



SF Giants Press Clips Saturday, July 7, 2018

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants beat Cards, but Joe Panik going to DL

John Shea

Joe Panik scurried around second and headed for third. Ron Wotus, from the coach's box, waved his arms to motion Panik to the plate with the tie-breaking run.

The Giants, on Gorkys Hernandez's double, were about to take their first lead since Monday.

Panik never made it home. He hobbled into third and went directly into the Giants' clubhouse with a strained left groin, the latest injury in a rough year for the second baseman.

The Giants pulled out a 3-2 victory over St. Louis at AT&T Park on Friday, snapping a four-game losing streak, and now must move on beyond Panik, who will go on the disabled list Saturday.

"It's hard to say how long," manager Bruce Bochy said of Panik's absence. "He did a pretty good job on it, though."

Without Panik, who'll have an MRI exam to reveal the extent of the injury, Alen Hanson will move from left to second with Austin Slater moving into a starting role in left.

“We have to overcome this. We’ve had to deal with enough of these this year,” said Bochy, adding Hanson should benefit from playing one position rather than rotating around the diamond. “But we’ll miss Joe.”

As Panik was getting examined, rookie pitcher Dereck Rodriguez and three veteran hitters carried the Giants. Pablo Sandoval homered in the sixth, and Hunter Pence hit a pinch single in the seventh and scored on Andrew McCutchen’s game-deciding single, his first hit in his last eight at-bats with runners in scoring position.

Panik already missed 31 games with a thumb injury and was hitting .218 since returning from the disabled list June 1. His fourth-inning single snapped a 0-for-16 funk, and he’s hitting .240 on the season.

Slater ran for Panik and was stranded. Sandoval’s seventh homer broke a 1-1 tie, but the Cardinals answered when Paul DeJong singled and scored on Kolten Wong’s triple, ending Rodriguez’s impressive night.

As Rodriguez walked off, he received a standing ovation from Giants fans, including one of the newer ones, Hall of Fame catcher Ivan Rodriguez, who’s Dereck’s dad and was sitting in the front row alongside the home dugout.

Rodriguez showed again why he deserves a rotation spot amid the reinstatements of Johnny Cueto, who pitched Thursday, and Jeff Samardzija, who’ll come off the DL on Saturday. Rodriguez pitched 62/3 innings and surrendered two runs on five hits and two walks, giving him a 1.35 ERA in his past three starts.

“After I throw the first pitch of the game, I feel fine,” said Rodriguez, who spent five years in the Twins’ farm system before debuting with the Giants this year. “I go out there, I have all the confidence in the world with whatever happens.”

Rodriguez mostly was a flyball pitcher in the minors but got 13 outs on grounders, including two double plays.

“I don’t think I ever got more than 10 in my life,” Rodriguez said.

Reyes Moronta struck out Harrison Bader to finish the seventh and keep the score 2-2, and Pence and McCutchen took over in the bottom of the inning to put the Giants ahead.

Tony Watson pitched a perfect eighth, giving him 19 straight scoreless home innings, and another lefty, Will Smith, got the ninth, though the Cardinals had three right-handers coming

up. Yadier Molina flied out, Marcell Ozuna grounded out and Jedd Gyorko struck out. Smith earned his third save.

“The way he’s throwing the ball, he’s going to be the guy we’ll use a lot in the ninth,” Bochy said. “He’s going to need breaks, and we have other good candidates.”

Fine with Smith.

“You want to pitch in meaningful situations,” he said. “It is kind of cool being the ninth-inning guy, especially at home. That was the first time doing it at home. The fans were nuts, which was kind of cool.”

San Jose Mercury News

Giants’ Evan Longoria ramping up rehab, due back early August

John Shea

For the first time since he broke his hand on June 14, Giants third baseman **Evan Longoria** will get a good amount of field time by the end of the weekend.

The plan for Longoria is to field grounders and hit off a tee, big steps in the third baseman’s recovery from June 19 surgery to repair the fifth metacarpal in his left hand. He conducted some light activity Friday.

“We’ll start ramping it up a little bit,” manager **Bruce Bochy** said.

The Giants anticipate Longoria returning to the lineup the first week of August, which would fall in the initial six-to-eight-week prognosis.

Longoria has 10 homers and 34 RBIs in 67 games, credible numbers on a team that didn’t have anyone hit 20 homers in 2016 or 2017.

Giants third basemen have three homers and 16 RBIs in his absence. **Pablo Sandoval**, who has gotten most of the playing time, homered in Friday’s 3-2 win over the Cardinals.

“Really, for a while there, we were doing really well,” said Bochy, noting the Giants’ recent offensive struggles haven’t been exclusive to third base. “I don’t want to wear Pablo down. He’s played a lot of games there. I’m going to have to give him some rest, a bit more than I’ve been doing.”

However, with second baseman **Joe Panik** (groin strain) going on the DL on Saturday, Sandoval might get few breaks. **Alen Hanson**, who has played third and other positions, will be needed at second.

Reliever **Hunter Strickland** (broken right hand) is due back the second week of August, Bochy said.

Futures Game: Outfielder **Heliot Ramos** and pitcher **Shaun Anderson** will represent the Giants in the July 15 Futures Game in Washington, D.C., two days before the All-Star Game.

Ramos, the Giants' top draft pick last year, started his pro career in stellar fashion in rookie ball, but this year is hitting .241 with six homers for Class A Augusta.

Anderson, acquired from Boston in last July's **Eduardo Nuñez** trade, is 5-5 with a 3.56 ERA with Double-A Richmond.

Top three, finally: **Jeff Samardzija** will come off the disabled list and start Saturday, the first time this season the Giants will have their projected top three starters — Samardzija, **Madison Bumgarner** and **Johnny Cueto** — together in the rotation.

The Giants haven't announced which starter will be the odd man out. **Chris Stratton** hasn't pitched as well recently as rookies **Andrew Suarez** and **Dereck Rodriguez**.

San Jose Mercury News

Dereck Rodriguez impresses in Giants' slump-busting 3-2 win over Cardinals

Matt Schneidman

SAN FRANCISCO — Hunter Pence emphatically clenched both fists as he crossed home plate, letting out a guttural scream as the Giants took a 3-2 lead in the bottom of the seventh.

Andrew McCutchen had just scorched a single through the left side past a diving Paul DeJong, easily scoring the pinch-hitter Pence from second with one out.

The offense-starved Giants didn't exactly emerge from their slump just yet, but another efficient outing from Dereck Rodriguez on the hill gave the bats a chance. The home lineup struggled early while the Cardinals only scored one run through six frames, but a Pablo Sandoval sixth-inning solo shot and McCutchen's RBI knock were just enough in a 3-2 win over St. Louis on Friday night.

