



Padres Press Clips

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Padres roster review: Bryan Mitchell

Jeff Sanders

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

BRYAN MITCHELL

- **Position(s):** Right-handed starting pitcher
- **2019 Opening Day age:** 27
- **Bats/throws:** L / R
- **Height/weight:** 6-foot-3 / 210 pounds
- **Acquired:** Via trade with [New York Yankees](#) in December 2017
- **Contract status:** Will make \$900,000 in 2019; will be arbitration-eligible for a second time in 2020 and eligible for free agency in 2022.
- **Key stats:** 2-4, 5.42 ERA, 38 strikeouts, 43 walks, 1.75 WHIP, .294 opponent average (16 games, 11 starts, 73 innings).

STAT TO NOTE

- **18.3** – The percent of curveballs thrown by Mitchell in 2018, a career-low. His breaking ball was a selling point when the Padres acquired Mitchell from the Yankees, but it wasn't a crisp weapon for him very often in 2018. Opponents logged a career-worst .161 isolated power against the pitch in 2018, as he gave up a career-worst 1.5 homers per nine innings.

TRENDING

- **Down** – In 2016, the Padres flipped LHP [Drew Pomeranz](#) to the [Red Sox](#) for top prospect [Anderson Espinoza](#). The organization might have had similar aspirations when they traded [Jabari Blash](#) to the Yankees for Mitchell and 3B [Chase Headley](#)'s \$13 million salary. While Headley was a potential short-term fit at third base (which went awry quickly), the Padres were eyeing Mitchell's ceiling as a hurler who posted a 3.18 ERA in 189 1/3 innings in Triple-A. The hope was a guaranteed job in a rotation would allow Mitchell to stretch his legs like never before. It didn't happen. Mitchell allowed five runs in five innings in his Padres debut, walked six in 5 2/3 shutout innings in his next start and was sitting on a 7.08 ERA when he landed on the DL in mid-June with a right elbow impingement. The Padres weren't going to miss him, either: He had an 8.27 ERA in 16 1/3 innings as a reliever after trying the team's patience as a starting pitcher. Yet after a two-plus-month stay on the DL, Mitchell teased at his potential. In four September starts, Mitchell won two games, posted a 2.19 ERA, struck out 15 in 24 2/3 innings and held hitters to a .239/.300/.370 batting line.

2019 OUTLOOK

- More than likely, Mitchell's last four games saved his spot on the roster, at least entering camp. The Padres have already parted ways with LHP **Clayton Richard**, although they'll pay half his \$3 million salary this year. Mitchell is due \$900,000, which will be an even easier sum to eat if he starts 2019 the way he began 2018. The Padres are short on veteran options for the rotation but long on young prospects, some of whom Mitchell will have to hold off this spring to even break camp on the opening day roster.

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. [Eric Hosmer](#)
2. [Austin Hedges](#)
3. [Manuel Margot](#)
4. [Francisco Mejia](#)
5. [Franchy Cordero](#)
6. [Joey Lucchesi](#)
7. [Ian Kinsler](#)
8. [Eric Lauer](#)
9. [Dinelson Lamet](#)
10. [Jose Castillo](#)
11. [Anderson Espinoza](#)
12. [Travis Jankowski](#)
13. [Robbie Erlin](#)
14. [Miguel Diaz](#)
15. [Phil Maton](#)
16. [Greg Garcia](#)
17. [Austin Allen](#)
18. [Pedro Avila](#)
19. [Bryan Mitchell](#)
20. [Brett Kennedy](#)
21. [Ty France](#)
22. [Javy Guerra](#)

Removed from the roster

- [Carlos Asuaje](#) (claimed by the Rangers)

Mark Loretta leaves Padres for Cubs coaching job

Jeff Sanders

Mark Loretta on Wednesday joined [Cubs](#) manager [Joe Maddon](#)'s staff as a bench coach. The one-time Padre turned special assistant will find plenty of familiar faces on the north side in Chicago.

