



Padres Press Clips

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Robert Stock living dream pitching, and pitching some more for Padres

[Kevin Acee](#)

Robert Stock is everyone, if everyone had a bionic arm and undying will.

He hit 100 mph for the first time in a major league game during [spring training](#) and flashed an unabashed smile as he eyed the radar reading.

He was sent to San Antonio and then El Paso, his 11th and 12th minor league teams (not counting Jalisco of the Mexican Pacific Winter League), and on Tuesday in Arizona rode a golf cart shaped like a baseball wearing a ball cap from the visitor's bullpen to pitch in his 10th major league game in 22 days.

Stock has come a long way and pitched a lot along the way.

There is arguably no one on the [Padres](#) — or maybe any team — who has demonstrated a greater passion and dedication for pitching than the 28-year-old right-hander.

He swears, too, he'll pitch into his 40s — anywhere, as long as someone will let him.

“I just love to play baseball,” he said one day last month. “Why wouldn't I?”

At this point, who can doubt the guy who spent 10 years chasing the big-league dream through Johnson City and Quad Cities and Palm Beach and Altoona and Bradenton — and is now his first major league team's most-used pitcher.

Since being called up for his second major league stint July 20, Stock has thrown 28 innings over 18 appearances. He's gone more than one inning in 10 of those appearances, including three innings twice and at least two innings five other times.

While consistently throwing in the high 90s.

No other reliever in the majors averaging more than 96 mph on his fastball this season has thrown more than 23 innings since July 20.

Simply, no one does what Stock has done and continues to do.

He loves it.

“I think it’s fun to try to be out there every single day,” said Stock, who has a 2.61 ERA in his 31 total innings this season. “Maybe it’s coming from being a catcher where you’re involved in every single pitch.”

Stock was drafted in the second round in 2009 by the [St. Louis Cardinals](#) as a catcher after he caught and pitched at USC.

No, really. Both. A lot. One doubleheader against Arizona, he caught every inning except the last one, for which he came in to get the save.

Those who made the elite travel-ball circuit in the early 2000s practically sing songs about Stock.

“I haven’t seen a little league player like him,” [Eric Hosmer](#) said this spring, [recalling facing the big pitcher in 2002](#).

Stock, who is 6-foot-1, was only a few inches shorter than that back then. He was *that* 12-year-old, often the biggest kid on the field.

He’d catch and pitch and play outfield. To hear Mike Hosmer, Eric’s dad, tell it, you almost think Stock played them all at the same time.

“It was incredible,” the elder Hosmer said earlier this season. “I thought his arm was going to fall off.”

Instead, even as other athletes caught up to him and passed him in stature and physique, Stock kept throwing. But not like now.

After signing with the Padres in the offseason, Stock knew his best way to keep the Padres intrigued was throw hard. So that's what he did. He lasted longer in big-league camp than virtually anyone in the organization thought he would but was sent down to work on his breaking pitches.

He made his major league debut June 24 flashing not only a fastball that seemed to go where he wanted it, but a biting slider that did the same.

“Since spring he has learned he has the ability to use sides of the plate, go north and south, east and west,” pitching coach [Darren Balsley](#) said. “He's more of a pitcher now than he ever has been — and maintaining the velocity.”

Aside from genetics and work, an important aspect of Stock's resurgence must be discussed.

Suffice it to say it wouldn't be a surprise to walk into the Padres' clubhouse next spring and see pitchers in every corner hooked up to a machine that emits varying pulses to whatever part of the body its tendrils are attached.

Because that is how you find Stock virtually every second he is in the clubhouse — sitting in front of his locker playing a video game or reading or doing a crossword puzzle while various body parts receive stimulation from a tiny EVO UltraFit machine.

He has used the system, which accelerates muscle recovery, off and on and to varying extents since he was in junior high school. Just this past offseason, though, he made it a lifestyle.

In daily consultations, a trainer, who gets information from Stock on how much he has thrown and/or how he slept and/or how certain body parts feel, prescribes the location, type and duration of treatment Stock should undergo.

Stock will often start on his feet, move to his shins, calves, thighs, oblique area, shoulders, biceps, triceps, neck and pretty much every part in between. He sleeps most nights with some body part wrapped and receiving the pulses. A total of 12 hours a day is standard.

This is not a commercial. But it's just difficult to imagine a better endorsement than what Stock has done.

He went from reaching 98 mph last year in to *averaging* just shy of that (97.6) this year — throwing harder, more often and with more control.

