



Padres Press Clips

Wednesday, October 3, 2018

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VOTE: Reyes nominated for NL Aaron Award

Annual honor goes to best offensive player in each league

By Daniel Kramer MLB.com Oct. 2nd, 2018

Hank Aaron is still widely revered as one of the game's all-time great hitters, a first-ballot Hall of Famer whose career statistics still rank among history's best. Aaron, who still has a presence in today's game as a senior vice president in the Braves' front office, is best remembered for breaking Babe Ruth's career home run record, and his 755 total ranked first when he retired in 1976. Yet for all his power, Aaron was perhaps just as effective as a contact hitter, as his 3,771 hits (third all time) would attest.

Today, the awards bestowed to each league's best overall hitter bears Aaron's name.

Voting is underway through Oct. 8 at MLB.com and the 30 club sites, where fans can help choose the winners. The annual award was introduced in 1999 to honor the 25th anniversary of Aaron breaking Ruth's all-time home run record. At that time, it was the first major award introduced by MLB in more than 25 years.

Here is each club's nominee for 2018, broken down by each division.

AL EAST

Blue Jays: [Justin Smoak](#)

Orioles: [Adam Jones](#)

Rays: [Joey Wendle](#)

Red Sox: [J.D. Martinez](#)

Yankees: [Giancarlo Stanton](#)

AL CENTRAL

Indians: [Jose Ramirez](#)

Royals: [Whit Merrifield](#)

Tigers: [Nicholas Castellanos](#)

Twins: [Eddie Rosario](#)

White Sox: [Jose Abreu](#)

AL WEST

Angels: [Mike Trout](#)

Astros: [Alex Bregman](#)

Athletics: [Khris Davis](#)

Mariners: [Mitch Haniger](#)

Rangers: [Joey Gallo](#)

NL EAST

Braves: [Freddie Freeman](#)

Marlins: [J.T. Realmuto](#)

Mets: [Michael Conforto](#)

Nationals: [Anthony Rendon](#)

Phillies: [Rhys Hoskins](#)

NL CENTRAL

Brewers: [Christian Yelich](#)

Cardinals: [Matt Carpenter](#)

Cubs: [Javier Baez](#)

Pirates: [Gregory Polanco](#)

Reds: [Scooter Gennett](#)

NL WEST

D-backs: [Paul Goldschmidt](#)

Dodgers: [Max Muncy](#)

Giants: [Evan Longoria](#)

Padres: [Franmil Reyes](#)

Rockies: [Trevor Story](#)

"I am honored to have my name on the award given by Major League Baseball to the top offensive performers in the game," Aaron said in the past.

This marks the ninth straight year that fans' voices and votes will be included in the selection process. A special panel of Hall of Fame players, who have been personally selected by Aaron to lend their expertise -- Roberto Alomar, Johnny Bench, Craig Biggio, Ken Griffey Jr., Eddie Murray and Robin Yount -- will also vote for the awards along with Aaron himself.

This year's field features an array of new faces -- Goldschmidt, Stanton and Trout are the only former Aaron Award winners amongst this year's finalists -- including some of this year's true breakout stars, such as Story, Muncy and Bregman. Thirteen finalists were named All-Stars this year, and the group also features 22 players under the age of 30, with seven aged 25 or younger.

History has typically favored the sluggers, and in today's era, where the long ball is as prevalent as it ever has been, fans could opt for nominees in that mold. It's worth noting that the reigning American League winner, Jose Altuve, was one of seven batting champions to win the Aaron Award in the same year.

Here are the [previous Aaron Award winners](#):

2017: [Jose Altuve](#) and [Giancarlo Stanton](#)

2016: [Kris Bryant](#) and [David Ortiz](#)

2015: [Josh Donaldson](#) and [Bryce Harper](#)

2014: [Stanton](#) and [Trout](#)

2013: [Miguel Cabrera](#) and [Goldschmidt](#)

2012: [Cabrera](#) and [Buster Posey](#)

2011: [Jose Bautista](#) and [Matt Kemp](#)

2010: [Bautista](#) and [Joey Votto](#)

2009: [Derek Jeter](#) and [Albert Pujols](#)

2008: [Aramis Ramirez](#) and [Kevin Youkilis](#)

2007: [Alex Rodriguez](#) and [Prince Fielder](#)

2006: [Jeter](#) and [Ryan Howard](#)

2005: [Ortiz](#) and [Andruw Jones](#)

2004: [Manny Ramirez](#) and [Barry Bonds](#)

2003: Rodriguez and Pujols
2002: Rodriguez and Bonds
2001: Rodriguez and Bonds
2000: Carlos Delgado and Todd Helton
1999: Manny Ramirez and Sammy Sosa

The Aaron Awards, which are officially sanctioned by Major League Baseball, will be presented by Aaron and Commissioner Rob Manfred during the 2018 World Series.