Two former [Padres](#) – first base coach [Will Venable](#) and quality assurance coach [Chris Denorfia](#) – are already on Maddon's coaching staff. The front office also includes General Manager Jed Hoyer, farm director Jaron Madison and vice president Jason McLeod, all of whom were Padres executives when Loretta joined the Padres front office in January 2010.

Loretta, 47, had spent the previous nine years as a special assistant to baseball operations.

Before that, he played three of his 15 big league seasons in San Diego, representing the Padres in the 2004 All-Star Game in a campaign in which he paired an .886 OPS with career-highs in homers (16), RBIs (76) and runs (108).

Loretta, who lived in Rancho Santa Fe during his front office tenure with the Padres, also played for the Brewers, Astros, Red Sox and Dodgers before retiring in January 2010.

Erik Greupner promoted to Padres president of business operations

Jeff Sanders

The Padres have promoted Erik Greupner to president of business operations, the team announced Wednesday. Greupner had been serving as the chief operating officer and handling day-to-day management of business operations since team President Mike Dee and the Padres parted in October 2016.

Greupner originally joined the organization in December 2010 as a senior vice president (general counsel). Before joining the Padres, Greupner worked for Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, an international law firm. He earned his Juris Doctor degree *magna cum laude* from the USD School of Law and his Bachelor of Arts degree from Wheaton College in Illinois.

Greupner currently serves as the chairman of the advisory board of trustees of Rady Children's Hospital Foundation and on the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce's board of directors.

Executive Chairman Ron Fowler and General Partner Peter Seidler issued a statement with the news of Greupner's promotion:

“Erik has been instrumental in the growth of our business since joining the Padres over eight years ago. He set the standard for operational excellence within the organization and has delivered tangible results off the field. We look forward to an exciting new chapter for our business operations under Erik's leadership.”

Here's how the Padres can contend in 2020

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

Jan. 2nd, 2019

SAN DIEGO -- The calendar only just flipped to 2019. What better time to start talking about '20 than right now?

In all seriousness, the year ahead should teach us an awful lot about the Padres, even if it's unlikely the team contends for a playoff berth. Given their loaded farm system and controllable young talent, the goal of a playoff push seems very attainable in 2020.

But there are quite a few steps the Padres must first take to ensure they're in position for that '20 success. With that in mind, here's a blueprint that could turn San Diego into a contender over the next 12 months.

Find a front-line starter

The organizational pitching depth is unquestioned. But if the goal is to compete in 2020, that depth only gets the Padres so far. Their rotation posted the highest ERA in the National League last year.

General manager A.J. Preller has a deep pool to trade from, and you can bet he's going to explore those options. In the last six months, the Padres have been extensively linked with [Chris Archer](#) and [Noah Syndergaard](#). The next big-name starter to hit the trade market is going to be linked with the Padres, too.

Get [Eric Hosmer](#) back on track

Hosmer recorded arguably the worst season of his career in 2018, posting a .720 OPS and a 1.4 [Wins Above Replacement](#). But he has a history of bouncing back, and the Padres brass seems confident he's got the work ethic to do so. They've touted the benefits of a normal offseason -- after last winter's free-agent uncertainty.

Of course, it could take a major swing overhaul for Hosmer, whose [ground-ball rate ranked second](#) in the Majors last season. But he's indicated that he's open to changes, and it's worth remembering that Hosmer was a 4.1 WAR player in Kansas City in 2017.

Let the kids play

[Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) turned 20 Wednesday. He's MLB Pipeline's [No. 2-ranked prospect](#) and presumably the Padres' future at shortstop, and he's probably going to be in San Diego by June.

That said, it's not fair to expect him to thrive immediately at one of the sport's most demanding positions. The same goes for second baseman [Luis Urias](#) and catcher/outfielder [Francisco Mejia](#). This is the season to experience that learning curve. If the Padres enter 2020 with a battle-tested group of youngsters, they'll be better off for it -- even if it means a few losses in '19.

Solidify center field

Between [Manuel Margot](#) and [Franchy Cordero](#), there should be an internal solution here. Margot was outstanding during his 2017 rookie campaign before taking a step back in '18. Cordero has flashed brilliance with five tools, but he missed the final four months last season following elbow surgery. Ideally for the Padres, Margot will bounce back in '19, and Cordero could serve as a platoon option at all three spots.