Rodriguez, with his Hall of Fame father Ivan watching from the first row beside the home dugout, threw 6 2/3 innings of two-run, five-hit ball. The 26-year-old righty has now gone five consecutive starts without a loss – he didn't factor in Friday's decision – and lowered his ERA to 3.09 while seemingly solidifying his spot in the rotation.

"Dereck was outstanding again," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "He's just got a great focus out there. He's got a calmness about him. He can slow things down. Good command of all his pitches. Tough lineup he had to pitch against."

After allowing DeJong to score in the second when Alen Hanson misplayed a fly ball in left field that rolled over the bullpen mound, Rodriguez tossed four scoreless frames and allowed one run in the seventh. Johnny Cueto and Co. couldn't save San Francisco's stagnant bats against scorching hot St. Louis ones in the series-opening 11-2 blowout, but the rookie's impressive night did enough to bide time for the Giants on Friday.

Sandoval's homer narrowly cleared the left-field wall to give the hosts a one-run edge. The lead didn't last long, however, as the Cardinals tied the game in the next frame following a DeJong single to center and Kolten Wong triple to right. Rodriguez, despite exiting with two outs in the seventh to a standing ovation, screamed into his glove in frustration as he trotted off the field. Reyes Moronta struck out Harrison Bader to end the seventh with Wong still on third, though, preventing Rodriguez from being charged with a third run and potentially the loss.

"Yeah I was frustrated about that," Rodriguez said of Wong's game-tying RBI triple, "but I felt good today. Commanded the ball in and out of the zone, threw a lot of strikes, so I felt good."

After McCutchen's go-ahead single and a scoreless eighth from Tony Watson, Will Smith earned the save with a seamless ninth as the Giants broke their four-game slide.

With both Cueto and Jeff Samardzija returning to the rotation this week, only two of Rodriguez, Chris Stratton and Andrew Suarez figured to remain in the rotation. Rodriguez's standing in that group of five already seemed defined, but Friday's outing all but set it in stone.

"I don't think about it," Rodriguez said of his place in the starting rotation. "I just got out there and I pitch every game the same way, do what I know how to do and then whatever their decision is is their decision. At the end of the day I know I did everything I could and I did my job and I felt good about it."

It wasn't all good news for the Giants, with second baseman Joe Panik likely heading to the disabled list after straining his groin running the bases Friday. He left the game in the bottom of the fourth after pulling up approaching third after a Gorkys Hernandez double. He was replaced by Austin Slater on the bases. Hanson moved from left field to second base and Slater played

left.

"He did a pretty good job on it," Bochy said, referring to Panik's injury. " ... It's a DL situation."

Panik will have an MRI Saturday, but Bochy is fully prepared to move Hanson to second for the time being and keep Slater in left with Panik sidelined.

"Joe's just a steady player. He's a good left-handed bat, steady at second, just a solid player," Bochy said. " ... We missed him before. He's been on the DL, and we have to overcome this."

In other DL news, the Giants are aiming for an early August return date for third baseman Evan Longoria, who broke his hand almost a month ago. "He's doing some really light baseball activity," Bochy said before the game. "A little grounders. He put a bat in his hand, but really it'll be the end of this weekend when you'll see him on the field, start ramping it up a little bit ... I think we're looking at the first week of August, in that area." Longoria owns a .246 batting average with 10 home runs and 34 RBIs this season.

MLB.com

Rookie helps Giants get back on track

Martin Oppegard

SAN FRANCISCO -- Mired in a four-game losing skid, the Giants turned to **Dereck Rodriguez** on Friday to effectively be the stopper and even the series against St. Louis. Like he's done all season, the rookie delivered.

The right-hander continued his masterful freshman campaign, scattering five hits and two runs across 6 2/3 frames in a 3-2 victory over the Cardinals at AT&T Park. It was his third consecutive quality start, and more importantly, the Giants have won his last five outings.

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"I felt good today, commanded the ball in and out of the zone, threw a lot of strikes," Rodriguez said. "I think I was just getting ahead of guys because I didn't punch a lot of guys out. Getting ahead of guys and getting them to roll over on a lot of pitches."

Manager Bruce Bochy agreed with his starter.

"He did a terrific job and you just like his command, doesn't beat himself," Bochy said. "He's just been pitching outstanding."

Of the 20 outs that Rodriguez recorded, 13 of them came on ground balls. Despite being a

rookie, he's gone beyond the sixth inning in three straight starts. He's also lowered his ERA to 3.09, the lowest among National League rookie starting pitchers (minimum 40 innings pitched).

"He's got the strength and stamina to be one of those guys that, when he goes out there, you feel comfortable that he's going to find a way to get you deep in the ballgame," Bochy said.

Rodriguez, who departed with a runner on third in the seventh inning, was picked up by his bullpen. **Reyes Moronta** (5-1) struck out **Harrison Bader** to end the threat, **Tony Watson** pitched a 1-2-3 eighth inning and newly appointed closer **Will Smith** threw a flawless ninth to record his third consecutive save.

After managing just five hits the past two games and flirting with the wrong side of a perfect game Thursday evening, the Giants offense found life as the game wore on.

Pablo Sandoval squared up a two-seam fastball and sent it over the left-field wall to put the Giants up, 2-1, in the sixth inning. After the Cardinals tied it in the seventh, **Andrew McCutchen** responded in the bottom of the frame by ripping an RBI single to left.

"Our game is playing well in close games," Bochy said. "That's where experience comes in."

Fittingly, it's been one of the least experienced Giants who has anchored the staff in the absence of **Madison Bumgarner** and **Johnny Cueto**. Only 25, Rodriguez seems to be an indelible part of the Giants' rotation.

"I go out there, I got all the confidence in the world," the rookie said. "Whatever happens, I get a ground-ball double play or I give up a home run, I'm just going to go after the next hitter."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Pinch-hitting to lead off the seventh inning, **Hunter Pence** saw three straight sliders and fell behind in the count, 1-2. The fourth slider Pence squared up, lacing a line-drive single to center field. He advanced to second on **Alen Hanson's** sacrifice bunt and scored the go-ahead run on McCutchen's single.

"Pence got us started there and we executed, got the bunt down and Cutch came through," Bochy said.

SOUND SMART

In their four-game losing skid, the Giants had walked against opposing starting pitchers just three times. Additionally, opposing starters had pitched seven innings or more in each of those four games. On Friday, the Giants walked three times against Cardinals starter **John Gant**, two

of which came in the second inning and helped them score in that frame without notching a hit.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Three-time Gold Glover **Brandon Crawford** niftily backhanded **Paul DeJong**'s grounder in the second inning and threw out **Jedd Gyorko** at home to preserve a scoreless tie. It was Crawford's second assist to home plate this season.

HE SAID IT

Rodriguez was surprised when he was told he got 13 ground-ball outs on Friday. "How much, 13? I don't think I've ever gotten more than 10 in my life." When asked if he was a fly-ball pitcher in the Minors, he laughed. "Yeah. By a long shot."