Padres see 2019 as an important step — ‘We’re going to look to start to compete’

By Dennis Lin Oct 2, 2018

Among the many interesting decisions A.J. Preller faces this winter, the pursuit of notable acquisitions again looms as a potential franchise-changer. Less than nine months ago, the Padres general manager opted to commit eight years and \$144 million to first baseman Eric Hosmer, a choice that has looked costlier than initially thought. Yet, for all he must do to prove he can evaluate established major-league talent as well as he can the prospect market, Preller retains a couple of critical advantages.

One, the No. 1 farm system in the sport. And, two, owners who continue to tout their head of baseball operations as a creative and aggressive force.

“I can definitely paint a picture where we could be a playoff team next year,” general partner Peter Seidler said with trademark optimism. “I could paint a more likely scenario that it’ll happen in 2020. What I really care about, though, is that the individual ballplayers are developing and that the camaraderie and togetherness and insistence on excellence that we have in our organization, that A.J.’s instilled in our baseball operations system, continues to be as strong as it is today and even further strengthens.

“(Padres executive chairman Ron Fowler) and I know A.J. really well, even going back to the very extensive process that we went through before we hired him. ... He’s one of these professionals that I’ve run into in my business experience that, when you meet him, you like him and he inspires confidence. And then as time goes on, with every passing month and every passing year, in my opinion he’s even better than you thought.”

So, despite a 279-369 record over the last four seasons, despite the continuing absence of a legitimate star, despite some doubts over the Padres’ willingness to see their rebuild to completion, Preller possesses the latitude to author one of his most active offseasons to date. Inside the organization, 2019 is viewed as a bridge to a sustained run of contention.

The shopping list begins with a top-of-the-rotation starter and a third baseman. Outfielder Wil Myers, who moved to the hot corner in August, could address the latter need; for now, at least, he enters the offseason aiming for significant improvement over his shaky first audition.

But beyond Hosmer, whose no-trade clause runs through 2020, no member of the roster is fully insulated from the possibility of a deal. That reality extends to the farm system, where the Padres, for the right price, could be persuaded to move anyone outside of Fernando Tatis Jr. and MacKenzie Gore. Some would argue Chris Paddack and Luis Patiño also belong to that select group. Rival clubs continue to demonstrate significant interest in San Diego's base of young talent, and at some point before next season, the Padres very well might capitalize on that interest.

At the major-league level, Preller must consider what to do with his surpluses behind the plate — even as team officials maintain Austin Hedges and Francisco Mejía can coexist — and in the outfield. Corner bats Franmil Reyes and Hunter Renfroe made encouraging progress in 2018, but they soon could be crowded by the returns of Franchy Cordero and Myers, should the third-base experiment end.

This much is certain: The Padres have exhibited measurable growth in a few individuals but not nearly enough collective strides. A shrewd trade or two, perhaps in concert with a key signing, could alter the picture in 2019.

“We expect to be a lot better,” Preller said Sunday, before the Padres walked off against the Diamondbacks to finish at 66-96. “I don't get too much into a number goal from a wins standpoint. I think the thing we focused on, these things are not usually linear. You don't really see teams go from 60 to 70 to 80 to 90 wins. I think you see more, some teams go from that lower tier of wins and all of a sudden they have some guys hit, some guys come up and develop, some guys that have been at the big-league level mature, and ... you **jump up** and you may have a **20-win spike** in one season.

“There's not a lot of difference between a team that wins 68 games and a team that wins 76 or 77 games. ... From our standpoint, next year we're going to look to start to compete. You've got to get over .500 to do that.”

Less than a year ago, Fowler spoke of reaching .500 as a personal hope for 2018. The Padres proceeded to play .333 baseball through the first 45 games of the season. They produced a .436 clip the rest of the way. Hosmer and Myers,

the team's highest-paid players, underperformed. The starting rotation, largely composed of rookies, submitted its highest ERA in at least two decades.

Over the weekend, Fowler was approached about his expectations for next year.

"I'm not going to throw out record stuff anymore," the executive chairman said, though he did share a recollection from a recent question-and-answer session with fans.