"What we saw as a rookie, what we saw in the Minor Leagues, that's the player we think he is," Preller said of Margot.

But it almost doesn't matter whether it's Margot or Cordero (whose OPS was approaching .900 before his elbow injury). The Padres are pretty set at the corners. They just need one of those two to anchor to the middle.

Enhance the rotation competition

Here's an underrated aspect of the Padres' goal to better themselves: Their young starting pitchers need to be pushed. Sure, [Joey Lucchesi](#) and [Eric Lauer](#) could be nice rotation pieces moving forward. But the Friars would be better off if they had six or seven of those pieces battling for time.

In some ways, they've already set themselves up nicely for a rotation crunch late in 2019. [Dinelson Lamet](#) should return from Tommy John surgery midseason, and [Garrett Richards](#) might be back at the end of the year. Prospects Logan Allen, Chris Paddock and Cal Quantrill will push for time, too. The best pitchers will rise to the top, and with the addition of a front-line arm, a formidable '20 rotation could fall into place.

Find a third baseman

Let's play some hypotheticals here. Say the five items above all come to fruition. That leaves the Padres with:

- A promising rotation
- A still-formidable bullpen
- A deep outfield with a center-field option
- Potentially two or three good young catchers
- A revamped Hosmer at first base
- Urias and Tatis in the middle infield

That's a pretty complete team. What's missing? Yep, still third base.

Preller will surely be active this winter in his search for a long-term third baseman. But it's also possible the Padres merely find a stopgap until next winter.

That takes us to another hypothetical: Next offseason, two of the game's elite third basemen hit the open market in [Nolan Arenado](#) and [Anthony Rendon](#). If the rest of the roster has fallen into place, the Padres might use their chips to address their only remaining hole. How's this for a San Diego lineup at this time next year?

1. Urias, 2B
2. Tatis, SS
3. Rendon, 3B
4. Hosmer, 1B
5. **Franmil Reyes**, RF
6. **Hunter Renfroe**, LF
7. Margot/Cordero, CF
8. **Austin Hedges**/Mejia, C

There are quite a few dominoes left to fall. But the path toward contention is getting clearer. And we're going to learn an awful lot in 2019.

Tatis Jr. leads top prospects in winter leagues

By Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com [@GoldenSombrero](#)

8:44 AM PST

We're just a few days into 2019 and [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) is already having a strong year.

The [Padres' No. 1 prospect](#) celebrated his 20th birthday on Wednesday by going 2-for-3 with a triple and two runs as he helped lead Estrellas Orientales over Leones del Escogido, 4-1, in postseason play in the Dominican Winter League. He also reached once via a walk and stole a base.

Tatis has been arguably the top hitter in the DWL so far in the postseason. Through eight games, the [No. 2 overall prospect](#) ranks among the league leaders in average (.345, second), OPS (1.096, first), hits (10, first), home runs (two, first) and total bases (19, first). It follows a regular-season campaign with Estrellas in which he hit .263/.379/.488 with 11 extra-base hits, seven steals and 17 runs in 23 games.

Playing all of 2018 as a 19-year-old in Double-A, Tatis posted a .286/.355/.507 line with 16 homers and 16 steals over 88 games in the Texas League before requiring season-ending surgery on his left thumb in mid-July.

Here's a look at how top prospects, as well as some other notable players, are performing so far in offseason leagues.

Australia

[D.J. Burt](#), 2B, [Royals' No. 28](#) -- The 2014 fourth-round pick has at least one hit in four straight games and eight of his last 10, including five multihit performances. He's hit .382 in that span, which in turn has improved his ABL average from .291 to .326 through 27 games for Melbourne. The 23-year-old second baseman spent the entire regular season at Class A Advanced Wilmington, hitting .280/.367/.371 with 24 extra-base hits and 32 stolen bases in 111 games.

