



## SF Giants Press Clips Thursday, April 12, 2018

### San Francisco Chronicle

#### Giants' decision to pitch to Paul Goldschmidt backfires

Scott Ostler

Bruce Bochy is bound for the Hall of Fame, no joke, and I'm not, unless there's a hall of fame for flossing regularly.

Still, Bochy should've walked Paul Goldschmidt on Wednesday afternoon at AT&T Park.

The Great Goldschmidt, who eats the Giants (sprinkled over his Froot Loops) for breakfast, had them for brunch Wednesday. The Diamondbacks' mighty first baseman hit a screaming two-run homer in the fourth to open the game's scoring, then blasted a double in the sixth to drive home the go-ahead run in Arizona's 7-3 victory.

That double was the one that hurt. With one out, Ketel Marte doubled off Giants rookie starter Andrew Suarez, and Bochy went to the bullpen for right-hander Sam Dyson to face Goldschmidt, a right-handed hitter.

Walk him? The Great Goldschmidt had been scuffling. He came into the game hitting .158, with one homer. However, that one homer was on his final swing the previous evening, off right-hander Hunter Strickland.

And the homer Goldschmidt hit in the fourth inning Wednesday was to deep-deep center. It narrowly missed the ballpark's vegetable garden, where it would have taken out a hectare of kale.

So in the sixth, almost everyone in the Giants' ballpark was begging Bochy to walk the Great Goldschmidt. Children riding the slide on the giant Coke bottle were calling, "Wheee, please walk Goldschmidt, wheee!"

Old-timers had flashbacks to when Willie Mays at times would stop at first base after hitting what appeared to be a sure double, so that the opposing team wouldn't intentionally walk the next batter, Willie McCovey. Mays did that because you want to give a great power hitter every chance to hit powerfully. Baseball is the only sport in which you can neutralize the other team's most dangerous player simply by waving your hand: intentional walk.

Small sample size, but Goldschmidt was 2-for-3 lifetime against Dyson. And this fact from the pregame notes: In the Great Goldschmidt's previous 27 games at AT&T Park, he hit .327, with four doubles, two triples, three homers and 24 RBIs.

Maybe if the Giants walk Goldschmidt in the sixth, they lose anyway. Over the last four innings, the Giants had one hit and didn't get a runner to second. But you know what Andrew McCutchen says (or should say): "Just get me to the 14th inning."

Naturally, Bochy was asked about not walking Goldschmidt, and naturally Bochy gave an honest answer to a fair question.

"I mean, there are times you walk him," Bochy said, "but he was probably one of their coldest hitters when he came in here. He took advantage of some mistakes now."

Bochy said there were some pitches thrown up in the zone to Goldschmidt. Bad pitches.

"If you look at who's behind him," Bochy said, A.J. Pollock has "been swinging the bat pretty good. You've got a guy hitting over .300 (Pollock was at .310 coming into the game, with one homer). You don't want to start putting a lot of guys on base early in the game, let the game get away."

But you don't want to start letting a lot of guys named Goldschmidt swing a stick at you in a dangerous situation, with first base open.

"It comes down to making good pitches," Bochy said, "and we didn't make very good pitches at times today, and we got burned. That's what a good hitter does."

That's especially what the Great Goldschmidt does, especially against the Giants.

It was a dreary and disappointing day for the Giants. For the second time in less than a week, they failed to parlay the emotional momentum of a McCutchen walk-off hit into a win the following day.

They wasted some great swings by Buster Posey, who had a single and a two-run jack, raising his average to .389. Buster Ballgame is dialed in.

Sure, it's early, but the Giants missed an opportunity to peek over the .500 mark with a 6-5

record.

And the Giants left the home fans, an announced crowd of 35,041, the lowest count since late in the 2010 season, dispirited and disappointed.

Still, there's cause for optimism. Two rookie starting pitchers in two games pitched decently for the Giants. Madison Bumgarner is healing. The Giants go on a 10-game road trip with a chance to find their true character (see Henry Schulman's story).

But they let the Great Goldschmidt ruin their day. That hurts.

Incidentally, I've long wanted to ask Mays this: When he would stop at first on a sure double so the other team didn't intentionally walk McCovey, why didn't the other team walk McCovey, anyway?

But what do I know? I think I'll just go floss.

## **San Francisco Chronicle**

### **Giants offense: When is time to panic?**

**Henry Schulman**

The answer is never. Panicking is not good for the soul and pointless.