UP NEXT

In his first start back from his second DL stint of the season, **Jeff Samardzija** (1-4, 6.56 ERA) will face the Cardinals for the 24th time in his career (13th start) at 1:05 p.m. PT on Saturday. The Giants are hoping to turn the right-hander loose, given that he's five days removed from his fourth rehab start. For Samardzija, it's all about finding the strike zone. He's walked at least three batters in six of eight outings this season. He'll be opposed by **Carlos Martinez** (5-4, 3.20).

MLB.com

Panik headed to DL with left groin strain

Chris Haft

SAN FRANCISCO -- The Giants found themselves in a familiar position Friday night: Expecting another trip to the disabled list for **Joe Panik**.

The Giants second baseman injured his left groin while running the bases in the fourth inning of San Francisco's **3-2 victory** over the St. Louis Cardinals. Giants manager Bruce Bochy left little doubt that Panik will be sidelined, though the extent of the injury won't be determined until the 27-year-old undergoes an MRI on Saturday.

View Full Game Coverage

"It's a DL situation," Bochy said.

Panik prolonged the fourth inning with a two-out single off Cardinals right-hander **John Gant** that ended a personal 0-for-16 skid. Panik appeared certain to score on **Gorkys Hernandez**'s subsequent double to the left-field corner, but pulled up at third base in obvious discomfort.

Panik's injury history thus continued to lengthen. He missed 31 games earlier this year after undergoing surgery to repair a left thumb ligament. He endured back inflammation in 2015 after making the National League All-Star team. Concussions sidelined him in 2016 and 2017, even while he ranked as the NL's toughest hitter to strike out.

Each of San Francisco's starting infielders, except for shortstop **Brandon Crawford**, has been on the DL this season.

"We've had to deal with enough of these this year," Bochy said.

Alen Hanson almost certainly will be the primary replacement for Panik, who has compiled a .240/.309/.345 slash line with four home runs and 14 RBIs in 54 games. Hanson possesses a slash line of .273/.305/.530 with six home runs and 24 RBIs in 46 games.

"He'll probably be more comfortable at one position. We've moved him around a lot," Bochy said of Hanson. "That's probably affected him a little bit.

"But we'll miss Joe."

MLB.com

Giants optimistic Cueto will rebound

Martin Oppegard

SAN FRANCISCO -- **Johnny Cueto** had allowed just three earned runs in his first 32 innings this season. In his first start off the disabled list Thursday, he allowed four earned runs in a 28-pitch first inning.

Cueto may have not looked like the ace who dazzled across five starts earlier this season, in which he posted a 0.84 ERA. But one laborious outing doesn't undermine Cueto's importance the rest of the season.

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"I said last night, in the first inning he was trying to find his way there," manager Bruce Bochy said before Friday's game against the Cardinals. "That's what he'll have to change a little bit in his next start because as you know, the first inning counts and he gave up a crooked number there. But after that, I thought his stuff got better, and that was really encouraging."

Cueto scattered 10 hits across five innings and allowed five runs. He walked two and struck out

two.

"I'm happy with what I did today and I have to continue working my way back to where I was," Cueto said Thursday. "It's not easy. But I just have to keep my head up and continue working."

The Giants are hoping Cueto can ease his way back into the rotation much like counterpart **Madison Bumgarner**, who didn't quite look like his dominant self in his first three starts off the DL. Then, Bumgarner snapped off a career-best 22-inning scoreless streak.

Speaking of Cueto, "he's a guy that helps head up this rotation along with Bum," Bochy said. "We were playing so well when he was on the mound, so it's great to have him back here. He's going to bring a lot of life to this club to just have him out there every fifth day."

Longoria beginning to work his way back

Evan Longoria is starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The third baseman, who has been sidelined since June 14 with a fractured left pinkie, began participating in light baseball activity before Friday evening's game.

"A little grounders, he put a bat in his hand," Bochy said. "Really, it'll be the end of this weekend when you see him on the field and when we start ramping it up a little bit."

The Giants are looking at a return around the first week of August, according to Bochy.

Finding a spot for Slater

Bochy is determined to find a way to insert **Austin Slater's** bat in the lineup, which may give the rookie an opportunity to showcase his versatility.

Traditionally an outfielder in the Giants organization, Slater played some infield at Stanford and has gotten pregame work at second base.

"He could play three infield positions," Bochy said. "He's played first, he's got some work at second. He probably would tell you he's more comfortable at third."

MLB.com

Ramos, Anderson to play in Futures Game

Jim Callis

What the All-Star Game is to Major League standouts, the SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game is to Minor League phenoms. Thirty of **MLB Pipeline's Top 100 Prospects** will appear in the 20th annual showcase of the game's best young talent on July 15 at Nationals Park.

The U.S. team, which will be managed by five-time All-Star and nine-time Gold Glover Torii Hunter, features 19 Top 100 Prospects. Shortstops Brendan Rodgers (Rockies, No. 6 on the Top 100) and Bo Bichette (Blue Jays, No. 7) are the highest-ranked prospects on the U.S. roster and part of a star-laden infield. That group also includes second baseman Keston Hiura (Brewers, No. 30), shortstop Carter Kieboom (Nationals, No. 62), first baseman Peter Alonso (Mets, No. 69) and third basemen Ryan Mountcastle (Orioles, No. 80) and Ke'Bryan Hayes (Pirates, No. 92).

- **Futures Game rosters**

It's conceivable that the United States could field an entire starting lineup of Top 100 Prospects in the game, which will be broadcast live at 4 p.m. ET on MLB Network and simulcast on MLB.com. The outfield is loaded with Taylor Trammell (Reds, No. 34), Jo Adell (Angels, No. 36), Kyle Lewis (Mariners, No. 58) and Alex Kirilloff (Twins, No. 67). Sean Murphy (Athletics, No. 66) could start behind the plate.

MLB.com will live stream and MLB Network will exclusively televise the SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game at 4 p.m. ET, with Greg Amsinger, Harold Reynolds, Lauren Shehadi and Jim Callis calling the contest live from Nationals Park. The game will also be available to SiriusXM subscribers.

Baseball's top-rated pitching prospect, right-hander Forrest Whitley (Astros, No. 9), headlines a U.S. pitching staff that includes six other arms ranked in the upper half of the Top 100: righties Mitch Keller (Pirates, No. 12), Hunter Greene (Reds, No. 18), Kyle Wright (Braves, No. 25), **Dylan Cease** (White Sox, No. 40) and Matt Manning (Tigers, No. 47), plus left-hander **Justus Sheffield** (Yankees, No. 39). Greene (second overall), Wright (fifth), Hiura (ninth) and Adell (10th) all were top-10 selections in the 2017 Draft.