[Tristan Gray](#), 2B, [Rays](#) -- Gray tied a bow on his 2018 by homering in back-to-back games for Perth on Dec. 30-31. He hit a pair of homers in the first game, delivering a two-run shot followed by a three-run blast in his first two trips to the plate to finish 2-for-4 with five RBIs, and then went deep again the following day to push his ABL total to six homers. Acquired from the Pirates last February in the [Corey Dickerson](#) trade, Gray showed impressive power potential by posting 53 extra-base hits, including 13 homers and 38 doubles, over 118 games in the pitcher-friendly Class A Advanced Florida State League.

Dominican Republic

[Genesis Cabrera](#), LHP, [Cardinals' No. 13](#) -- Cabrera has allowed an earned run but no hits in his three postseason relief outings for Tigres del Licey, striking out three in 3 2/3 innings. The

22-year-old left-hander -- acquired from Tampa Bay last July in the [Tommy Pham](#) trade -- pitched to a 1.26 ERA and .152 BAA with 21/2 K/BB in 14 1/3 frames (20 appearances) during the DWL regular season.

Mexico

[Isaac Paredes](#), SS, [Tigers' No. 13](#) -- Paredes started at second base and went 1-for-3 on Wednesday as Obregon edged Mazatlan, 3-1, to improve to 2-0 in the best-of-seven opening round. The 19-year-old finished the regular season on a tear, slashing .333/.512/.533 with 10 hits, nine RBIs and 11 walks over his final 10 games, and was 1-for-2 with a walk in the playoff opener. Playing in 123 games last season between Class A Advanced Lakeland and Double-A Erie, Paredes hit .278/.359/.456 with 15 homers and 28 doubles while tallying 70 RBIs and runs scored apiece.

Venezuela

[Isan Diaz](#), 2B, [Marlins' No. 9](#) -- Diaz tallied at least one hit in three of his final four games to finish his VWL campaign with a .272/.348/.368 slash line in 33 games with Gigantes de Carolina. He hit one home run and had eight extra-base hits overall to go along with a 13/20 BB/K. The 22-year-old second baseman was challenged this past season in the upper Minors and hit just .232 in 119 games between Double-A and Triple-A, though still finished with 13 homers -- his fourth straight season with at least 13 homers -- 23 doubles and 14 steals while reaching base at a .340 clip.

Allen among prospects who drove ball best in '18

By Mike Rosenbaum MLB.com [@GoldenSombrero](#)

Jan. 2nd, 2019

Here at MLB Pipeline, the ringing in of the New Year means we're that much closer to rolling out our 2019 preseason rankings. Until then, however, we're continuing to look back at some of the more impressive hitters from the '18 season.

The first installment of this new stats-based series examined [10 hitters](#) who, based on specific batted-ball data from our Prospects Stats tool, seem poised for more success in 2019.

This week, we're breaking down a crop of last year's more successful hitters -- specifically, players who had the highest percentage of their line drives and fly balls go for hits. It's a roundabout way of highlighting which hitters drive the baseball the most effectively in absence of [Statcast™](#) data.

There are some obvious caveats here, of course. Namely, that the numbers used represent raw data and therefore are not adjusted for league and/or park factors. Also, the sample looks only at hitters who rank among their club's Top 30 prospects and had at least 350 batted balls during the Minor League regular season.

Meanwhile, after identifying select players in the series' first installment, this week's list is presented in ranked order. The spray charts below display all line drives and fly balls by each player in the Minor Leagues during the 2018 season.

One notable name absent from the list is Vladimir Guerrero Jr. The game's top prospect doesn't appear here because he fell just shy of the minimum for BIP (350). Of the 328 balls Guerrero put into play last season, 26.8 percent (88) were line drives or fly balls that went for hits, which would rank him just outside the Top 10 on this list.