So, rephrasing the question: How many games does the offense get to prove it is not as bad as it has looked for most of the first 11?

That's the answer for everything.

One-quarter of the season.

Look, the angst is understandable because the big fear all winter was, the Giants have an old team, and for the most part they have looked like an old team. They bear the burden of proof to show otherwise.

But they need to have some rope, unless you believe Evan Longoria is going to be hitting .132, Brandon Crawford .216 and Andrew McCutchen .217 a month from now.

Nor does manager Bruce Bochy have many options rejiggering the lineup when he has one hitter (Buster Posey) raking and just one more (Joe Panik) making consistent, solid contact.

Let's see what Bochy does with Longoria when the Giants face two right-handed pitchers Thursday and Friday in San Diego. Pablo Sandoval could start one at third. Then again, Sandoval is hitting .214.

Longoria understands the issue, and it is not moving to a new league and seeing new pitchers.

“I’m not going to make those excuses,” he said. “I’ve got to be better. I’ve just got to relax a little bit. I’ve been put into some big situations. Credit these guys for putting me into those situations. These are situations where I’ve got to come through.”

A bigger concern is Hunter Pence, who is hitting .194 with 10 strikeouts in 36 at-bats. As the elder of the group, turning 35 on Friday, he has to show he has more left in that bat.

“His timing is off,” Bochy said. “He just looks like he’s a little off-balance, pulling (off) a little bit.”

In Little League terms, Pence is stepping into the bucket. Older players do that sometimes to cheat on fastballs inside, but Pence’s bat speed still looks good. He had the same issue early in spring training, fixed it, then started to rake.

Regardless of the above, Bochy offered a strong hint that the club could summon a hot outfielder from the minors to vitalize the offense, though not just yet. He spoke about it in this Giants beat regarding Mac Williamson, who tore up Pacific Coast League in the first week of its season.

Supporting the kids: Ryan Sadowski, you’re safe.

Sadowski remains the last Giants pitcher to start and win his big-league debut, in 2009, after Tyler Beede got no decision and Andrew Suarez a loss in their first games Tuesday night and Wednesday.

Suarez allowed more runs (four) than Beede (two). But Suarez also lasted longer and had the more impressive start because did not walk anybody and struck out seven against one of the better-hitting teams the Giants will face.

He struck out Paul Goldschmidt looking on a curveball to end the first inning.

“I thought the kid did a nice job pounding the strike zone,” Bochy said. Overall he did a pretty good job in his debut. I know there are a couple of pitches he’d like to have back, but overall he was pretty impressive.”

Goldschmidt and John Ryan Murphy each hit hanging sliders for homers.

Beede will start again Sunday in San Diego. Suarez’s start might be a one-and-done if Johnny Cueto is healthy enough to take his next turn Tuesday.

“I’m just glad I threw strikes,” Suarez said. “I didn’t walk anyone. That felt good.”

“A lot of people say my weakness is that I throw too many strikes. I’ve got to learn when to throw balls and when not to.”

Longoria said the offense could have made life easier for Suarez by providing early run support, but that’s not how the Giants have rolled.

“The starters have done a good job so far,” Longoria said. “The offense hasn’t done much to help them out.”

Andrew McCutchen has made a name for himself early with two walkoff hits but admitted it would be nice not to have to win in the ninth.

“We’ve been coming alive later in the game,” McCutchen said. “Hopefully we can get that going from the first inning on. You want to get that start in his first at-bat.”

Dyson dilemma: The game story did not kindly treat Bochy’s decision to pitch to Goldschmidt with first base open in the sixth inning of a 3-3 game. Goldschmidt hit a go-ahead double off Sam Dyson.

Bochy’s counterargument was the risk of handing the Diamondbacks another baserunner to potentially drive in. One point the story did not make: Dyson had not allowed a hit to a right-handed batter this season before Goldschmidt beat him with an RBI double.

Dyson will go only as far as his power sinker will take him. He has been working all spring on mechanical changes to make it consistently effective. He is not there yet.

“I don’t think it’s been a terrible pitch,” Dyson said. “One day it has a lot of depth. One day it’s running side to side.”

The goal, he said, is to make it more consistent day to day.

Dyson already has fallen to middle relief as he works on those mechanics. He could slip farther in the hierarchy if he continues to struggle and rookies Pierce Johnson and especially Reyes Moronta keep excelling.