- **2018 All-Star Game**

While the World squad can't match the United States' sheer total of Top 100 Prospects, it does feature the highest-ranked prospect in the Futures Game and the two best catching prospects in baseball. Manager David Ortiz, a 10-time All-Star and the 2013 World Series MVP, will have

shortstop **Fernando Tatis Jr.** (Padres, No. 3) and backstops **Francisco Mejia** (Indians, No. 15) and Keibert Ruiz (Dodgers, No. 44) at his disposal.

San Diego's double-play combination of the future could be on display if Tatis teams with second baseman Luis Urias (No. 29). The World infield also includes first baseman/outfielder **Yordan Alvarez** (Astros, No. 51) and shortstop Andres Gimenez (Mets, No. 68).

The World matches its infield total with four Top 100 outfielders: Leody Taveras (Rangers, No. 28), **Jesus Sanchez** (Rays, No. 35), Heliot Ramos (Giants, No. 70) and Yusniel Diaz (Dodgers, No. 85). While he's not yet ranked on the Top 100 list, outfielder Seuly Matias (Royals) leads the Minors with 24 home runs.

Left-hander **Jesus Luzardo** (Athletics, No. 20) is the lone Top 100 Prospect on the World pitching staff. That doesn't mean the international team will have a shortage of mound talent, however.

Right-hander **Jorge Guzman** (Marlins) is one of the hardest-throwing starters in the Minors, capable of reaching 103 mph. Righty Enyel de los Santos (Phillies) works in the mid-90s and leads the Triple-A International League with a 1.81 ERA. Righty reliever Yoan Lopez (Diamondbacks) has similar heat and has averaged 14.9 strikeouts per nine innings the last two years.

The United States owns an all-time 12-7 edge over the World and won the 2017 Futures Game 7-6 in Miami. Rays right-hander **Brent Honeywell** earned MVP honors by striking out four in two scoreless innings, though he's now sidelined after blowing out his elbow in February and having Tommy John surgery. Fourteen of the 50 Futures Gamers from last year currently are playing in the big leagues, including Ronald Acuna, **Brian Anderson**, **Rafael Devers**, **Jack Flaherty** and **Yoan Moncada**.

Here are the Futures Game representatives for each club (Pipeline rank for their club in parentheses):

ARI: Yoan Lopez, RHP (No. 25)

ATL: Kyle Wright, RHP (No. 2)

BAL: Ryan Mountcastle, 3B (No. 2), Alex Wells, LHP (No. 8)

BOS: Bryan Mata, RHP (No. 4)

CHC: Miguel Amaya, C/3B (No. 10)

CIN: Hunter Greene, RHP (No. 2), Taylor Trammell, OF (No. 3)

CLE: Francisco Mejia, C/OF (No. 1), Kieran Lovegrove, RHP
COL: Brendan Rodgers, SS/2B (No. 1), **Jesus Tinoco**, RHP (No. 12)
CWS: Dylan Cease, RHP (No. 4), **Luis Alexander Basabe**, OF (No. 13)
DET: Matt Manning, RHP (No. 2), **Dawel Lugo**, 2B (No. 12)
HOU: Forrest Whitley, RHP (No. 2), Yordan Alvarez, OF/1B (No. 3)
KC: Seuly Matias, OF (No. 3)
LAA: Jo Adell, OF (No. 1)
LAD: Keibert Ruiz, C (No. 2), Yusniel Diaz, OF (No. 2)
MIA: Jorge Guzman, RHP (No. 3)
MIL: Keston Hiura, 2B (No. 1)
MIN: Alex Kirilloff, OF (No. 3), **Lewis Thorpe**, RHP (No. 11)
NYM: Andres Gimenez, SS (No. 1), Peter Alonso, 1B (No. 2)
NYY: Justus Sheffield, LHP (No. 2)
OAK: Jesus Luzardo, LHP (No. 1), Sean Murphy, C (No. 3)
PHI: **Enyel De Los Santos**, RHP (No. 11)
PIT: Mitch Keller, RHP (No. 1), Ke'Bryan Hayes, 3B (No. 3)
SD: Fernando Tatis Jr., SS (No. 1), Luis Urias, SS/2B (No. 3) Buddy Reed, OF
SEA: Kyle Lewis, OF (No. 1)
SF: Heliot Ramos, OF (No. 1) **Shaun Anderson**, RHP (No. 7)
STL: Dakota Hudson, RHP (No. 3), Randy Arozarena, OF (No. 7)
TB: Jesus Sanchez, OF (No. 4), Nate Lowe, 1B
TEX: Leody Taveras, OF (No. 1) C.D. Pelham, LHP
TOR: Bo Bichette, SS/2B (No. 2) **Danny Jansen**, C (No. 6)
WSH: Carter Kieboom, SS (No. 3), **Luis Garcia**, SS/2B (No. 5)

Complete rosters

The Athletic

Dereck Rodríguez has earned a spot in the Giants rotation

Shayna Rubin

Dereck Rodríguez gripped a spare baseball as he fielded questions from reporters.

There's no reason why anyone should be taking the ball out of his hands at this point, anyway. The rookie is rolling with the type of confidence his last name carries.

Manager Bruce Bochy had already taken one ball from him a few hours prior, right after Kolten Wong's game-tying triple ricocheted awkwardly enough to baffle right fielder Andrew McCutchen. Reyes Moronta's strikeout of Harrison Bader that followed sealed Rodríguez's 6 2/3 inning, two-run outing.

Those two earned runs didn't feel quite earned, but were enough to provoke heart palpitations in the Giants' eventual 3-2 win over the St. Louis Cardinals on Friday night. McCutchen's right field adventure in the sixth paired with Alen Hanson's misplay of Wong's first RBI, a blooper the left fielder booted in the second inning.

Unfortunate bounces aside, in his last three starts, Rodríguez has gone at least six innings, accumulating a 1.35 ERA. The Giants have won six of his seven total starts, that one loss coming after Rodríguez's 2 2/3 inning mishap against the Nationals a month ago.

In the Pacific Coast League, Rodríguez was a strikeout machine, fanning 53 in 50 1/3 innings in the hitter-friendly league. He's demonstrated strikeout stuff in the bigs, but on Friday forced the Cardinals to hit 13 ground ball outs, upping his solid 41 percent ground ball rate heading into the matchup.

His results with the Giants are a far cry from the kind of numbers he rang up in his minor league pitching career.

"I don't think I ever got more than 10 (ground balls) in my life," he said.

The guy with the second-highest ground ball rate in the bigs for June? Fellow rookie Andrew Suárez (58 percent).

Of course, ground ball rate isn't the only indicator of a pitcher's dominance — although, an infield with Brandon Crawford makes up one heck of a shutdown defense. The pair's recent dominance made this clear: both Suárez and Rodríguez have earned spots as potential workhorses in the Giants' rotation.

"We're keeping an eye on his workload, but he's a strong kid and maintains his stuff late in games," Bochy said of Rodríguez. "He can maintain his stuff, and he's got the stamina to be one of those guys."

