



Padres Press Clips

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Around the Horn: Battle looming in right field

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com [@AJCassavell](#)

With Spring Training on the horizon, MLB.com is taking an in-depth look at the 2019 Padres, breaking the team down position by position. Today, we preview the San Diego right fielders.

SAN DIEGO -- In 2018, the Padres' two best offensive players both played right field. [Hunter Renfroe](#) spent the first half of the season there, before moving to left when [Franmil Reyes](#) took over.

Renfroe made major strides, particularly in the second half last season. He finished with an .805 OPS, a 119 OPS+ and a team-high 26 homers. He was unquestionably the Padres' best hitter over the course of the entire season.

Reyes, meanwhile, grabbed hold of a starting role in July, and he ran with the opportunity, posting an .838 OPS, a 130 OPS+ and 16 homers. He was unquestionably the Padres' best hitter in the second half, after spending most of the first half in the Minors.

Few would argue that Renfroe and Reyes were the Padres' two best hitters last season. But in 2019, there might only be room for one in the starting lineup.

After an ill-fated stint at third base, [Wil Myers](#) is headed back to left field, and it's created quite the logjam in the outfield corners: three righty-hitting power bats for two places. General manager A.J. Preller has not addressed the backlog this offseason, either. He doesn't feel as though he needs to.

Reyes is coming off an offseason knee operation, and Myers missed nearly half of last season with various injuries. Both are fully healthy for the start of camp. But Preller clearly likes his depth and won't be forced into a trade.

"I definitely wouldn't be surprised if we go into the year with the group as it stands in the outfield," Preller said earlier this offseason.

Here's how that group stands, if the season were to start today:

Projected starter: Renfroe

Potential backups: Reyes, Myers, [Travis Jankowski](#), [Franchy Cordero](#)

Top 30 prospects: No. 15 [Josh Naylor](#), No. 16 Tirso Ornelas, No. 19 Jeisson Rosario, No. 27 Grant Little, No. 28. [Edward Olivares](#)

Best-case scenario

The growth of Renfroe and Reyes in 2018 was no fluke. Both continue their upward trajectories,

and the Padres have two corner outfielders who could serve as legit middle-of-the-order power threats.

That would leave Preller with a number of options. Both Renfroe and Reyes are pre-arbitration players, and they're under team control for a long time. Preller could use one of them to trade for a big-name starter. Or he could look to trade Myers, gaining some salary relief.

In any case, if Reyes and Renfroe hit like they did last season, the Padres will hold some useful cards in their inevitable trade negotiations.

Worst-case scenario

Despite his major strides at the plate, Renfroe still only reached base at a .302 clip last season. His swing-happy tendencies return, and pitchers learn to exploit them. Reyes, meanwhile, struggles to overcome offseason knee surgery. When he does, he regresses from his out-of-nowhere second half. (Reyes wasn't a Top 30 prospect, and he was left unprotected in the Rule 5 Draft prior to the 2018 season).

The Padres have a deep outfield elsewhere, with Myers and Cordero also set to play prominent roles in the corners. They really aren't counting on Renfroe *and* Reyes to be long-term lineup anchors. But they need at least one of them to be exactly that. They can't afford for both to take steps back in 2019.

A reasonable prediction

Renfroe and Reyes showed an awful lot of promise last season, and it's certainly possible that both continue their rise toward potential stardom. But the sample sizes for both players remain pretty small. Let's say one regresses and one continues to thrive. (Good luck guessing which is which.)

By the All-Star break, the Padres know who their right fielder of the future is. Preller, with a still-crowded outfield, decides to deal one of his bats, and the backup right fielder is packaged in a deal for a starter.

That leaves Myers, [Manuel Margot](#) and Reyes/Renfroe as the starting outfield, with Cordero platooning regularly at all three spots against right-handed pitching. Jankowski, meanwhile, continues to serve as a late-game defensive replacement, especially for Reyes, who will probably always have shortcomings defensively. Jankowski, too, should receive the occasional start against a tough righty.