1. Colton Welker, 3B, [Rockies' No. 2 \(No. 94 overall\)](#) -- 31.2 percent

Welker, 21, won the Class A Advanced California League batting title in 2018 with a .333 average. He also led the circuit in hits, tallying 151 in 114 games, and put together hitting streaks of 15 and 20 games along the way, all while showing the ability to lace line drives to all fields. His home/road splits (.572 SLG, 9 HR vs. .750 OPS, 4 HR) suggest that he did benefit from Lancaster's extremely hitter-friendly environment, and some evaluators are wary about his power potential as a result, but Welker's career .337 average in 232 Minor League games, as well as his feel for using the opposite field, provides reason for all-around optimism.

2. [Austin Allen, C/1B, Padres' No. 25](#) -- 30.0 percent

Spending all of 2018 in the Double-A Texas League, Allen totaled exactly 22 home runs and 31 doubles for a second straight year and finished second in the circuit in slugging (.506). The exit velocities he posted in the [Arizona Fall League](#) confirm that Allen hits the ball hard, and the 6-foot-2, left-handed hitter has long shown that he can get to his huge pull-side power during

games. Meanwhile, Allen's overall production -- he was a .290/.351/.506 hitter in '18 -- stands to improve if he can make gains against same-side pitching.

3. Elehuris Montero, 3B, [Cardinals' No. 7](#) -- 29.8 percent

Montero made the jump to full-season ball for his age-19 season and garnered Class A Midwest League MVP honors after leading the circuit in batting (.322), slugging (.529) and OPS (.910). Altogether, he finished with a .315/.371/.504 line, 16 homers and 37 doubles in 127 games across two levels. The 6-foot-3, 195-pounder impresses evaluators with his knack for squaring up the baseball from line to line -- a product of his excellent hand-eye coordination, bat speed and barrel awareness -- though his power plays mostly to his pull-side at the present. That said, it's not difficult to envision many of Montero's doubles clearing fences as he adds strength to his projectable frame.

4. [Kevin Kramer](#), 2B/SS, [Pirates' No. 7](#) -- 29.7 percent

A revamped swing with an emphasis on hitting the ball in the air paid immediate dividends for Kramer, as he finished with 35 doubles (second most in the Triple-A International League) and 15 home runs after going deep just 10 times over his first 233 pro contests. The power surge came with the tradeoff of an elevated strikeout rate, though it didn't keep Kramer from finishing second in the circuit's batting race (.311 average).

5. Alex Kirilloff, OF, [Twins' No. 2](#) (No. 10 overall) -- 29.6 percent

Kirilloff showed no lingering effects from the Tommy John surgery that cost him all of 2017 as he produced an obscene .348/.392/.578 line with 71 extra-base hits (20 HR, 44 2B, 7 3B) over 130 games between the Midwest and Florida State Leagues, at age 20. The scouting supports the stats, too, as there might not be a more promising hitter in the Minors (save for Vladimir Guerrero Jr., of course) than Kirilloff. He shows a potential plus-plus hit tool from the left side of the plate, combining athleticism, bat speed and barrel control with a mature approach and a preternatural feel for using the entire field. Meanwhile, the fact that Kirilloff hit over half (11) of his home runs to the opposite field (in two largely pitcher-friendly tough leagues) portends at least plus power.

6. Peter Alonso, 1B, [Mets' No. 2](#) (No. 58 overall) -- 27.9 percent

Alonso's power was well documented in 2018, and not just because he finished tied for the Minor League lead with 36 home runs. The right-handed slugger became a Statcast™ favorite when he launched a 113.6 mph moonshot homer during the Futures Game, and he furthered that reputation in the Arizona Fall League by hitting the ball harder (116.3 mph double) than any Mets player since Statcast™ started tracking data in '15. And if that wasn't enough confirmation of Alonso's prodigious power, he also parked a home run to center field (110 mph exit velo) on a 103 mph fastball from Nate Pearson in the annual Fall Stars Game.

7. Brent Rooker, 1B/OF, [Twins' No. 7](#) -- 27.7 percent

Rooker showed plenty of power in his first full season as he posted a 45.3 percent extra-base hit rate to finish among the Double-A Southern League leaders in homers (22, second) and doubles (32, first). An ability to consistently hit the ball in the air earned Rooker a spot in this series' first installment, and he has the potential to improve even more in that regard given his current swing-and-miss tendencies and pull-oriented approach.

