the trade deadline, they supposedly [pushed hard to land Chris Archer from the Rays](#). Then this winter we had rumors of Syndergaard and deGrom again, followed by the alleged courting of Machado, Realmuto, and Harper.

The timing of the supposedly hot pursuits of Machado, Realmuto, and Harper in particular look a little fishy. On Jan. 19, the *San Diego Union-Tribune* published a story that was supposed to show [how the Padres had opened their books to the public](#), a once-in-a-million-years event in the [opaque, dishonest world that baseball owners typically live in](#).

That article...did not go over well. The Padres blogosphere has already [ably dissected](#) the problems with ownership's supposed newfound transparency. The short version is this: The Padres have supposedly been drowning in debt for years, and even after the \$68 million payout the team got from [MLB's sale of Bamtech to Disney](#), the team was barely breaking even, and was thus unable to spend anything close to league average on player payroll. How this squares with supposed pursuits of Machado and Harper, or even the team's \$144 million signing of [Eric Hosmer](#) last winter is anyone's guess. (As an aside, the Hosmer deal already looks like a disaster -- spending huge money on stars is defensible; doing so on second-tier talent is not.)

Figuring out whether or not to believe the Padres' disclosures is a tough task. This is an ownership group that has actually spent real money on talent at times, from the Hosmer bonanza to the 2014-2015 offseason, when the Padres acquired [Matt Kemp](#), the Upton brothers, [Wil Myers](#), [James Shields](#), [Craig Kimbrel](#), Ryan Klesko's third cousin, and [Paste from Bases Loaded](#). But the bottom line is that from a PR standpoint, the *Union-Tribune* article went over terribly with the fan base, and the team's multiple close calls on blockbuster trades and free-agent signings did nothing to help its credibility.

In a wild coincidence, the Padres almost immediately let it be known that they'd [bring back their wildly popular brown uniforms for the 2020 season](#). Almost immediately after that, we learned that the Padres' interest in multiple star players had suddenly intensified.

The thing about all these big rumors is that of all the teams that finished below .500 last season, the Padres might be the most logical bidders on players like Machado and Harper. [All the big top prospects lists just came out](#), and the Padres landed at the top of virtually everyone's list for minor-league talent, led by potential star infielder [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) Other than Hosmer and Wil Myers, the Padres' balance sheet looks clean for years to come. The Padres have been after a top-tier third baseman since the dawn of time. And while they're flush with corner outfielders, none of those incumbents hold a fraction of the talent and star power that Harper possesses; the Padres could even turn around and trade some of their surplus outfield talent for help elsewhere if need be.

There's a political concept called the [Overton window](#), which includes the range of ideas that people are willing to discuss, consider, and believe. ESPN's Buster Olney recently quoted a talent evaluator from another team who speculated that the Padres could essentially be trying to move the Overton window: Bring up interest in Harper and Machado, then when that supposed interest falls juuuuust short of producing actual signings, fall back on another player, [maybe someone like Dallas Keuchel](#).

The question is, if all of this proves to be simply the Padres doing their due diligence in the hopes of getting a lowball deal on a star player, or just simple misdirection, how will Harper and



Machado signing elsewhere go over for fans who got their hopes up? And if all of this buzz over all these big names ends with the Padres getting nothing, how will a smart and oft-burned fan base react?