Everything to know about Padres' closer role

MLB.com

As the 2019 season draws near and rosters take a clearer shape, MLB.com has been examining each club's current construction and projecting how personnel might look on Opening Day.

With bullpens becoming more versatile and less defined, the closer role has seen as drastic a change as any in recent years -- particularly with many clubs opting for their best relief arms in the most high-leverage situations, regardless of inning.

That trend could certainly continue in 2019, and it has led to some uncertainty about who will pitch the ninth for a handful of clubs. And for others, some of the most established closers will retain their roles. Here is a breakdown of where things stand for each club at closer.

Padres: [Kirby Yates](#)

Coming off a career year, Yates enters camp as the presumed closer in San Diego. He took over last July when [Brad Hand](#) was dealt to Cleveland. Despite a couple late-season hiccups, Yates finished with a 2.13 ERA and 90 strikeouts in 63 innings. In fact, Yates' 37.2 percent strikeout rate since joining the Padres in 2017 is highest in franchise history. It's worth noting, however, that the Padres played around with matchups quite a bit last season. Yates, a right-hander, will presumably pitch the eighth inning on occasion if he's set to face a string of tough righties. In such cases, a lefty like [Jose Castillo](#) could be saved for the ninth. -- *AJ Cassavell*

Padres roster review: Kirby Yates

Jeff Sanders

Sizing up the Padres' 40-man roster, from A to Z, heading into the 2019 season:

KIRBY YATES

- **Position(s):** Right-handed reliever
- **2019 Opening Day age:** 32
- **Bats/throws:** L / R
- **Height/weight:** 5-foot-10 / 210 pounds
- **Acquired:** Via waivers in April 2017
- **Contract status:** Will make \$3.062 million in 2019 after avoiding arbitration; will not be a free agent until 2021
- **Key stats:** 5-3, 2.14 ERA, 12 saves, 90 strikeouts, 17 walks, 0.92 WHIP, .181 opponent average (65 games, 63 innings)

STAT TO NOTE

- **1.8** – Yates' homers allowed per nine innings after the All-Star break – *after* the Brad Hand trade made him the closer – more than double his rate for the year (0.86), a career-best.

TRENDING

- **Up** – Yates started his tenure in San Diego as a waiver claim, a journeyman who'd bounced from undrafted free agency to the Rays, Yankees and Angels before getting a look in San Diego's bullpen. Today, he is the closer and an All-Star snub after setting career-bests in innings, ERA, FIP (2.54), WHIP, hits per nine innings (5.9), walks per nine innings (2.4) and strikeout-to-walk ratio.

Among relievers, Yates 16.7 percent swinging strike rate ranked eighth – behind **Josh Hader** (19.0), **Edwin Diaz** (18.9), **Blake Treinen** (18.2), **Ryan Pressly** (17.7), **Craig Kimbrel** (17.2), **Jose Leclerc** (17.2) and **Tanner Scott** (16.7). Yates very well may have been the Padres’ best reliever in the first half but the closer – **Brad Hand** – got the All-Star invite ... and ultimately a trade out of San Diego. Yates assumed the job after Hand’s departure and allowed five of his six homers over his final 25 innings (3.20 ERA). Opponents still hit just .202/.255/.394 against Yates over that span, adding weight to the notion that the homer balls were indeed flukes during a generally impressive second year in San Diego.

2019 OUTLOOK

- Yates opens the season as the Padres’ closer, although it’s not crazy to imagine scenarios in which **Andy Green** mixes and matches his way through games (Yates picked up a handful of saves that way before the Hand trade last year). He’s also a prime trade candidate because he’s good, because the Padres may not be and because he’s still two years away from free agency. The Padres flipped one waiver claim (Hand) for a top prospect (**Francisco Mejia**) last summer and could look to do so again if this season gets away from them.