8. Corey Ray, OF, [Brewers' No. 2](#) -- 27.5 percent

After a disastrous first full season in 2017, Ray bounced back to hit 27 home runs, 32 doubles and steal 37 bags over 135 contests to win the Double-A Southern League's MVP Award. Ray's

emergence as a legit power hitter stemmed from him rediscovering his feel for driving the ball to all fields -- his seven opposite-field homers matched his entire homer total from '17 -- and he consistently hammered inner-half fastballs. The power-speed pairing should make Ray a useful big leaguer, but as a career .239 hitter who struck out at a 29.3 percent clip last season (and 31 percent in '17), it's fair to question the future value of his hit tool.

9. Nate Lowe, 1B, [Rays' No. 13](#) -- 27.0 percent

A 13th-round pick out of Mississippi State in 2016, Lowe followed a nondescript first full season with an absolutely massive breakout campaign in '18, hitting .330/.416/.568 with 27 homers, 32 doubles and 102 RBIs as he ascended from Class A Advanced Charlotte to Triple-A Durham. Behind improved bat speed and a looser, more athletic left-handed swing, Lowe showed that he could drive the ball over the fence to the biggest part of any park, while still exhibiting a discerning eye at the plate against increasingly advanced pitching.

10. Keston Hiura, 2B, [Brewers' No. 1](#) (No. 30 overall) -- 26.9 percent

Hiura's MVP campaign in Arizona Fall League was a fitting end to an impressive first full season, in which he slashed .293/.357/.464 with 13 homers and 34 doubles while reaching Double-A. Simply put, the 22-year-old has a gorgeous right-handed swing, as he's short but explosive to the ball, with a knack for finding the barrel and impacting the ball with authority to all fields. As a result, Hiura, who projects as at least a plus hitter with plus game power, has the ingredients needed to become a middle-of-the-order force for Milwaukee in the near future.

The next 10 on the list

[Josh Fuentes](#), 3B/1B, Rockies' No. 17 -- 26.8%

[Eloy Jimenez](#), OF, [White Sox No. 1](#) (No. 3 overall) -- 26.4%

Laz Rivera, SS, White Sox No. 28 -- 26.4%

Kevin Smith, SS/3B, [Blue Jays' No. 6](#) -- 26.4%

Tyler Ramirez, OF, [Athletics' No. 17](#) -- 26.2%

[Christin Stewart](#), OF, [Tigers' No. 6](#) -- 26.0%

Matt Thaiss, 1B, [Angels' No. 5](#) -- 25.1%

Gavin Lux, SS/2B, [Dodgers' No. 4](#) (No. 82 overall) -- 24.9%

[Lane Thomas](#), OF, Cardinals' No. 21 -- 24.9%

C.J. Chatham, SS, [Red Sox's No. 8](#) -- 24.9%

#PadresOnDeck: Tirso Ornelas, Jeisson Rosario, Jorge Oña Outfielders to Watch

FriarWire

Jan 2

By Bill Center

At the moment, the Padres have a surplus of outfielders.

But today's surplus could be tomorrow's shortage—although the Padres have no shortage of young outfielders in their minor league pipeline.

Three of the Padres' more interesting outfield prospects were members of the ballclub's heralded 2016 international signing class—**Tirso Ornelas**, **Jeisson Rosario** and **Jorge Oña**.

Teenagers Ornelas and Rosario are ranked among the Padres' Top 30 prospects. Cuban native Oña was until he had an off-season in 2018. A look at the trio in order of their prospect rankings by the MLB Pipeline.

— Tirso Ornelas won't turn 19 until March 11. The 6-foot-3, 200-pound left-handed hitter is a native of Tijuana and was ranked the No. 28 international prospect by MLB.com in the 2016 class. He is ranked the [Padres' No. 16 prospect](#).

Ornelas played 86 games for Single-A Fort Wayne last season as an 18-year-old before suffering a season-ending injury. Ornelas hit .252 for the TinCaps with a .341 on-base percentage and a .392 slugging percentage for a .732 OPS. He had 13 doubles, three triples, eight home runs, 40 RBIs and 45 runs scored in 350 plate appearances. He also drew 40 walks against just 69 strikeouts.