The success Rodríguez is riding is no fluke. The rookie who worked his way from a non-roster invitee all the way to the bigs seems to be built for this. Although he insists he doesn't think too much about his role in the rotation, Rodríguez knows he belongs in the big leagues.

"I go out there and I've got all the confidence in the world," Rodríguez said. "At the end of the day, I know I did everything I could."

Jeff Samardzija will be activated Saturday morning, making his first start back since he left a May 29 outing early with a shoulder injury. With that move, one of the Chis Stratton/Rodríguez/Suárez trio will be demoted from the rotation.

A few weeks ago, given the team's typical reliance on pitchers with more experience, Stratton would have been easy to pencil back into the rotation upon Samardzija's return. But two relatively disastrous starts — eight earned runs against the Rockies in his last start and five the start before — have Stratton essentially edged out of the rotation mix.

It's looking more likely that a pair of 26- and 25-year-old rookies will hem the line of veteran starters in a rotation that is just now coalescing. But Bochy wasn't ready to make any official announcements.

Bochy did make one injury-related announcement after the game. Joe Panik pulled up lame rounding second base in the fourth inning and Bochy said that his second baseman was almost certainly DL-bound with a strained groin.

The injury marks Panik's second DL stint this season — He's struggled at the plate of late, his single in the fourth snapping a 16 at-bat-hitless streak — but his imminent designation also clears a path for Samardzija to return from the 10-day DL without Stratton, Suárez or Rodríguez getting optioned for now.

So Bochy won't be taking the ball from Rodríguez any time soon. For now, that fact might not just be borne out of circumstance.

"He's just been pitching outstanding," Bochy said.

Panik's injury sets in motion a slew of other defensive adjustments. This year, the Giants have the depth to cover injuries to their position players.

Hanson, who's looked a tad shaky in left field, will move to a more comfortable position at second base and Austin Slater will get more reps in left.

Terrible circumstances, yes, but it's about time Slater get the Mac Williamson treatment as a possible everyday outfielder.

Slater has been used in the lineup primarily to fill the right-handed bat gap against lefties — which came in handy against a southpaw-heavy Colorado rotation. But Slater's splits against righties warrant more playing time. With Sacramento, Slater was batting .351 with a 1.015 OPS against right-handers.

Back up in the bigs, his efficient approach at the plate is a sign that he could be right back where he left off following an untimely hip injury last season.

He'll just need playing time to prove it.

The closer job in San Francisco is essentially unclaimed.

Will Smith came into the ninth inning on Friday with a one-run lead and owned the moment, earning his third save of the year. (Smith had only recorded one save in his six-year career.)

Here's the final two pitches of the strikeout to Jedd Gyorko to end the game.

If Smith can work back-to-back days on a consistent basis, it's clear that his fastball/slider combo is the deadly closer's concoction this team lacks, and needs.

The Athletic

Four A's and Giants prospects selected to the MLB All-Star Futures Game- when might they be big leaguers?

Melissa Lockard

The MLB All-Star Futures Game rosters were announced on Friday. The annual MLB prospect showcase game will take place on July 15 at Nationals Park as part of MLB's All-Star Game festivities. The A's and Giants are each sending two prospects to the Futures Game. Who are these prospects and when will we be seeing them at the Coliseum and AT&T Park?

A's

The A's are sending Double-A Midland RockHounds teammates Jesus Luzardo and Sean Murphy to the Futures Game. Both are top-10 prospects in the A's system.

Jesus Luzardo

Pos: LHP | **Age:** 20 | **Ht./Wt.:** 6-1/205

How acquired: Traded from the Washington Nationals along with RHP Blake Treinen and IF Sheldon Neuse on July 16, 2017, in exchange for LHP Sean Doolittle and RHP Ryan Madson

Background: For most players, suffering a torn elbow ligament months before the MLB Draft would be a career-altering moment. For Luzardo, it's turning into a mere footnote. The Stoneman Douglas HS (Parkland, Florida) star was expected to be a first-round pick in the 2016 draft, but an elbow injury led to Tommy John surgery during his senior year of high school. The Nationals took a chance on him in the third round and he's looked every bit the part of a first-rounder since.

After a year of rehab, Luzardo made his professional debut June 28, 2017, and he's been on a fast track ever since. He made three impressive appearances with the Nationals' Rookie League club before the A's targeted him in the trade that sent Sean Doolittle and Ryan Madson to D.C. Luzardo was expected to spend the rest of the 2017 season in the Rookie-level Arizona League, but he pitched so well and showed so much maturity that the A's sent him to short-season Vermont to finish the year. He helped the Lake Monsters reach the New York-Penn League championship series and finished the year with a 1.66 ERA and a 48:5 K:BB in 43 1/3 innings.

This season, the A's challenged Luzardo again, starting him in the hitter-friendly California League, where he was one of the youngest pitchers in the league. He made three dominating starts for the High-A Stockton Ports before earning a promotion to Midland. Currently the youngest pitcher in the Texas League, Luzardo has a 2.81 ERA and a 64:14 K:BB in 57 2/3

Double-A innings.

Scouting report: Luzardo has three plus to potentially plus offerings. His fastball is above-average, sitting in the 92-95 mph range, touching 98 on occasion. He spots the pitch well to both sides of the plate and isn't afraid to challenge hitters with it in hitter's counts. Luzardo uses the fastball to set up his changeup and curveball. The changeup is currently his best secondary offering, although the curveball flashes plus potential and should be a weapon for him in the upper levels. He commands all three pitches well and has shown no fear when facing hitters with several years of age and experience on him.

Major league ETA: Luzardo's time in the big leagues could come as soon as this September, if the A's are in the playoff mix and believe his arm could help them out of the bullpen. They are more likely to wait until next season to bring him up, however, as he is on an innings limit this season after throwing roughly 75 innings between extended spring training, the regular season and the postseason last year. Luzardo should be on a more generous innings cap in 2019 and could be in the A's Opening Day rotation. If he isn't, look for Luzardo to join the A's by midseason 2019.

Sean Murphy

Pos: C | **Age:** 23 | **Ht./Wt.:** 6-3/215

How acquired: The A's selected Murphy out of Wright State in the third round of the 2016 MLB Draft.

Background: Like Luzardo, Murphy had some first-round buzz heading into the 2016 draft, only to be derailed by injury. Murphy broke his hamate bone on a hit by pitch early in his junior season. He missed only 22 games with the injury but wasn't at full strength at the plate upon his return, showing little of the power he had displayed before the break. That dropped his draft stock, and the A's grabbed him in the third round.

Injuries continued to derail Murphy in his pro debut season, when he missed significant time with a staph infection while with Vermont. His 2017 season was also marked by injury early, as a wrist injury cost him a month early in the year with Stockton. Murphy was good when healthy with the Ports, however, posting an .870 OPS in 45 games and showing impressive skills behind the plate. The A's promoted Murphy to Midland midseason, where he continued to play well defensively, but his offensive numbers suffered. Murphy made a late-season adjustment at the plate and that carried over into spring training, when he hit .385 in big league camp.