PADRES POWER RANKINGS

(Currently 40 players on the 40-man roster; the list below reflects only the players reviewed thus far in the series)

1. [Wil Myers](#)
2. [Eric Hosmer](#)
3. [Austin Hedges](#)
4. [Hunter Renfroe](#)
5. [Manuel Margot](#)
6. [Francisco Mejia](#)
7. [Franchy Cordero](#)
8. [Joey Lucchesi](#)

9. Chris Paddack
10. Luis Urias
11. Franmil Reyes
12. Ian Kinsler
13. Eric Lauer
14. Matt Strahm
15. Kirby Yates
16. Dinelson Lamet
17. Garrett Richards
18. Jose Castillo
19. Craig Stammen
20. Anderson Espinoza
21. Robert Stock
22. Travis Jankowski
23. Trey Wingenter
24. Robbie Erlin
25. Miguel Diaz
26. Jacob Nix
27. Phil Maton
28. Brad Wieck
29. Greg Garcia
30. Austin Allen
31. Pedro Avila
32. Edward Olivares
33. Gerardo Reyes
34. Luis Perdomo
35. Bryan Mitchell
36. Jose Pirela
37. Brett Kennedy
38. Ty France
39. Javy Guerra
40. Luis Torrens

Column | **Move to brown means Padres should kick ballpark blues**

Tom Krasovic

Congratulations to Padres bosses for reintroducing brown into the team's uniform, cap and logos, effective 2020.

Brown provides the Pads special opportunities, and the team's braintrust of Ron Fowler and Peter Seidler is smart to seize upon it, even if Fowler, over the past several years, has sounded grumpy about brown's sartorial potential.

Foremost, brown is unique to the 30-team palette of big league baseball.

The Padres now can create a funky niche within a baseball gallery saturated with shades of blue and red.

This has worked for the stylin' A's, who wear green, white and gold like no one's business.

As part of their advantage, the Pads are adopting brown without it smelling of gimmick, because the color is a big part of their heritage. They wore brown-trimmed duds when they joined the big leagues and through their first World Series.

Understand, too, that Mr. Padre would applaud the decision.

"I'd love it," the late Tony Gwynn said in 2012, for [my article urging Fowler](#) to wear dark brown to his introductory news conference that August and announce he'd bring back the brown. "That's how we started, with brown. I'd love to see brown."

Goodbye, blue?

Question: Is dark brown — the shade of brown the team has chosen — complementary with navy blue?

This matters because Petco Park's interior is drenched in dark blue.

The 40,000 seats are dark blue. The outfield walls are navy blue. The huge backdrop beyond center field, known as the batter's eye, is deep-dark blue. The top of the dugout and other interior structures are trimmed in dark blue.

Dark blue made sense, pre-brown.

The dark blue of the uniforms and caps matched the dark blue inside the ballpark, which opened in 2004, but with the switch to brown, should the Padres change out so much blue?

“No plans to change the seat color from blue,” Fowler told me.

Said Seidler: “Ron and I are on the same page.”

My suggestion: Say goodbye to the blues.

I'd suggest dark green for the seats, and also the outfield walls and the batter's eye. In addition, give some thought to brick facades that match the Western Metal building.

Dark green or olive works well for the seats and walls at many of the 40-plus big-league parks I've visited. The color also complements the vast green outfield plus the brown-and-green infield.

Black is the color closest to dark brown, and also a color in the Giants' wardrobe; at the spectacular bayside ballpark in San Francisco, dark green is the color of the seats and railings.

Navy blue is a versatile color, but seems a sub-optimal fit with dark brown, at least in this case. “Don't agree with sub-optimal comment,” Fowler countered.

Trimming the ballpark's interior with brown would seem over the top, and changing the red, white and blue of the Petco logo isn't an option.

The brown challenge

Gwynn argued not for the Pads to bring back the actual brown uniforms of decades ago, but to figure out a stylish look with brown trim.

"You've got to make it look good," he said. "You can't just be throwing something together. It's got to be right."

He understood that brown, done right, presented fresh opportunities.