The Padres are high on Ornelas' bat control and his power ceiling. The right fielder worked out for a team in the Mexican Pacific League this off-season. As a 17-year-old in 2017, Ornelas hit .276 in the Arizona Rookie League with 11 doubles, three triples and three homers in 53 games for a .808 OPS.

— Jeisson Rosario started in center for Fort Wayne in 2018 while Ornelas was in right. The 6-foot-1, 191-pound, left-handed hitter is a native of the Dominican Republic.

Rosario, who turned 19 in October, was named the Best Athlete in the Padres' system by Baseball America following the 2017 season. He is ranked the [Padres' No. 19 prospect](#).

After hitting .299 with a .404 on-base percentage in the Arizona Rookie League in 2017, Rosario made a successful jump to full-season Fort Wayne in 2018. He hit .271 with a .368 on-base percentage and a .353 slugging percentage for a .722 OPS. In 506 plate appearances over 117 games with the TinCaps, Rosario had 17 doubles, five triples, three homers, 18 stolen bases, 34 RBIs and 79 runs scored as a top-of-the-lineup hitter. He drew 66 walks against 108 strikeouts.

— Jorge Oña was 19 when he signed with the Padres as the fourth-ranked Cuban player in the class of 2016. Oña, who turned 22 on Dec. 31, is a 6-foot, 220-pound, right-handed-hitting right fielder.

Oña hit .277 in 2017 for Fort Wayne in his debut professional season. He had 18 doubles, a triple, 11 homers and 64 RBIs in 107 games for the TinCaps with a .351 on-base percentage and a .405 slugging percentage for a .756 OPS. A participant in the Midwest League All-Star Game, Oña was ranked the Padres' No. 13 prospect after his first season in the U.S.

But he hit only .239 for Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore in 2018 with a .312 on-base percentage and a .380 on-base percentage for a .693 OPS. He had 24 doubles, two triples, eight homers, 44 RBIs and also 44 runs scored in 100 games for the Storm. But in two professional seasons, Oña has struck out 225 times in 875 at-bats — or one strikeout per every 3.9 at-bats.

Both Tirso Ornelas and Jeisson Rosario could start the 2019 season with Lake Elsinore as teenagers while Jorge Oña could be with Double-A Amarillo.

Number Of Minor League Pitchers Throwing 100 MPH Decreases In 2018

By [J.J. Cooper](#) on January 3, 2019

It may be just a slight step back, but the 2018 minor league seasons showed some signs that we may have reached peak velo.

In conversations with scouts and front office officials during the season many of them mentioned seeing less pitchers with top-of-the-scale fastballs than they had seen in other recent seasons. Now we have some data to back of that assertion.

Reporting by Baseball America has found 62 minor leaguers who touched 100 mph or higher in 2018.

This is the fourth time we've compiled the list of the Century Club—pitchers who threw at least one pitch 100 mph or harder. To make the list, we have to have credible reporting from a scout, a coach or a club official who has logged the velocity with a radar gun, TrackMan or a similar verification. We will add to this list if we receive further credible reports, but even if we get a few more additions, this year will have the fewest 100 mph pitchers in the minors in the past three seasons.

There has been somewhat of a similar trend at the major league level. Cardinals righthander Jordan Hicks arrived to give baseball a new 103 mph fireballer, joining Aroldis Chapman, but overall, there were four fewer major league pitchers who threw 100 mph or better in 2018 than there were in 2017.

At the MLB level, the average fastball velocity around the league, as measured by Baseball Info Solutions (and presented by Fangraphs.com), remained steady at 92.8 mph in 2018. It was the first time since 2010 that the average fastball velocity hadn't jumped.

It may be just a pause, but it's possible that the league-wide velocity bumps we've seen in the past decade may be slowing or stopping now that velocity-building training (weight training, long toss and weighted ball work) have become so pervasive.