It was quite an investment for a guy who before this season toiled nine years in the minors, one of those in independent ball and never above Double-A.

“Yeah,” Stock said. “But I think that any person wants to know that when they're done playing baseball they didn't leave any stone unturned for being as good as they could be.”

Stock told manager Andy Green on the morning of his first day in the big leagues he was available as much as needed. He could catcher, play the outfield or just pitch every day.

Stock, until Francisco Mejia was called up Tuesday, was the Padres' emergency catcher. He never got to put the gear on.

“That would be so awesome,” he exclaimed, his wide smile accentuating what is a boyish face.

Instead, since the All-Star break he has been pitching at a breakneck pace.

Used twice in one-inning appearances and three times for fractions of an inning before then, Stock points to the turning point in his development as a major league reliever a July 24 appearance against the Mets. That day, Green turned to Stock to spell a short-handed bullpen by pitching the fifth, sixth and seventh innings.

He did so in 37 pitches, allowing one hit and striking out five.

“Now every time I go out here I expect to go out there and throw scoreless innings,” he said a week later. “I know that won't always happen, but I expect it.”

It pretty much has happened.

That night began a run of 16 appearances in which he allowed just two earned runs before Tuesday night's wild appearance in which he recorded five outs before allowing three runs (two earned) without getting another out.

This what he was meant to do, what he wants to do.

During games, he throws more than any other reliever in the bullpen.

"He can throw every day, all the time," Balsley said. "... The resiliency of his arm is greater."

Stock seems bemused by any fuss over what he's done since being converted to the Padres' semi-long man.

He's just playing baseball, like anyone would if they could do it like him.

Minors El Paso, San Antonio lose playoff openers

Jeff Sanders

Triple-A El Paso will have to dig out of an early hole if it wants to win a second [Pacific Coast League](#) title in three years.

Right-hander [Walker Lockett](#) allowed four runs in the first inning and Fresno won, [8-7](#), in 10 innings to turn back El Paso's late rally.

Raffy Lopez singled in a run in the seventh, followed by **Dusty Coleman's** game-tying sacrifice fly. Three innings later, left-hander **Brad Wieck** gave up **Myles Straw's** go-ahead single to take the loss.

Coleman drove in two runs on a second-inning homer After **Allen Craig's** solo shot.

Ty France, **Brett Nicholas** and Lopez each had two hits.

Lockett allowed seven runs – five earned – on four hits and five walks in 4 2/3 innings in the start.

The bullpen allowed just Wieck's run over 5 1/3 scoreless innings.

Left-hander **Logan Allen** (4-0, 1.63) will start Thursday's game opposite Fresno right-hander **Trent Thornton** (9-8, 4.42).

Missions drop playoff opener

In his fifth start for Double-A San Antonio, **Michel Baez** struck out eight but allowed four runs in five-plus innings in a [7-0 loss](#) to Corpus Christi in its Texas League playoff opener.

Baez allowed two runs in the third and both of the runners he faced in the sixth scored. Baez walked two and threw 63 of his 99 pitches for strikes.

Right-hander **Ronald Bolanos** allowed three runs – one earned – in 1 2/3 innings in his Texas League debut.

Singles from **Buddy Reed, Owen Miller, Kyle Overstreet** and **Hudson Potts** accounted for all of San Antonio's offense.

Right-hander **Emmanuel Ramirez** (2-, 2.63) will start Thursday's Game 2 for the Missions opposite Corpus Christi right-hander **Corbin Martin** (7-2, 2.97).

Transactions

- RHPs **David Bednar, Ronald Bolanos** and **Dauris Valdez** and LHP **Nick Margevicius** transferred from Lake Elsinore to San Antonio.
- INF **Owen Miller** transferred from Fort Wayne to San Antonio.

Column | Is Andy Green the right manager for Padres?

Bryce Miller

I understand fans who wonder whether [Padres](#) manager Andy Green is the right guy, the end-goal guy, the finish-line guy. This is his first gig, after all — and it's happening amid unusual and, to a large degree, unprecedented circumstances.

What I can't understand is anyone who can definitely, unequivocally say that he *isn't* the right guy.

The truth is, there's simply no way to know.

If Green's only directive this season was to win, would we see this dizzying, Macy's-level parade of pitchers who weren't alive when George H.W. Bush handed over the presidency to Bill Clinton? Would we see [Wil Myers](#) change positions ... and change positions ... and change positions?