"A.J. talked about gradual improvement, gradual improvement, you get to a tipping point," Fowler said. "And I leaned over to him and said, 'You know, I'm an old guy. Let's get to the tipping point sooner versus later.' And he laughed and sort of said he thinks we're closer than people think. Whether that means sometime next year or sometime in 2020, I think we've got the talent."

The front office does not necessarily hold an isolated view. Officials from other teams see potential in a lineup with Tatis, Hosmer, Myers, Mejía, second baseman Luis Urías and, if he rebounds, center fielder Manuel Margot. Renfroe smacked 26 home runs for a second consecutive season, and Reyes became the franchise's first 23-and-under player to log an OPS over .800, across at least 250 plate appearances, since Gary Sheffield. Meantime, the Padres' cache of pitching prospects is unrivaled in the sport. And current financial commitments for 2019 and 2020 total around \$50 million per year, though ownership already has downplayed the idea of pursuing third baseman/shortstop Manny Machado.

"I think it's going to be more trade than very expensive free agents," Fowler said.

Financial flexibility does exist, however.

"I think it's more about what's going to fit within our strategy as opposed to year to year to year," Seidler said regarding the team's payroll. "We look at budgeting in a lot of cases as more of a three-year thing. In other words, you spend a little bit less now, you might have a little bit more next year. If you spend a little bit more now, it might impact you next year.

"But I can tell you it's common knowledge that in the past couple years, Ron and I have put in money through a capital-call program. We want to win, and we're not going to let a contract here or a contract there stop us short, if it makes sense and fits within the strategy."

The overarching plan, Seidler added, continues to center on sustainability.

“One thing I know is we’re not going to waver in our conviction to this homegrown strategy,” Seidler said. “We’ll put in pieces in and around through trades and free agency and what have you, but . . . we’re not going to be a mishmash of guys that were trained in other organizations and came here through various sources. We’re going to be a team of players at Petco Park that for the most part were signed and developed by the Padres. And as well as I know the people that have scouted and ultimately signed and developed and trained these players, that gives me a lot of confidence.

“I think our fans can pretty much rest assured that we’re not going to trade our top three prospects to get a few guys that maybe will help us catch lightning in a bottle and win one year. We’re all about bringing 10 years of winning baseball to San Diego.”

Exactly what that translates to in 2019 remains unclear. The Padres, along with 29 other clubs, must wait until after the World Series to enact their offseason plans. Their words, meanwhile, signal ambition for the upcoming year.

MadFriars' Wrap-Up Series: Tri-City Dust Devils

Kevin Charity FOX Sports San Diego Oct 2, 2018 at 12:13p ET

MadFriars kicks off its end of the year wrap-up series for Fox Sports San Diego with all of the Padres' affiliates with the guys that know them the best — their play-by-play announcers. Today's interview is with Chris King, the-play-by-voice of the Tri-City Dust Devils. Before we review the Dust Devils campaign, we have a quick rundown of the top players in the Arizona League and for the Dust Devils, who play in the Northwest League

Arizona League Padres: For the second straight season, the Padres fielded two teams in the Arizona League, creatively named AZL Padres-1 and AZL Padres-2. Both clubs posted losing records, finishing 27-29 and 26-30 respectively.

The AZL clubs featured a mix of recent draft picks and players making their stateside debuts after being signed as international free agents. Ryan Weathers, the Padres' top draft pick in 2018 and Comp Round A pick Xavier Edwards were the headliners of a very intriguing group of teenage prospects who made their professional debut in the spring training home of the big league club.

Top Players: Despite a late-season promotion to Tri-City, infielder Tucupita Marcano won the Arizona League batting title with a .395 batting average in 151 plate appearances. The 18-year-old showed outstanding bat-to-ball skills and walked 26 times while striking out just ten times at the plate. Marcano stole ten bags and was leading the league in hits and walks at the time of his promotion.

Top Pitchers: LHP Joey Cantillo pitched in the Arizona League for a second straight summer, before earning a late-season promotion to Fort Wayne. Cantillo utilized a low-90s fastball and excellent off-speed stuff and pitched to a sparkling 2.18 ERA in 45.1 innings.

John Conniff talked to Sam Geaney, the Padres' Director of Player Development about players Cantillo and Marcano, as well as some of the 2018 draft picks, such as infielder Sean Guilbe and catcher/first baseman Nick Gatewood.

Tri-City Dust Devils: The Dust Devils had some standouts with individual performances in 2018 but the squad finished in last place with a 35-41 record. The Dust Devils finished near the bottom of the league offensively (Gesa Stadium, the Dust Devils' home field is a notoriously difficult place to hit) but the pitching staff led the league in strikeouts for the second consecutive season.