**San Francisco Chronicle**  
**Giants fall to Diamondbacks to cap losing homestand**  
**Henry Schulman**

An old baseball bromide holds that struggling teams can use a long road trip. Count Evan Longoria a believer.

The Giants' new third baseman said only half in jest that he is skittish about dining out in San Francisco until he starts hitting.

"I think the road trip will be good for us," Longoria said after Wednesday's 7-3 loss to the Diamondbacks at AT&T Park. "Just being out the road sometimes takes the pressure off. You can sleep in more, relax a little bit. I think it's really going to help us."

The Giants' first extended trip should provide better clues to which way the 5-6 team will tilt.

After facing one tough pitcher after another over the first 11 games, the Giants will face San Diego starters with ERAs of 4.22, 5.25 and 5.29 starting Thursday night at Petco Park.

When that four-game series ends, the Giants should get more answers if Johnny Cueto and Jeff Samardzija return as planned during a three-game series in Arizona. The Giants then play three at Anaheim against the fast-starting Angels, including a probable encounter with the arm, bat and aura of one Shohei Ohtani.

Longoria, who doubled against left-hander Robbie Ray on Wednesday, is far from the only struggling Giant, but that .132 average is tougher to take because he is trying to impress new fans and teammates.

Hunter Pence is hitting .194, Pablo Sandoval .214, Nick Hundley .071 and Brandon Crawford .216. But they have track records here. For most fans, Longoria is the 32-year-old who cost the Giants a good prospect in Christian Arroyo and strikes out a lot after Buster Posey hits.

"It sucks, for lack of a better term," Longoria said. "But I've been around long enough to know I'm going to come out of it. It's just tough when you're going through it to convince yourself you'll get out of it."

In ending a 3-4 homestand by losing the series decider against the division's hottest team, the Giants scored all three runs in the fifth inning on Andrew McCutchen's RBI grounder and a two-run homer by the only torrid Giant, Posey, who is hitting .389.

That tied the game 3-3, but the Diamondbacks immediately retook the lead after Ketel Marte's one-out double in the sixth, which led to Andrew Suarez losing his big-league debut.

Sam Dyson relieved Suarez and allowed an RBI double by Paul Goldschmidt, whose two-run homer in the fourth accounted for half the runs against Suarez.

Goldschmidt came to San Francisco with three hits on the season, then loaded up with a single, double, triple and two home runs. At some point, pitching to Goldschmidt with first base open is like banging your head against the wall, but manager Bruce Bochy did not want Dyson to walk him intentionally in the sixth and hand Arizona another baserunner.

"There are times you walk him, but he was probably one of their coldest hitters coming in here," Bochy said. "He took advantage of a mistake, and the guy hitting behind him, (A.J.) Pollock, is swinging the bat pretty good."

Dyson gave up three runs in the seventh inning as he continues to search for consistency with his sinker.

Suarez's debut was better than Tyler Beede's the night before because he pounded the zone, walking none and striking out seven.

Suarez always can say his first big-league strikeout was Goldschmidt, but has to admit that Goldy was his first home run, too.

Suarez hung a slider to Goldschmidt in the fourth and got a loud lesson in why that is not prudent. The two-run homer clanged when it hit a metal bleacher seat in center field.

Suarez still got a nice ovation as he walked off the mound in the sixth inning and said, "I haven't had one of those, ever."

**San Francisco Chronicle**  
**Giants plan to add and subtract young relievers liberally**  
**Henry Schulman**

Giants relievers might not be old enough to remember the movie "Catch-22," but they are learning what the title means.

Roberto Gomez knows. The rookie pitched two bullpen-saving innings in Monday night's 2-1 loss to the Diamondbacks then was shipped to Triple-A Sacramento on Tuesday. Steven Okert arrived from Sacramento on Tuesday, got his hugs and handshakes, then returned to Triple-A on Wednesday gaining nothing more than one day's big-league meal money.

Unlike past years, when the Giants were hamstrung with a roster full of players who lacked minor-league options, they have a younger pitching staff. The club will not be shy about turning Interstate 80 into a highway of tears and cheers for the pitchers who will commute between AT&T Park and Raley Field.

A pitcher who gives the Giants multiple innings might be rewarded with a ticket to Sacramento, where he has to stay for 10 days.

Manager Bruce Bochy said he and his staff have explained this to the pitchers.

"You want to talk to them before it happens so they understand the situation, especially with

what we're going through right now," Bochy said, referring to injuries that have left the rotation full of young starters.