"You could make it a white uniform with brown letters and orange trim, and make it sleeveless, where you wear brown sleeves underneath," Gwynn said in 2012. "You could do a whole lot of different things. I think people would love it. And, I would bet some of these young kids would want it because it's something different."

The dearth of brown in the sports-uni universe is a reminder this won't be easy, but it can be done.

Creative Pads fans have displayed several prototypes that pop yet are traditional enough to suit baseball's incomparably long season.

My sense is the team is excited with where this is going, especially the home uniform (and, if the team's projection for '20 playoff contention pans out, so much the better, of course).

Prediction: If the designer can pull it off, the move to brown will fare no worse than a clean shot through the 5.5 hole with the bases loaded.

The Padres New Financial Outlook Has Them Ready For Manny Machado

[Anthony Witrado](#) Forbes

The San Diego Padres, known recently for not spending money on players, have gotten their debt under control and are ready and in a position to make impact free-agent signings and trades this offseason, including possibly Manny Machado. It was a little more than four years ago that A.J. Preller was dubbed a “rock star.” But now, it might as well have happened a generation ago.

The San Diego Padres made a massive splash during the 2014-15 offseason, trading for and signing the likes of Matt Kemp, James Shields, Craig Kimbrel and B.J. Upton, prompting Kemp to dub Preller the “rock star” GM. By August of the next season, after an astronomical disappointment on the field, each of those big acquisitions was gone and the Padres were back to being the penny-pinching cellar dweller the current baseball world is accustomed to.

That’s about to change, though. The Padres recently found financial freedom, and they’re ready to bring excitement back to gorgeous Petco Park, and willing break out the checkbook again if necessary.

The goal is “to field a team worthy of fans’ support with the goal of competing for a World Series championship each season,” executives said in a recent sit-down with the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#).

In that meeting, the Padres provided some insight into their frugal ways since that winter splash in 2014, and how refinancing their \$193 million inherited debt is allowing them to shop again. Essentially, the franchise’s executives prioritized paying down the debt rather than spending on players. It knocked down \$77 million of that debt – a \$45 million payment came after Major League Baseball’s [BAMTech deal](#) paid each team about \$50 million last year – and brought down the interest and principal payments.

That gives the Padres financial flexibility, and with one of the game’s [best farm systems](#) already in place, they are looking to acquire talent however they can. That is why they now want to meet with Manny Machado, one of the gems of this winter’s free-agent class.

They’re also working on prying away one of the trade market’s biggest names – prized Miami Marlins catcher J.T. Realmuto. That means the Padres are willing to part with some of their coveted prospects to put their big league team in the spotlight again.

And signing Machado – albeit not to anything resembling a [\\$30 million annual average value](#) – and acquiring and extending Realmuto are legitimate possibilities, because a lot of bad money will be coming off the books soon.

Aside from the debt relief the Padres are getting through the refinance, they are also ridding themselves of the nagging contracts they’re still paying on for that disastrous 2014-15 offseason. The Union-Tribune reported since the start of 2017, the Padres are paying Kemp, Shields, Upton and others not with the club a total of more than \$50 million.

They won’t be done paying those debts until after the 2020 season. After that, the team’s [payroll commitments](#) plummet to less than \$50 million, and below \$15 million in 2023. Those numbers include

Eric Hosmer's eight-year, \$144 million contract signed just before spring training last year, the biggest contract in franchise history to date.

To say the Padres could afford a player like Machado and an extension for Realmuto is a laughable understatement.

This is great news for the Padres, their ownership and Preller, who must be itching to prove his worth as the man in control of the roster after his first ugly foray into big spending. It's great news for the fan base as well.

But this kind of revelation comes with pressure.

Give credit to the Padres for their transparency. It's a wonderful trait to have, and a service to the fans. But now ownership will be held accountable for the on-field product more than it ever has in this regime's past.

The look into the team's books and all the hot stove rumors are creating expectations, and demands for a winner – or at least a competitor. So, that transparency carries with it serious weight.

And maybe that's the point.