Would we see a guy like Jose Pirela with more at-bats than a guy like Hunter Renfroe, unless it's a fact-finding mission or a chance to bump up trade stock? Would we see rookie pitchers pushed to see if they can go a full six innings, while fans scream at TVs? Would we see batting lineups shuffled like a back-alley shell game?

Would we see Bryan Mitchell, at all?

You can argue that Green should not have bunted in a certain situation or replaced a defensive liability late in the game in another situation. But think: What if those are the marching orders?

Name another manager who would consistently win with the tools Green has been handed? Boston's Alex Cora? Cleveland's Terry Francona? Doc Roberts? Try again.

Someone might mine a few more wins, if someone was managing for job security rather than managing for the future. If you believe in the plan that magically

transformed the No. 27-or-so farm system into the undisputed No. 1 in a mere blink, you're either all in or you're not.

Either you're in — through the tinkering, testing and all — or you're not.

That's not on Green.

Of course, that's a tricky balance for the front office. It's tough to say wins aren't the priority when you ask fans to pay major league prices. The tea leaves, though, are piled upon tea leaves.

So if you don't like what it takes to make the youth-based sausage, vote by staying away from Petco Park. But to judge Green so absolutely is akin to blaming a bus driver because the mechanic forgot to install a new battery and change the spark plugs. In life, you often work with what you've got. [As colleague Kevin Acee noted Tuesday](#), Green's had 15 players make their big-league debuts and started a rookie pitcher in nearly 40 percent of his games.

That's not to absolve Green of everything, of course. [I wrote a recent column](#) about the lack of development. When pitchers forget to back up plays, outfielders fire to the wrong base and hitters wildly chase with two strikes, the buck stops with the manager and staff.

We're learning more about Green as his patchwork team learns, as well. [Myers' criticism about extra drills](#), captured in a streaming video-game feed, was the type of grumbling virtually all of us have made when jobs grind. That, however, doesn't mean Myers didn't mean what he said. Just because it was an unfortunate situation, doesn't make it any less honest.

And an aside: If you're last in the [National League](#), you don't get to complain about extra work. If you make three errors in a game, as Myers did just days after griping, no matter the length of time at the position, you embrace whatever the boss suggests in order to fix it.

That said, I've seen and heard conversations between Myers and Green in the clubhouse. If there's a lack of big-picture respect, you don't see it. The opposite optics exist, actually.

Public dust-ups like this one, though, will test Green's mettle. Until now, the man managing constant transition has mostly enjoyed a free pass. This is the first time he's experienced some legitimate heat, from fans and a big name in the clubhouse. Will that heat ultimately forge, or melt?

Another question: If you're complaining about Green this season, did you give him credit for the clear surge — with challenges just as limiting and large — in the second half last season? You can't discuss one without the other.

And, again, that's the thing. We don't know if Green is the right guy, but there's no way to be certain he isn't.

The Padres made a huge investment in international and youth talent, nearing \$100 million. If you empty the checkbook on a new car, you don't simply hammer the accelerator every time you drive to the grocery store. You find out if it can corner. You determine how the sound system works. You find out what you've got.

If Green had the tools and team with a clear mandate to win, that's one thing. Right now, he's the great experimenter. The find-out-what-we've-got guy. The person tasked to peek under the hood, kick the tires and chart the gas mileage.

Should Franmil Reyes be in the long-term plans? Is Travis Jankowski a fourth outfielder? What do the Padres have in Robert Stock? Would you want Green to manage every outing like it's Game 7 of the World Series, inching the needle from 65 to 71 wins, if it cost you two young arms in the future?

That's why we don't know, and can't know, about Green. Not fully. Not yet.

Strahm excelling in 'pen but eyes rotation spot

Lefty says he'll be preparing himself as a starter in offseason

By AJ Cassavell

SAN DIEGO -- So long as he's pitching in the big leagues, [Matt Strahm](#) isn't all that concerned about his role. He goes to great lengths to make that very clear. When Strahm is asked about starting, he points out that he's very happy to pitch in the 'pen. When he's asked about pitching in the 'pen, he adds that he'd be open to starting, too.

This offseason, however, there's no in between.

"I'm showing up to camp as a starter," Strahm said. "I'm going to come in, hopefully get an opportunity to compete for one of those five spots. As soon as October 1 hits, I'm preparing myself as a starter."

Strahm, 26, has already mastered the bullpen this season, having posted a 2.12 ERA and a sub-1 WHIP in his return from surgery on his torn left patellar tendon.