"We have to protect these guys as much as getting fresh arms. I've talked to (Josh) Osich about it. He has options. It can affect any of those guys if we need them to throw a couple of innings."

Mac attack: Bochy had a telling comment about the outfield, where the Giants have no minor-league option flexibility. If one of their Triple-A outfielders rakes over time, he said, the Giants will find room for him on the big-league club.

The context was Mac Williamson's hot start for Sacramento. He is 11-for-22 with three doubles and three home runs.

"We would find a way to put somebody in our lineup if we think he can help us," Bochy said. "We could get creative and mix a few things up. It a small sample, both here and down in Triple-A. Let's play some baseball and see where we're at."

Bochy said Williamson will not report to San Diego even though Austin Jackson left Wednesday's game with a tight groin, an injury not considered serious.

Briefly: Madison Bumgarner was placed on the 60-day disabled list to clear a 40-man spot for Andrew Suarez, making Bumgarner unavailable until May 26. Bumgarner hopes to have the pins removed from his fractured hand Thursday ... Reliever Will Smith (Tommy John surgery) will make his second rehab appearance Saturday at San Jose, again piggybacking Jeff Samardzija.

## **MLB.com**

### **Suarez K's 7 in debut, but SF comes up short**

#### **Do-Hyoung Park**

SAN FRANCISCO -- It wasn't one of those close, low-scoring games that the Giants have grown all too familiar with during the first two weeks of the season, but Wednesday afternoon's 7-3 loss to the D-backs seemed to follow the same script: effective starting pitching, but a lack of timely hitting to back it up.

Making his MLB debut in front of his mother, grandmother, brothers and a crowd of 35,041, 25-year-old left-hander Andrew Suarez retired the first 10 hitters he faced, striking out five of them. He only allowed four hits in 5 1/3 innings and attacked the zone, striking out seven without issuing a walk.

"I'm just glad I threw plenty of strikes," Suarez said. "I didn't walk anyone. I felt good."

Unfortunately for the left-hander, the few mistakes he made were hit a long way. Paul Goldschmidt drilled a hanging slider 436 feet in the fourth inning for a two-run homer, and John Ryan Murphy took another hanging slider 402 feet to left field in the fifth. Suarez was charged



with four earned runs in his debut.

"It was supposed to be low and in, but I just opened up a little bit and it was pretty much just a hanging spinner," Suarez said about his pitch to Goldschmidt. "Sometimes I try to throw it too hard, and I end up opening up instead of staying closed and letting it out in front."

The Giants' offense, which entered the game second-to-last in MLB with a .160 average (12-for-74) with runners in scoring position, had its chances to spot Suarez an early lead but was unable to capitalize against Arizona starter Robbie Ray.

San Francisco put runners on first and third with two outs in the third inning before Joe Panik struck out to end the rally. In the fourth, the Giants had runners on second and third with one out before Ray rallied with two strikeouts to emerge unscathed.

"The starting pitchers are doing a good job," third baseman Evan Longoria said. "Offensively, we haven't done much to help them. They've been having to really grind to keep us in games, and I think offensively, we've got to do more. We've got to find a way to jump out ahead early and take some of the pressure off of the pitchers."

The offense finally broke through in the fifth with a RBI fielder's choice by Andrew McCutchen and a two-run homer by Buster Posey, who was the only Giant to finish with multiple hits and extended his hitting streak to nine games. But that was all the offense could muster, as the D-backs' bullpen only allowed two baserunners in 4 1/3 scoreless innings.

Clutch K's from Ray: After Goldschmidt's two-run homer in the top of the fourth broke a scoreless tie, the Giants threatened to answer in the bottom of the inning when they put runners on second and third with one out with a single from Posey and a double by Longoria. But Ray escaped the jam with a three-pitch strikeout of Nick Hundley and an inning-ending strikeout of Brandon Crawford after he intentionally walked Hunter Pence to load the bases.

"Buster had a big hit to really tie that game and get us going, and Longoria, he hit a nice double down the line," manager Bruce Bochy said. "It looks like [the hitters are] starting to come around and show some life. It's a matter of time. These guys are too good. But I do like what's been happening in the last two, three days."