Dodgers, Padres, Reds still involved in J.T. Realmuto trade talks

Bill Baer
NBC Sports

[Fancred's Jon Heyman reports](#) that the [Dodgers](#) and [Padres](#) have been “at the forefront” of trade talks involving Marlins catcher [J.T. Realmuto](#) in recent days. A third team, the Reds, have also gotten involved. [SiriusXM's Craig Mish adds](#) that the Padres are “making a late charge” for Realmuto and the Braves are also on the periphery. In Mish’s words, “The final chapter of the saga is upon us.”

After free agents [Bryce Harper](#) and [Manny Machado](#), Realmuto was arguably the most prized player who was expected to change teams this offseason. Thus far, nothing has happened, but the expectation is still that he will be wearing a new uniform at the start of spring training.

Realmuto, 27, made his first All-Star team last season, finishing the year batting .277/.340/.484 with 21 home runs, 74 RBI, and 74 runs scored in 531 plate appearances. According to FanGraphs’ version of WAR, no catcher (min. 1,000 PA) has been more valuable over the last three years. Realmuto leads at 12.3 followed by [Buster Posey](#) (10.0) and [Yasmani Grandal](#) (9.0). The team that ultimately lands Realmuto will certainly be making a significant upgrade behind the plate.

Intriguing Padres want their Manny Machado date

By Post Wire Report

January 27, 2019 | 2:16pm

It wouldn't quite be a blind date, but a mysterious one at least.

The Padres, late entering the Manny Machado sweepstakes (sleepstakes?), have expressed interest in sitting down with the free-agent slugger, [The Athletic reported Saturday](#). They want a closer look at the 26-year-old who surprisingly is not yet scooped up in an offseason in which he reportedly envisioned receiving a deal around 10 years and \$300 million.

For months, the only stated interested teams have been the Yankees, White Sox and Phillies. The Yankees appear out of the hunt after signing DJ LeMahieu and Troy Tulowitzki, along with allotting their spending toward the bullpen. The Phillies may favor Bryce Harper, and the White Sox's offer was reported to be [just seven years at \\$175 million](#), though his agent, Dan Lozano, [blasted the report](#).

The Padres may be the mystery team that steps in at the last moment. And they aren't just linked to one star but two; [MLB.com reported](#) they were after Miami catcher J.T. Realmuto.

Machado, who has played shortstop and third base in the majors, is a career .282 hitter with 175 home runs and 513 RBIs. He twice has been in the top five in Most Valuable Player voting.

Last season, he hit .297 with a career-high-tying 37 home runs and career-high 107 RBIs combined between the Orioles and Dodgers. He also sported a .367 on-base percentage, above his .335 career average, and his .538 slugging percentage exceeded his career figure of .487.

As for Realmuto, the Padres have young catcher Francisco Mejia, whom the Marlins reportedly covet. The rival Los Angeles Dodgers are also said to be in pursuit of Realmuto.

Last season, Realmuto hit .277, with an on-base percentage of .340. His 21 home runs and 74 RBIs were career highs. He has asked Miami to trade him before spring training begins.

The Padres have been building up their farm system in recent years and haven't posted a winning season since 2010. Nobody currently sees them as a contender in the National League West for 2019, but signing a big-name free agent or two would speed up the timetable.

Just last year, San Diego made a splash by signing free-agent first baseman Eric Hosmer to an eight-year, \$144 million deal.

Cellar-Dwelling MLB Team Could Bring Chaos to Bryce Harper, Manny Machado Chases

JACOB SHAFER BLEACHER REPORT

[Bryce Harper](#) and Manny Machado are generational talents in the midst of their primes. They're also unemployed as of this writing.

Eventually, both free agents will sign. Will it be with a clear-cut contender on the verge of a title?

Maybe. Then again, maybe not.

The [San Diego Padres](#), no one's idea of an [MLB](#) juggernaut, could upend the offseason in a major way by inking one or both of the winter's most coveted targets.