Following that surgery in July 2017, Strahm was traded from Kansas City to San Diego, a deal that is quickly becoming one of general manager A.J. Preller's best. He sent [Trevor Cahill](#), [Ryan Buchter](#) and [Brandon Maurer](#) to the Royals for [Travis Wood](#), [Esteury Ruiz](#) and Strahm.

Wood was released shortly thereafter. But Strahm has been a revelation, and Ruiz is a promising prospect who can play multiple infield spots and stole 49 bags at Class A Fort Wayne this season.

"[The trade] was another piece of the puzzle, potentially," Green said. "Matt Strahm could be right in the middle of our rotation next year, or he could be absolutely dominant out of the bullpen. Ruiz could come up someday and be a utility infielder that bounces around, steals bases, gets huge hits."

Green was quick to add that the Royals did what any sensible team would do. Knowing they were in their final year of contention before a number of free agents departed, they went for it.

But there are perks to being involved in a deal in which your trade partner's window is closing. Fourteen months later, the Padres are the clear winners -- and so is Strahm.

"I got traded from a team that's probably, now, two years behind where we are," Strahm said. "You look at it, if I wasn't traded, I'd be two years behind the Padres. I got traded, so I got to jump a little further on, and I'm super excited to see what these young guys can do to help us win."

San Diego's rotation features four rookies, and none of the five spots next season have been locked up. The Padres view Strahm as the potential ace up their sleeve. He's immensely talented but hasn't yet been turned loose.

Because of his injury, Strahm has been treated with caution, his workload limited. Green hadn't used Strahm in consecutive games this season until the final two days of August.

"I totally understand the situation," said Strahm, who has made 40 starts in his career between the Minors and Majors. "But I'm still always in Andy's ear telling him I'm ready."

He's in luck. Next spring, the kid gloves are off. Strahm could easily be a pivotal everyday bullpen piece. But the Padres see value in a transition to the rotation, and they're going to test it.

"I would rather see guys get every opportunity to start until they can prove they can't," said pitching coach Darren Balsley. "He's already proven he's a very good reliever."

"There's no reason he couldn't be a starter," said catcher [Austin Hedges](#). "He's got everything - the makeup, the command. He's got everything it takes to be a starter. And the cool thing is that we know he could relieve, so if it doesn't work out, then it's fine."

Balsley brings up [Tyson Ross](#) and [Drew Pomeranz](#) as hybrids who went to San Diego and thrived when given regular starting opportunity. He thinks the same is possible with Strahm, but he cautions that Strahm first needs to build strength and stamina during the offseason. (He wasn't afforded that opportunity last year, coming off major knee surgery.)

Hedges plays devil's advocate and brings up [Brad Hand](#). Two years ago, the Padres were similarly tempted to use Hand in the rotation. They decided against it, noting Hand's struggles as a starter with Miami. Sure enough, Hand quickly developed into an elite left-handed relief weapon.

"Brad Hand wasn't good as a starter, but then he was arguably the best reliever in baseball," Hedges said. "We don't have to push anything, because [Strahm] could be the best reliever in baseball. He could be Brad Hand."

Well, not exactly Brad Hand.

"He's got four *plus* pitches," Hedges said of Strahm. "That's the difference between him and Brad Hand."

That pitch mix is particularly enticing. And in some ways, it's under-utilized when Strahm pitches short stints out of the 'pen and relies heavily on his fastball and slider. Even in his five starts this season, he was used as an opener and never lasted much longer than one trip through the opposing lineup.

Sounds like Strahm will get the chance to do that next season -- though he offers a quick reminder that he'd be happy either way.

"No preference," he said with a smile. "I feel like I can excel at both. It's probably unique, legitimately not caring which you do. But as far as the offseason goes, I'll prepare as a starter."

This Day in Padres History, 9/6

By Bill Center

Sept. 6, 1975—Right-hander **Brent Strom** allows six hits and a walk with four strikeouts in a complete game as the Padres scored a 2–1 win over Houston in the Astrodome.

Sept. 6, 1990—**Bip Roberts** hit a three-run, walk-off homer with two out in the 10th to give the Padres a 3–0 victory over Houston at San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium. **Bruce Hurst** and **Greg Harris** combined on the five-hit shutout.

Sept. 6, 1999—**Tony Gwynn** hits a three-run homer as the Padres defeat the Pirates 4–3 in Pittsburgh.

Sept. 6, 2006—Pinch-hitter **Paul McNulty** hits a two-run, walk-off homer with one out in the 11th inning to give the Padres a 2–0 victory over Colorado at Petco Park.