Buster breaks through: The Giants had entered Wednesday's series finale hitting .160 (12-for-75) with runners in scoring position, the second-lowest mark in the Majors. That trend continued on Wednesday, as the Giants started 0-for-4 in such scoring opportunities against Ray. But in the fifth, following an RBI fielder's choice by McCutchen, Posey ended Ray's outing with a game-tying two-run homer to left-center. Entering Wednesday, Posey had been 3-for-19 in his career against Ray.

"They threw a ton of breaking balls, and I thought we adjusted there that inning and took advantage of it," Bochy said.

## QUOTABLE

"A lot of people say my weakness is I throw too many strikes. You can see it there. I just always try to compete, and I've just got to learn when to throw balls and when not to." -- Suarez, on giving opponents too many pitches to hit in the strike zone

## SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

According to STATS LLC, Tuesday and Wednesday marked only the second time in the San Francisco era in which the Giants started pitchers making their Major League debuts on back-to-back days. Tyler Beede and Suarez join Bob Knepper and Frank Riccelli, who accomplished the feat Sept. 10-11, 1976, against the Reds.

## JACKSON DEPARTS GAME WITH TIGHT GROIN

Giants center fielder Austin Jackson was removed from the game in the seventh inning due to tightness in his groin. He had been 1-for-2 with a walk and a run. He was replaced by Gregor Blanco for the final three innings. According to Bochy, the move was precautionary, and he doesn't believe it to be a cause for significant concern moving forward.

"He'll be fine, hopefully, tomorrow," Bochy said. "But it tightened up on him, and we didn't want to risk an injury."

## WHAT'S NEXT

The Giants kick off a 10-game, three-city road trip on Thursday at 7:10 p.m. PT, when right-hander Chris Stratton opposes San Diego righty Bryan Mitchell in the opener of a four-game series at Petco Park. Stratton is 1-1 with a 6.43 ERA in two career appearances against the Padres.

## MLB.com

**Suarez called up; Bumgarner to 60-day DL  
Do-Hyoung Park**

SAN FRANCISCO -- The Giants selected the contract of left-hander Andrew Suarez from Triple-A Sacramento prior to Suarez's first career start in San Francisco's 7-3 loss to Arizona in Wednesday afternoon's series finale.

In corresponding roster moves, Madison Bumgarner was transferred to the 60-day disabled list and reliever Steven Okert was optioned back to Sacramento after one day with the Giants.

Bumgarner's move to the 60-day disabled list means that the earliest he would be eligible to be activated would be May 25. The lefty continues to recover from a fractured finger in his pitching hand sustained during Spring Training.

Suarez, the Giants' No. 10 prospect according to MLB Pipeline, retired the first 10 hitters he faced on Wednesday and attacked the strike zone effectively, allowing only four hits and

striking out seven without issuing a walk. However, he fell victim to the long ball, as he allowed homers to Paul Goldschmidt and John Ryan Murphy on a pair of hanging sliders.

The 25-year-old left-hander was ultimately charged with four earned runs in 5 1/3 innings pitched. He was lifted after 83 pitches.

"I thought he did a nice job," manager Bruce Bochy said. "Sure, he made a couple of mistakes, but I thought overall, it was a pretty good job by him in his first start, his debut. Again, throwing strikes. He worked ahead, and I know there are a couple of pitches, sure, that he'd like to have back, but I thought it was pretty impressive."

The Giants have already guaranteed a second start on Sunday to right-hander Tyler Beede, who debuted Tuesday, but despite Suarez's promising outing, Bochy hesitated to offer a similarly concrete timeline for Suarez's next start.

"He'll get another chance. I can't tell you when," Bochy said. "We'll wait and see. We're talking about it now. He's going to pitch up here, I can tell you that, at some point, whether he's making another start here real soon, depending on Johnny [Cueto]'s ankle, but we'll wait."

On Wednesday, Suarez took the rotation spot of Johnny Cueto, who was placed on the 10-day disabled list on Tuesday following a left ankle sprain suffered during a workout.

Despite the uncertainty in his timeline, Suarez remained unconcerned.

"I'm just going through it day by day, and whatever happens, happens," Suarez said.

### **NBC Sports Bay Area**

#### **Pinpoint command got Suarez to majors and it'll keep him here, but it burned him in debut Alex Pavlovic**

SAN FRANCISCO -- Through the first two innings of his big league career, Andrew Suarez had thrown 23 strikes and just seven balls. That's a great trait to have as a pitcher. Most of the time.

"A lot of people say my weakness is I throw too many strikes," Suarez said after a 7-3 loss to the Diamondbacks. "I always try to compete. I've got to learn when to throw balls."