Top Players: Shortstop Owen Miller, a third-round pick in this year's draft, played at three different levels in his debut season, but did most of his damage for the Dust

Devils. Olivier Basabe, who played both in the infield and the outfield, also had a breakout campaign in the Northwest League. Late season addition shortstop Xavier Edwards, the Padres' second overall pick in the 2018 draft, showed plate discipline beyond his 18 years and will be one of San Diego's top prospects going into next year.

Top Pitchers: The Dust Devils pitching staff was led by Ramon Perez and Angel Acevedo, both less heralded pitchers from the Padres' big international free agent class of 2016. Tri-City got big performances out of the bullpen from Dan Dallas and Jordan Guerrero.

Sam Geaney talked about the Dust Devils prospects at Tri-City including what may be one of the better double-play combinations in the Midwest League next summer with Xavier Edwards and Tucupita Marcano.

MadFriars Minor League Announcer Series: Chris King

Chris King just finished his seventh season of calling Dust Devils baseball and has seen some of the finest talents in the Padres' vaunted system in Pasco over the last few years. In addition to his responsibilities with the Dust Devils, King is also the radio voice of the Idaho Vandals men's basketball team. The Washington State alumnus talked to us about the 2018 version of the Tri-City Dust Devils.

MadFriars: *The Dust Devils had a new manager in former big leaguer Mike McCoy. How was his managerial style and what did he bring to the team on a daily basis?*

Chris King: I think Mike was great. He was great to work with. We've been really lucky. This has been the Dust Devils' fourth year as a Padres' affiliate and we've had really good luck with our managers to this point.

[Former Dust Devils manager and current rehab pitching coach] Ben Fritz was outstanding the previous two years. [Current TinCaps' manager] Anthony Contreras was here in year one. Mike is a guy who has so much playing experience, and really all these guys really have a ton of playing experience but Mike has been up in the major leagues and Mike was a guy when you look at his career, he wasn't the highest draft pick but he worked his way to make it up to the major leagues.

It's funny at one point this season, [Dust Devils'] catcher Chandler Seagle had to pitch in a game because the team was low on pitching — it happens maybe once a year, twice a year — where a position player needs to pitch. And [McCoy] could talk about it — he pitched in the big leagues when he was a position player and he could give advice of what to do.

Mike was fantastic, the whole staff was great to work with and it was kind of another year of a lot of really good talent. We've been really fortunate — the four years that

the Dust Devils have been with the Padres, I have been with the team for all four of those years and to have a front-row seat of all of the talent coming through and for that to continue into this year has really been a lot of fun.

Catcher Blake Hunt finished the year really strong after scuffling through the first part of the season. Do you think that was a byproduct of a major adjustment or did he just seem to get better with more at-bats?

Chris King: Yeah, I think it was just more of him getting really hot and maybe more of the latter part of what you suggested. I know [Dust Devils' hitting coach] Pat O'Sullivan had been working with him throughout the year, and boy, it really was an impressive tear. And I know for Blake Hunt he didn't necessarily play a ton, especially catching-wise last year, in his first year down in the Arizona League.

For anyone, I think it takes a little bit of an adjustment to get used to the grind of catching every day and he caught more than any other player in the Northwest League. A lot of times in the past there maybe has been a split, like last year, it was almost 50/50 with Chandler Seagle and Jalen Washington, but Blake got the majority of the playing time as the team's catcher this year. We kind of saw flashes from him before, throughout the season, but boy did he put together an impressive stretch at the end of the season.

We saw his defense improve too along that period as well. His numbers really jumped up, when you look over the last two or three weeks of the season and they really shot up and he became, with some guys moved up [to Fort Wayne] at the end of the season, he became the most dangerous hitter in the middle part of the order.

Third round pick, SS Owen Miller had a monster season in Pasco, before earning a promotion to Fort Wayne. What kind of hitter can you see him becoming going forward?

Chris King: Not only did [Miller] tear up short-season pitching, but he ended up having a better batting average in Fort Wayne. [Miller hit .336 in Fort Wayne and .335 with Tri-City]. When you see him, there's not a lot that necessarily flashy about him and I don't mean that in a bad way at all. He just flat-out hits.

He's hit at every level he's been at, he hit for two cycles in three days in the Northwoods League, the summer collegiate league last summer. He set the single-season hits record this year at Illinois State and he just continued to do the same thing.