Murphy returned to Midland to start the 2018 season, and he's been one of the best all-around players in the Texas League this season. Through Thursday, he was batting .289/.356/.504, all while playing every day behind the plate in the grueling Texas heat.

Scouting report: Although Murphy offers promise with his bat, it is his glove that separates him as a prospect. Murphy's father was a prospect in the Cleveland organization, reaching Triple-A as a pitcher, and Murphy developed a unique understanding of how to call games from learning from his father. A late-bloomer from a growth perspective (he grew nearly half a foot between his senior year of high school and his junior year of college), Murphy has a smaller man's footwork and agility in a Jason Varitek-sized frame. Murphy's arm rates a 70 on the 20-80 scouting scale both for his arm strength and accuracy.

Offensively, Murphy has above-average contact skills. He doesn't walk a lot, but he doesn't strike out much either, especially for a hitter his size. Murphy's power hasn't fully emerged in-game yet, but he still hit 13 home runs last year and has eight already this season. He won the Texas League's All-Star Home Run Derby last week and could be capable of 20-plus home run totals in the big leagues. Even if he hits .270 with 10-15 home runs in the big leagues, he will be very valuable given his defensive skills.

Major league ETA: The A's have three catchers on their 40-man roster and another veteran (Beau Taylor) ahead of Murphy on their current organizational depth chart, but it is likely that he will jump to Triple-A at some point during the second half of the season. Depending on what the A's do with impending free agent Jonathan Lucroy this offseason, Murphy could be in the discussion to be on the A's Opening Day roster as soon as next spring. Even if he isn't on the roster on Opening Day, Murphy is likely to spend the majority of the 2019 season in the big leagues.

Giants

Two of the Giants' top prospects are headed to the Futures Game, but they are on different sides of the spectrum in terms of their readiness for the big leagues.

Shaun Anderson

Pos: RHP | **Age:** 23 | **Ht./Wt.:** 6-4/225

How acquired: Anderson was traded to the Giants along with RHP Gregory Santos from the Boston Red Sox in exchange for IF Eduardo Núñez on July 26, 2017.

Background: Anderson, like Luzardo and Murphy, was a member of the 2016 draft class. The right-hander was a closer at the University of Florida, and a dominating one at that. Most teams liked Anderson as a starter in the pros, however, and the Red Sox transitioned Anderson to the rotation for the 2017 season. Anderson had to remake his arsenal as a starter. He relied heavily on his slider as a closer, but he learned to pitch more off of his fastball as a starter while also

using his other secondary pitches more often.

Anderson was very solid in his first year as a starter, posting a 3.44 ERA in 123 innings split between Low-A and High-A. During his late-season stint with the High-A San Jose Giants, Anderson had a 3.51 ERA and a 22:4 K:BB in 25 2/3 innings.

In his first spring training with the Giants, Anderson had an impressive minor league camp and he was chosen to start for the big league club in the Giants/River Cats scrimmage at the end of spring training. Anderson was then assigned to Double-A Richmond, where he has pitched all season. Recently named to the Eastern League All-Star team, Anderson has a 3.56 ERA and a 91:21 K:BB in 91 innings so far this year.

Scouting report: Anderson isn't overpowering, but he sits 91-94 mph with his fastball and can touch 96 when he needs something extra. Anderson keeps hitters off-balance with a deep arsenal of pitches that includes a two-seam and four-seam fastball, slider, curveball, changeup and cut-fastball. Anderson hides the ball well and fills up the strike zone.

Despite not having a starter's background in college, Anderson has shown workhorse abilities, racking up significant innings since turning pro. He has a sturdy starter's frame and projects to be a 200-innings pitcher as a big leaguer.

Major league ETA: With Andrew Suárez in the big leagues and Tyler Beede struggling, a strong argument can be made that Anderson is the Giants' top pitching prospect. He should get some innings in Triple-A during the second half of this season and is a strong candidate to receive a non-roster invite to big league camp to compete for a spot in the Giants' rotation next spring. It wouldn't be surprising to see Anderson log at least a half season with the Giants next year.

Heliot Ramos

Pos: OF | **Age:** 18 | **Ht./Wt.:** 6-2/185

How acquired: The Giants selected Ramos out of Leadership Christian HS in Puerto Rico in the first round of the 2017 MLB Draft.

Background: The Giants surprised many pundits last June when they selected Ramos in the first round after a run of several years of targeting college players with their first pick. The Giants had gotten plenty of eyes on Ramos in Puerto Rico and were confident that he was a special player.

He electrified the Arizona Rookie League in his pro debut season, posting a .348/.404/.645 line in 35 games. At 17, Ramos was one of the youngest players in all of professional baseball last season.

Ramos showed significant maturity along with his skill in his pro debut season, so the Giants

weren't shy about challenging him with an aggressive assignment to the Low-A South Atlantic League to start the year. Ramos has been the youngest player in the league all season at 18 years old. He's had his ups and downs and is currently batting .234/.313/.372, which isn't a bad slash line at all when one considers that most players his age would be high school seniors and he is matching up against players four to five years his senior every night.

Scouting Report: Ramos is a true five-tool prospect. He has power that should continue to develop as he matures physically and he is an above-average runner. Ramos has powerful, quick wrists that allow him to whip the bat quickly through the hitting zone. While there is swing-and-miss to his game, he sees a lot of pitches and has a solid foundation for an approach at the plate. Ramos should hit for average at the upper levels and projects to be a middle of the order threat.

Defensively, Ramos has the arm strength and speed to play any of the three outfield spots. His reads will improve with experience, but his skill set suggests he should be an asset in the spacious AT&T Park outfield. He is an intelligent player who has proven to be very coachable in his brief pro career.

Major league ETA: For all of Ramos' talent, he is still just 18. The Giants will maintain a balance between challenging him with aggressive assignments and being careful not to rush him prematurely. He's likely to spend all of next season with High-A San Jose and projects to reach the big leagues in late 2020 or early 2021.

NBCsportsbayarea.com

Rookie Dereck Rodriguez proving to be a workhorse for Giants rotation

Alex Pavlovic

SAN FRANCISCO — When setting a rotation for the second half the of the season, a manager will often slide a rookie between a couple of veteran starters, knowing that the experienced pitchers can help make up for any innings the bullpen might have to soak up in the rookie's starts.

The Giants brought Johnny Cueto and Jeff Samardzija back this week and they slid Dereck Rodriguez, a 26-year-old, between the two reliable innings-eaters. But Rodriguez is flipping the script.

Cueto's return on Thursday night was shaky, and the Giants, for all their optimism, don't quite know which version of Samardzija will show up at AT&T Park on Saturday afternoon. But when this slice of the rotation comes back around next week, they can be pretty comfortable with the young right-hander pitching between two of the highest-paid pitchers in the game.