Suarez has pinpoint command and that's what got him to the big leagues. It'll keep him here, too, and it'll please his manager, pitching coach and infielders. But he's savvy enough already to know that there are times where a pitch in the dirt or six inches outside is a good one.

As he pounded the zone Wednesday, the Diamondbacks eventually caught on. Paul Goldschmidt hit a two-run homer. John Ryan Murphy hit another. Both came on sliders.

"Hanging sliders," Suarez said.

The 25-year-old caught Goldschmidt looking at a two-strike curveball in the first and tried to go down and in with a slider in their second matchup. It stayed out away, and Goldschmidt blasted it.

"It was pretty much just a hanging spinner," Suarez said. "Sometimes I try to throw (the slider) too hard. I end up opening up (my delivery)."

The day was a learning experience, but also one to celebrate. Suarez had his mom, grandmother and brothers in the seats and said an ovation as he walked off the field was the biggest of his life. He may not make another start immediately, as Johnny Cueto is due back Tuesday, but Bruce Bochy left no doubt that Suarez will be a part of the future.

"I thought he did a nice job," Bochy said. "He pounded the strike zone. He made a couple mistakes but I thought overall that's a good job by him."

### **NBC Sports Bay Area**

#### **Beede, Suarez pull off something Giants haven't done since 1976**

**Alex Pavlovic**

SAN FRANCISCO — Tyler Beede and Andrew Suarez spent the spring competing to be the next man up in the big league rotation. It turns out they'll make their debuts less than 24 hours apart.

Beede got his feet wet with four two-run innings on Tuesday and Suarez will take the ball Wednesday in place of Johnny Cueto, who has a sprained left ankle. The 25-year-old left-hander was added to the roster Wednesday morning, with Madison Bumgarner moving to the 60-day DL to clear a 40-man roster spot. Steven Okert was optioned back to Triple-A after one game to clear a spot on the active roster.

According to Stats LLC, Beede and Suarez are doing something that hasn't been done for the Giants since long before they were born. Only once in the San Francisco Giants era have back-to-back games been started by guys making their debuts. Bob Knepper took the ball on Sept. 10, 1976 and Frank Riccelli made his debut a day later.

"He's confident and he has the ability to go out here and have success," Beede said. "It's a bright future for him. I've seen him pitch all spring. I'm excited to see him out there. I've been pulling for him and all the guys in the rotation. It's really cool that we're all here together. We're all good friends and to experience these moments together is surreal."

Suarez is the top left-handed prospect in the organization. He's viewed as Ty Blach-ish, with a very good slider. Manager Bruce Bochy said Suarez is stretched out enough that he should be able to throw about 90 pitches Wednesday. If he can get the win, he'll do something else the Giants haven't seen in a while. The last Giants pitcher to win his first start was Ryan Sadowski in

2009.

## **NBC Sports Bay Area**

### **Bochy, Giants have their eyes open as Mac Williamson puts the pressure on in Triple-A Alex Pavlovic**

SAN FRANCISCO — A year ago, the Giants told Christian Arroyo to go down to Triple-A and force his way up. Arroyo hit his way into the big league lineup by April 24.

Could Mac Williamson do the same thing this year?

After a big swing, Williamson was sent back to the River Cats to continue working on swing changes he made in the offseason. The results so far have certainly opened eyes. Williamson is 10 -or-17 through five games with two homers, three doubles and just two strikeouts.

“A really good start. He’s doing what we were hoping he would do — go down and make noise and play well and put pressure on us,” manager Bruce Bochy said Wednesday morning. “This is a huge year for Mac and where he’s at as far as his career. It’s time for him to dominate that league.”

Williamson, 27, now has 856 at-bats in Triple-A. He would appear to be stuck in limbo, as the Giants prefer center field options — Gregor Blanco and Gorkys Hernandez — on their bench and there are veterans at every starting outfield spot. But this is a bit of a different time for the front office and coaching staff. There is a greater sense of urgency, seen already with moves in the bullpen that will continue as the Giants aim to increase their flexibility. Bochy said he has talked to relievers already about the fact that they might be sent down regardless of their numbers, if they have options and the Giants need a fresh arm.

All involved with these decisions know that they might not survive another losing season, and the offense has been frustrating to watch through most of nine games. Hunter Pence, in the last year of his contract, has a .435 OPS so far in left field, and while the bench has been part of some comebacks there haven’t been many power flashes.