I was trying to think of a guy that we have had since the Dust Devils became a Padres' affiliate, who was exactly comparable to [Miller] — we've had some good hitters — but he just goes to plate and knows how to put the ball in play, and to have a batting average above .300.

There's not one thing that stands out about him, where you say this tool is super-flashy, it's really he knows how to hit and it's been fun to watch him in Fort Wayne and what he was able to do with the Dust Devils.

Big Luis Asuncion finished his third straight year with the Dust Devils. What did you see from him and were there any noticeable improvements in 2018, as he transitioned to first base?

Chris King: Yeah, it was interesting. I talked about it on the air. He played in over 180 games with the Dust Devils. We aren't used to having a guy around like that so much. He is a great guy and boy when he connects, it looks really, really good.

He's still a young guy at 21. He took a real step forward last year. Last year, he played in the Northwest League vs. Pioneer League All-Star Game. He ended up being the MVP of the game. He was back this year and I think a lot of it had to be so much talent around and there just wasn't a lot of room for him to go up.

They had him play first base and he kind of platooned with Justin Paulsen. I would say at times he could put together stretches as impressive as any hitter we saw this year. There were also times where he would have some cold spells at the plate. But when he is on, boy watch out. He ended up tied for fifth in the Northwest League in doubles this year and August 2nd was his last double. He went nearly the whole last month of the season without a double and you would like to see some more extra-base hits in there. He also finished the season as the team leader in home runs but that just goes to show you that when he is on, he has stretches where he is spraying extra-base hits all over the ballpark.

Henry Henry returned for his second season in the Northwest League after struggling in the Midwest League to start the year. Is he a guy that should be someone to watch next year?

Chris King: You know, I would say with Henry Henry, and I mean this in a positive way, we saw a lot of the same. He performed really well last year with the Dust Devils. He had a 3.48 ERA and made the same number of starts as he did this year. His ERA was a little bit lower [3.32 ERA this year].

He's still such a young guy, at just 19, but I would say the spot that you would see improvement from him is that sometimes [last year] when things weren't going well, then he might have a hard time getting out of that jam or if things were kind of going south, then they would keep going south. But you have to learn how to deal with traffic and adversity and he did a better job of dealing with that this year.

It's interesting, I never got a great answer as far as his issues in Fort Wayne because, at the start of the year, those numbers really weren't good. But everything he did with the Dust Devils back before getting promoted to Fort Wayne at the end of

the year, just kind of building upon what he did last year and more of the same and again I mean that in a good way because he was really strong with the Dust Devils last season.

RHP Cole Bellinger is an interesting guy because of his family ties and the fact that he is incredibly young. He had stretches of success this year in Tri-City. What did you see from Bellinger this year?

Chris King: [Bellinger] had some good stretches this year. There was a game in Spokane, specifically, that stands out; he had nine strikeouts in that game. There was never a point of the season where the velocity was overwhelming but he's also a guy who considers his curveball his best pitch and his curveball is really an effective pitch.

Still, for him, he's a second-year player and he has the bloodlines. You just get excited by seeing that name from what his brother has done and what his dad did but he's super-young and he won't turn 19 until October and it definitely seems like there is room to grow there.

Infielder Tucupita Marcano burst on to the scene this year, impressing with his eye and the plate and his ability to make contact. What stood out to you about Marcano this year?

Chris King: With Marcano, you can see why he hit .393 in the Arizona League. He did have a tough spell and from my understanding, he wasn't 100% — it didn't seem like anything huge but he didn't play in the last few games of the season. He went through a dry spell but then you would see him up at the plate and you would see why this all made sense and how it looked a lot like a certain guy who played for the Dust Devils back in 2015 at the start of the year and is now in the big leagues.

Comp Round A pick Xavier Edwards played in Pasco at the end of the season and looked impressive. What can you tell us about him?

Chris King: Edwards had a little bit of a wrist injury, so he's a switch-hitter and only hit from the left side throughout the year. But Edwards' speed is real — I mean really impressive speed. He ended up 10-for-10 on stolen base attempts in 24 games. The only other guy in the four years that the Dust Devils have been a Padres' affiliate that has played for the Dust Devils after being taken out of high school in their first year was Hudson Potts.

Those guys aren't an apples-to-apples comparison. Potts' numbers weren't overwhelming with the Dust Devils — you saw the flashes when he played with the Dust Devils, while Xavier Edwards finished his time with the Dust Devils hitting .314. He had four doubles and can lay down a bunt. He had nine multi-hit games and can get infield singles and his defense was strong as well.