Rodriguez was dominant into the seventh Friday night, shutting down a Cardinals lineup that whacked Cueto a night earlier. He did not get the decision in a 3-2 win over St. Louis, but he tightened his grip on his rotation spot, lowering his ERA to 3.09 with 6 2/3 strong innings.

The Giants will keep a close watch on Rodriguez as the summer wears on. He is, after all, a converted outfielder who has never thrown more than 143 innings in a season. But he also has the look of a workhorse.

“We’re going to keep an eye on him with his workload,” manager Bruce Bochy said. “But he’s a strong kid and he maintains his stuff late in the ballgame. He can maintain his stuff and command, and he’s got strength and stamina to be one of those guys. When he goes out there you have confidence he’s going to get you late in the game.”

Rodriguez threw 99 pitches and seven innings two starts ago. His last time out, it was 6 1/3 innings on 102 pitches. On Friday night, he went 6 2/3 on 90 pitches before Bochy pulled the plug. He was able to get deep because of a change in gameplan, but not a conscious one.

Rodriguez said he has long been a fly-ball pitcher — “oh yeah, by a long shot,” he said, smiling — but he got 13 outs on the ground Friday, repeatedly feeding an infield that took a blow in the fourth inning. Joe Panik was pulled with a left groin strain and will go on the disabled list Saturday, with Alen Hanson taking over at second and Austin Slater getting most the time in left. Hanson better be warmed up the next time Rodriguez pitches, because he kept the guys behind him busy Friday. Rodriguez was talking about that defense when he paused and looked back at a reporter.

“How many — 13?” he said of the groundball outs. “I don’t think I’ve ever gotten more than 10 in my life.”

The Cardinals kept pounding it into the dirt, but they did get to Rodriguez twice. Hanson overran a two-out pop-up to left in the second inning and Rodriguez was saddled with a tough-luck run. He cruised from there, but Bochy saw signs of fatigue in the seventh and had Reyes Moronta warming. Paul DeJong singled with two outs and Kolten Wong pulled a double off the bricks, with DeJong scoring easily when the ball took an odd bounce. That was it for Rodriguez, who yelled into his glove as he walked off the mound. The crowd didn’t seem to notice. Rodriguez got a raucous ovation.

“Yeah, I thought it was a good pitch (to Wong) and he put a good swing on it,” Rodriguez said. “Unfortunately the ball took a bad hop when it hit the wall.”

It might have cost Rodriguez a win, but it didn’t cost the Giants. Andrew McCutchen drove Hunter Pence in a few minutes later and Tony Watson and Will Smith closed it out. The Giants snapped a four-game losing skid.

“Right now we’re not clicking offensively,” Bochy said. “We’re going to have to throw the ball well and find a way to score runs.”

NBCsportsbayarea.com

Giants edge Cardinals to snap four-game losing streak

Alex Pavlovic

SAN FRANCISCO — For the fifth time this week, the Giants failed to do much offensively. With Dereck Rodriguez on the mound, it didn't matter.

Rodriguez kept the Cardinals down into the seventh, and while he didn't figure into the decision, he gave the lineup a chance to break through late. Andrew McCutchen's hard single to left brought Hunter Pence racing home in the seventh for the go-ahead run and the Giants walked away with a 3-2 win.

On a night when the Giants snapped an ugly four-game losing streak, here's what you need to know...

--- Joe Panik eased into third base on Gorkys Hernandez's double in the bottom of the fourth and was immediately taken out of the game by the training staff. He has a left groin strain. With just eight games until the All-Star break, this would be an easy time to place him on the DL to heal.

--- Rodriguez appears to be the real deal. He gave up just two earned in 6 2/3 innings, lowering his ERA to 3.09. The rookie got 13 outs on the ground.

--- Given the way he's swinging the bat, Alen Hanson is certainly worthy of a lineup spot every time the Giants face a righty. But it's probably time to end the outfield experiment. Hanson looked shaky all night in the series opener and he overran a bloop in the second inning Friday, allowing a two-out run to score all the way from first. It's baffling that the Giants won't just run Austin Slater out there everyday and let Hanson get starts at second and third. They might be forced to now, because of the Panik injury.

--- Pablo Sandoval gave the Giants the lead in the sixth with a solo shot to left. The homer was Sandoval's seventh of the season. The Giants got just nine homers from their third basemen last season, but already have gotten 17 from Sandoval and Evan Longoria.

--- It was 108 degrees for the first pitch of the Dodgers-Angels game in Anaheim. It was 73 degrees for first pitch at AT&T Park. NorCal is better.

NBCsportsbayarea.com

**The advice Hall of Fame father gives Dereck Rodriguez before every start
Dalton Johnson**

Go to any local little league or high school baseball game and you're bound to hear the too-loud-dad who thinks he should be the coach. For Dereck Rodriguez though, it's all ears when dad has something to say about the game.

Before every one of his starts for the Giants, Dereck and his Hall of Fame catcher father, Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez, go over a game plan.

"I talk to him every time before he pitches," Ivan Rodriguez **said Friday morning on KNBR**, hours prior to Dereck toeing the rubber against the Cardinals. "We talk for five or ten minutes."

Over his 21-year career, Ivan Rodriguez caught 2,427 games, good for 20,348 innings. Winning 13 Gold Gloves, he knows everything you can as a catcher and his formula for his son to have success on the mound is far from complicated.

"I tell him to be simple," Ivan says. "Don't try to do too much. I tell him a best friend for a starting pitcher is throwing strike one. Just get ahead in the count and don't be too complicated."

As a rookie, Dereck would already be Ivan's ideal pitcher with the way he pounds the zone. In seven appearances for the Giants this season, he has issued just nine walks in 37 innings, averaging 2.2 per nine innings.

"That's one of the best things that Dereck do. He averages fifty five to sixty five strikes per start. When you do that, you're gonna get a lot of guys out," Ivan said.

While Dereck is still learning the ins and outs as a 26-year-old who was originally an outfielder, he seems to have taken to his father's advice. Heading into his start Friday night at AT&T Park, Dereck is 3-1 with a 3.16 ERA.

ESPN.com

Futures Game always a highlight of All-Star festivities

Keith Law

The MLB Futures Game is by far my favorite part of the All-Star festivities. This year will be the 13th I've attended in person, but I can't tell you the last time I watched anything else during the annual break. This year's game is good, worth watching as always, with quite a few players I've wanted to see, but the rosters have been severely constrained by promotions of top prospects and a litany of injuries to others who would almost certainly be in the game.