“We would find a way to put somebody in our lineup when we think he could help us,” Bochy said. “We could get creative here to mix it up. It’s a small sample, whether it’s here or in Triple-A, so let’s play some baseball and see where we’re at.”

## **The Athletic**

### **Opportunity or referendum? Giants hit the road seeking offensive production Andrew Baggarly**

Andrew Suarez had shoulder surgery during his freshman season at the University of Miami, which allowed him to get a jumpstart on his coursework. The Giants drafted him after his redshirt junior season, but he was able to leave Coral Gables having achieved a degree in

criminology and psychology.

He doesn't know anything about blood spatter. Except what he learned by watching "Dexter."

"I do love that show, though," he said.

In that spirit, then, Suarez found himself making his major league debut on Wednesday because the Giants pitching staff is currently in a state of dismemberment.

Madison Bumgarner hopes to get the pins removed from his fractured throwing hand on April 19. Jeff Samardzija is working his way back from the disabled list. Johnny Cueto and his sprained ankle just joined him there. The closer, Mark Melancon, is out with more arm problems and his status is foggier than the Outer Richmond. And last year's interim closer, Sam Dyson, continues to wander the neighborhood without GPS. He entered a tie game in the sixth inning Wednesday afternoon, and what came out the other end was a 7-3 loss and a two-out-of-three series defeat to the streaking Arizona Diamondbacks.

It's true: The Giants currently find themselves without their top three starting pitchers as well as the two relievers who were considered their most accomplished and trusted cogs a season ago.

So, naturally, the offense is the problem.

"The starting pitching has been doing a good job," said third baseman Evan Longoria, who is hitting .132 and was double-switched out of Wednesday's loss. "Offensively, we haven't done much to help them out. They've been having to grind to keep us in games. Offensively, we've got to do more. We've got to find a way to jump out ahead early and take the pressure off the pitchers."

At the end of spring, when the clubhouse was still in shock over Bumgarner's fractured hand, Longoria said that the offense would have to step up and produce to win some 8-7 games.

They are not winning 8-7 games.

Give them credit for this much. They did well on Wednesday to tax Diamondbacks left-hander Robbie Ray – he grunted as loudly as Monica Seles on the mound and threw his 100th and final pitch with two outs in the fifth inning – but they once again lacked the breakthrough hit with runners in scoring position and they couldn't muster much against Arizona's bullpen.

They are hitting .152 with runners in scoring position, and if you take a deeper look into the 12 times they've come through this season, you'll find that seven (!) of those hits were squibbers or bleeders that did not result in an RBI.

Longoria (0 for 8, six strikeouts with RISP) has been particularly un-clutch and acknowledged he

is trying too hard to make a good impression. Hunter Pence has one extra-base hit thus far. He has regressed to pulling off pitches again and he's on roller skates in the batter's box. Brandon Crawford struck out to strand the bases loaded in the fourth inning.

"It's a matter of time," manager Bruce Bochy said, "and these guys are too good."

Except that's what Bochy said early last season.

No, you can't overreact to 11 games, especially when the record is 5-6. But absolutely, yes, there should be a greater sense of urgency now — especially when the Giants just announced 35,041 tickets sold on Wednesday, their smallest gate since Sept. 15, 2010.

Don't expect Giants trainers to close their eyes, flip to a random page in "Gray's Anatomy," point a finger and create an injury for Pence so they can call up Mac Williamson (11 for 22, three homers, three doubles) from Triple-A Sacramento. But maybe, with right-handed pitchers the next two days at Petco Park, it might be time to give Brandon Belt a start in left field and get Pablo Sandoval in the lineup at first base. Maybe Sandoval should start one of those games for Longoria, too.

The Giants won just three road series all last season — and dropped all three they played in San Diego, too — but Longoria suggested that this 10-game trip to play the Padres, Diamondbacks and Angels might be just what this group needs to relax and coalesce.

"You hate to get off to the start that I did, but I think this road trip is going to be good for us," Longoria said. "Just get out on the road as a group and be able to relax a little bit, you know? Sometimes the pressures at home are tough. You get to sleep in a little more, relax a little more and I think it's going to help us."

And in Longoria's case, being on the road will mean escaping that feeling of trying to impress 40,000 pairs of eyeballs.

"I've just got to relax a little bit, understand we've got a ton of good players on this team and I don't need to do more than I'm capable of doing," he said. "I've been put in some big situations, and credit to the guys for being able to pass the baton to me, and those are situations where I've got to come through."