That's not idle speculation. According to [Jon Heyman](#) of FanCred, the Padres have "checked in" on both Machado and Harper. [Ken Rosenthal](#) of The Athletic echoed Heyman's reporting and said that while the Pads "are more likely to spend big next offseason than they are this one, they are not ruling out a run at Machado or Harper at the right price."

That last bit is important. Machado and Harper entered the winter with visions of \$300-plus million contracts dancing in their heads. Now, with spring training fast approaching, they might have to settle for less. Getting nine figures feels like a foregone conclusion, but the realities of today's tepid MLB market may bump the pair below \$200 million.

If so, the Friars could emerge as chaos-inducing, out-of-left-field suitors.

The Machado-Harper rumors have mostly centered on perennial big spenders (the [Los Angeles Dodgers](#) and [New York Yankees](#)) and up-and-coming clubs with payroll to burn (the [Chicago White Sox](#) and [Philadelphia Phillies](#)). The [Washington Nationals](#) and [Chicago Cubs](#) also seem like plausible landing spots for Harper.

You could toss in every other contender, at least in theory. But the Padres? Come on.

We're talking about a franchise that hasn't enjoyed a winning season since 2010 and hasn't qualified for the postseason since 2006. In no way do the Padres sound like players for the winter's glitziest stars.

But in a world where a pair of superstars entering their age-26 seasons are languishing unsigned in late January, anything is possible.

Consider: Last offseason, the Padres signed first baseman Eric Hosmer to an eight-year, \$144 million contract. It didn't work out especially well, as Hosmer underperformed on offense and defense and posted [minus-0.1 WAR](#), according to FanGraphs' calculation.

San Diego might be hesitant to make more big-money investments. On the other hand, it plays in a relatively soft division and could be ready for a dramatic move.

The Dodgers are the toast of the National League West on the heels of two consecutive National League pennants, but they haven't made any seismic signings this winter after extending ace Clayton Kershaw.

The [Colorado Rockies](#) are looking to build on two straight wild-card berths but haven't noticeably bolstered their roster.

The [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) and [San Francisco Giants](#) are stuck between rebuilds and retools and don't figure to be especially dangerous.

That leaves an opening for the Padres to blossom ahead of schedule behind a farm system Bleacher Report's [Joel Reuter](#) ranked No. 1 in baseball. Take burgeoning studs such as infielder Fernando Tatis Jr. and left-hander MacKenzie Gore, add an established star, and stir.

Inking Harper or Machado wouldn't make the Padres champions overnight. Guys like Tatis and Gore are likely a year or more away. San Diego needs to allow its young players to mature before they can contribute.

But in this slow-developing free-agent market, the Friars could swoop in and change the game—quite literally.

As recently as 2015, Padres general manager A.J. Preller added expensive players such as Craig Kimbrel and Matt Kemp in the hopes of contending.

Once that blueprint fizzled, San Diego went lean at the big league level while adding MiLB chips.

Is this the moment to go all-in?

It might be, after the Padres re-financed their debt and opened up the option of looser purse strings, as [Kevin Acee](#) of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* reported.

The Padres are an under-the-radar outfit. They don't boast a long history of winning (two pennants and zero titles) nor do they play in a big-time market.

That said, the weather in San Diego is amazing, and any player who signed there could put the franchise on the map.

Imagine, for example, helping the Yankees win championship No. 28 versus helping the Padres win championship No. 1. There's glory in both, but hoisting the first Commissioner's Trophy in Padres history would arguably be more notable.

Harper seems destined for a massive market with his brash personality and "make baseball fun again" [antics](#). Machado, likewise, ought to play for a club with title aspirations.

Harper has compiled [30.7 WAR](#) next to Machado's [30.2](#) as a big leaguer, per FanGraphs. Even if you don't adore WAR as a stat, that's undeniably good.

The Padres aren't the favorites to sign either or both stars, but San Diego's credible entrance into the Harper-Machado sweepstakes injects an alluring who-can-say curveball.

Will the Pads ink one or both of the best available free agents?

Maybe not. But...maybe?