Vlad Guerrero Jr. isn't here, as he's still on the disabled list in Double-A. Victor Robles also is hurt, and Nick Senzel is out for the year, so that's three of my preseason top 10 prospects unavailable due to injury, with three more -- Ronald Acuna, Gleyber Torres and J.P. Crawford -- already in the majors. Other significant prospects who are hurt and thus weren't selected include Brendan McKay, Sixto Sanchez, Luis Robert, Dane Dunning and Estevan Florial. The best prospects in the Futures Game are **Fernando Tatis Jr.** (No. 3 preseason), **Francisco Mejia** (No. 7) and **Forrest Whitley** (No. 8), along with 2015 third overall pick **Brendan Rodgers**. Tatis (Padres) was a surprising omission from last year's game, but he has more than earned his spot this year as the youngest player in the Texas League, bouncing back from a dismal April to hit .329/.409/.595 from May 1 onward, with 14 steals in 17 attempts. It's hard to top what Guerrero has done in Double-A, but Tatis isn't far behind at the plate and has far more value on defense as a shortstop who has a very good chance to stay somewhere on the dirt.

Mejia's season started even worse than Tatis', as he was under .200 through the end of May, but he's been back to his normal self and then some since then; after a three-game hitless stretch in late May, he's hitting .409/.445/.638, with a double every 19 plate appearances. A catcher by trade with a strong arm but fringy or below-average receiving skills, he's played some left and right field for the Indians' Triple-A team and could end up catching and playing the outfield in the Futures Game.

Whitley (Astros) just returned from a suspension for a positive drug test, reportedly an amphetamine, but has resumed dominating Double-A at age 20, already striking out a third of the batters he's facing and showing three above-average to plus pitches. The only question I've heard on his ceiling is whether he's a future ace or perhaps "just" a No. 2 because of command, but that's a pretty nice problem to have in your top prospect. Whitley was pulled from his start Thursday night with "left oblique discomfort," so he could end up being replaced.

Rodgers (Rockies) has had his best pro season to date while playing in a home park that is anything close to neutral for the first time, hitting 16 homers and posting a .281/.345/.525 line after his own rough start. (I wonder how much the frigid April affected hitters' lines this year, especially for players on teams in the Northeast and upper Midwest.)

The U.S. team also includes shortstop **Bo Bichette**, the Blue Jays' No. 2 prospect and a top-20 prospect in the game, who is off to a solid start in Double-A, where he's young for his level at age 20.

There are four players from the top 10 of last year's draft in the game, including last year's second overall pick and top draft prospect **Hunter Greene**. Fifth overall pick **Kyle Wright**, ninth pick **Keston Hiura** and 10th pick **Jo Adell** also are here. The Giants' main representative is their 2017 first-rounder, **Heliot Ramos**, who is also the lone Puerto Rican representative in the game.

Greene (Reds) has been sitting 97-101 and flashing a plus slider this year as a true 18-year-old in low-A. After a rough first four outings, he made some very small adjustments and has been dominating ever since, with 59 strikeouts and nine walks in his past 50 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings (10 starts), posting a 2.31 ERA in that span. Other pitching prospects in the minors are closer to big-league ready, but among right-handers he has the highest ceiling.

Wright (Braves) went straight to Double-A to start this year, unusual for any draft pick in his first full pro season. Even so, he's striking out a man an inning and showing a plus slider and above-average fastball, with a modestly high walk rate the only negative he's shown so far.

Hiura (Brewers) has split time almost equally between second base and designated hitter, due to an elbow problem that kept him off the field entirely before the draft last year, but he's raked at high-A and Double-A with doubles power, hitting .322/.381/.523 between the two levels with 27 doubles, good for second in the minors this year.

Adell (Angels) has exploded on the minors this year and, although I haven't written up the list yet, I suspect he'll end up in my global top 10 when I re-rank the top 50 prospects in the minors after the All-Star break. Adell, just 19, hit .326/.398/.611 in the Midwest League, and has continued to hit for average and power after a promotion to the hitter-friendly California League, although his walk rate has gone through the floor (4.1 percent since the move, 3.1 percent since his first series with Inland Empire). He's still a potential superstar with huge raw power and a much more advanced hit tool than it appeared when he was an underclassman on the showcase circuit in 2016. He's primarily a center fielder now but likely will end up in a corner as he fills out.

Ramos probably wasn't ready for low-A and has struggled this year, but was the Giants' best prospect coming into the year, and he's the third-youngest regular in the Sally League. (The youngest, Luis Garcia, will represent the Nationals in the Futures Game.)

A few of this year's biggest breakout prospects also made the official rosters: **Jesus Luzardo**, **Peter Alonso**, **Luis Basabe** and **Seuly Matias**. Luzardo was born in Peru but will represent Venezuela, the birthplace of his parents, who moved from Peru to the U.S. when

Luzardo was young. Traded by the Nats to Oakland in last summer's deal that brought Sean Doolittle and Ryan Madson to Washington, Luzardo has been pitching for a full year since returning from Tommy John surgery, and his aggregate career line across five levels is 137 strikeouts and 24 walks in 115⅔ innings, including 12 strong starts in Double-A this year. He's working with a plus fastball and changeup, and projects as a No. 2 starter as long as he stays healthy.

Alonso has emerged as the Mets' top position player prospect -- although their first pick last month, Jarred Kelenic, might seize that mantle soon -- with a huge power/on-base breakout in Double-A, earning a promotion to the hitter's paradise of Las Vegas in June.

Basabe was the third prospect the White Sox acquired from Boston for Chris Sale, along with Yoan Moncada and Michael Kopech. Basabe is a speed/power guy with a good idea at the plate, although he's scuffled since a promotion three weeks ago to Double-A.

Matias (Royals) is one of the biggest outliers in the minors, with huge raw power and very poor pitch recognition, with 24 homers in 67 low-A games at age 19, but just 20 unintentional walks and 101 strikeouts, worse ratios than Joey Gallo posted at the same age and level.

The worst prospect here, other than players selected as token reps for their parent clubs, is Buddy Reed, the third Padres player in the game, a 23-year-old putting up good superficial stats in a severe hitter's park in high-A. Reed is a plus defender in center, and the only true long-term center fielder on the U.S. roster, which I assume is the reason he's on the team. I would have much preferred to see Houston's Kyle Tucker, Kansas City's Khalil Lee, Detroit's Daz Cameron or Baltimore's Ryan McKenna in that spot.

Detroit right-hander Matt Manning also was a surprising selection after he walked 28 in 55⅔ innings while repeating low-A, with the Tigers' 2017 first-rounder Alex Faedo, just promoted to Double-A, older and having a much better season.

I was also mildly surprised at the omission of Minnesota's Royce Lewis, the top pick in last year's draft, currently hitting .322/.367/.492 as a 19-year-old in low-A, although the Twins do have two reps in 2016 first-rounder Alex Kirilloff and Australian lefty Lewis Thorpe. Another surprise is Phillies lefty JoJo Romero, who is pitching extremely well with a broad arsenal of above-average weapons as a 21-year-old in homer-prone Reading (Double-A). He is Philadelphia's best healthy pitching prospect.