Longoria is accustomed to being an every day, nine-inning player. He certainly is not accustomed to exiting on double switches, and the career American Leaguer confessed to some momentary confusion the couple times when Sandoval came out to replace him. But he also is no diva about it.

"No, I mean, I think that's just the move you've got to make to give the team the best chance to win," he said. "You can't have the pitcher coming up the next inning and you're potentially burning another guy. It makes sense. It's the right move."

Even just 11 games in, the Giants have to be willing to react to what they're seeing and make the right moves. Bochy spoke prior to Wednesday's game about how the club plans to take advantage of pitchers with minor league options. He explained to several pitchers in the spring that they might have to ride the Sacramento shuttle this season for the good of the team.

Bochy will have to take the same approach with his star position players, and it's a good sign that someone like Longoria would be on board with taking an early seat and perhaps losing out on a chance to win the game in his next at-bat.

For now, Williamson can only keep doing what he's doing.

"It's a really good start," Bochy said. "He's doing what we hoped he'd do: make some noise and put some pressure on us. This is a huge year for Mac with where he's at as far as his career. It's his time to dominate that league."

Suarez showed enough last season and early in the spring to convince the Giants he could handle a starting assignment, although once Cueto's ankle forced him to miss a turn, they didn't exactly have a choice.

Suarez and Tyler Beede became the first starting pitchers to make their major league debuts for the Giants on consecutive days since Bob Knepper and Frank Riccelli on Sept. 10-11, 1976.

If Beede was a bit squirrely while issuing five walks, Suarez was a picture of calm. He did not frown or fidget when the second batter he faced, Ketel Marte, worked him for an 11-pitch at-bat that ended with a groundout.

Suarez retired the first 10 batters he faced, and the fact he appeared to smile when he squinted for the signs only added to his unruffled air. His scruffy beard was the only thing that kept him from looking like a high school kid. His uniform pants might have been two sizes too big. When he gave up a two-run home run to Paul Goldschmidt that traveled 440 feet and dented a metal bleacher in center field, he calmly made a circuit of the mound and asked for a new baseball.

His mother, grandmother and brothers made the trip from South Florida to see his debut. When he walked off the mound, several thousand fans joined them in treating him to a standing ovation.

"It was great," he said. "I haven't had one of those ... ever."

The pitch to Goldschmidt was a curveball with two strikes and catcher Nick Hundley took a wide stance as if ready to smother something in the dirt. Instead, it hovered in the zone and gave the Diamondbacks a 2-0 lead in the fourth inning.

In the fifth, Suarez executed one of those back-foot sliders to strike out Deven Marrero. He did



not execute on the very next slider he threw, and John Ryan Murphy hit a solo shot.

The Giants tied it in the fifth after Austin Jackson walked and Joe Panik singled to put runners at the corners, and no, their scoring rally did not involve a hit with RISP. Andrew McCutchen grounded into a forceout at second base that scored Jackson. Then with no runners anywhere in scoring position, Buster Posey hit a two-run homer.

It was Posey's second home run on the homestand. He hit just three homers at AT&T Park all last season.

Suarez was allowed to begin the sixth, but Marte solved him for a one-out double. And then Goldschmidt greeted Dyson with a tie-breaking double off the left field wall.

Dyson retired just one of four batters in the seventh inning, and was charged with three runs. And Bochy did not attempt to gloss over what he saw.

"We need to get him on track," Bochy said. "It's been up and down with him. You'd like to think he's going to find his game here pretty quick. The stuff is down and he's up in the zone. He's a guy with experience closing and pitching in tight ballgames, and we put him in a tight ballgame and it got away from us."

The best way to avoid that situation is to play fewer tight ballgames. Longoria noted that the offense hasn't been able to break out in the early innings — an issue that might sound familiar to you — and being able to put up early runs would alleviate that "here we go again" sense that can begin to creep between ears.

The Giants have been outscored 18-8 in the first four innings this season.

They also have faced some top-tier pitching (especially left-handed pitching) in these first 11 games while dealing with the stops and starts of a rainout along with breaks in the schedule.

Now they get Padres right-handers Bryan Mitchell and Tyson Ross, followed by left-handers Clayton Richard and Joey Lucchesi. You could see this as an opportunity. And if this offense remains on roller skates through this weekend, you might also see it as a referendum.