One season is not enough data to make an sweeping generalizations. We won't know for several seasons to come, but for baseball to take a step back when it comes to top-end velocity, even for one season is notable at a time when the game has been seeing more and more fireballers every season.

In 2018, the Padres and Rangers [top our list](#) with five minor leaguers who touched 100 mph. The White Sox, Reds, Blue Jays and Marlins each had four pitchers who threw 100 mph or harder.

Just seven teams did not have a pitcher who joined the century club.

Angels (2): [Ty Buttrey](#), [Brett Hanewich](#)

Astros (3): [Reymin Guduan](#), [Josh James](#), [Jojanse Torres](#).

Athletics (2): [Frankie Montas](#), [J.B. Wendelken](#)

Braves (1): [Luis Mora](#).

Blue Jays (4): Bryan Baker, Jackson McClelland, Patrick Murphy, Nate Pearson.
Cardinals (2): Junior Fernandez, Roel Ramirez.
Cubs (1): Dillon Maples.
Dodgers (3): Stetson Allie, Joel Inoa, Zach Willeman.
Giants (3): Melvin Adon, Ray Black, Camilo Doval.
Indians (1): Carlos Vargas.
Marlins (4): Sandy Alcantara, Tayron Guerrero, Jorge Guzman, Tyler Kinley.
Mets (2): Gerson Bautista, Jose Moreno.
Nationals (3): Jimmy Cordero, Ronald Pena, Jefry Rodriguez.
Padres (5): Andres Munoz, Gerardo Reyes, Robert Stock, Dauris Valdez, Trey Wingenter.
Phillies (1): Yacksel Rios.
Pirates (2): Blake Cederlind, Jesus Liranzo.
Rangers (5): Jairo Beras, Emmanuel Clase, Anthony Gose, C.D. Pelham, Connor Sadzeck.
Rays (2): Willy Ortiz, Ryne Stanek.
Reds (4): Hunter Greene, Joel Kuhnel, Tanner Rainey (traded to Nationals this offseason), Aneurys Zabala.
Rockies (3): Justin Lawrence, Riley Pint, Robert Tyler.
Twins (2): Brusdar Graterol, Johan Quezada.
White Sox (4): Mauricio Cabrera, Dylan Cease, Michael Kopech, Thyago Vieira.
Yankees (3): Albert Abreu, Luis Gil, Luis Medina.

Century Club pitchers, year by year

2014: Minor leagues 52 | Major leagues 30
2015: Did not compile minor league 100 mph pitchers
2016: Minor leagues 71 | Major leagues 36
2017: Minor leagues 81 | Major leagues 40
2018: Minor leagues 62 | Major leagues 36

10 Prospects We Hope Have A Healthy New Year

By [Ben Badler](#) on January 2, 2019

When healthy, [Ronald Acuña](#) showed exciting promise as an 18-year-old outfielder making his full-season debut for the Braves in 2016.

Acuña ranked as the No. 67 prospect in baseball after the season, but he played just 40 games that year for low Class A Rome because of a broken thumb that kept him out for three months.

In [Juan Soto](#)'s pro debut, he won the MVP award in the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League as a 17-year-old in 2016. But in 2017, the Nationals outfielder played just 32 games due to a broken ankle, broken hamate bone and then a hamstring injury late in the season.

For both players, everything changed when they stayed healthy the next season. Acuña climbed three levels to Triple-A in 2017 and became the No. 1 prospect in baseball after the season. Soto started 2018 back in low Class A Hagerstown but finished it in Washington, batting .296/.406/.517 in 447 big league plate appearances.

Looking forward, these are 10 prospects who have struggled with injuries who we're hoping have a healthy new year.

1. [Sixto Sanchez](#), RHP, Phillies

After Astros righthander [Forrest Whitley](#), Sanchez has a compelling argument as the next best pitching prospect in baseball. He sits in the mid- to upper 90s and can break triple-digits, doing it without much effort and while filling the strike zone.

Yet Sanchez threw just 46.2 innings last year, with his final outing coming on June 3 before he went on the disabled list with right elbow inflammation. The Phillies say Sanchez is healthy and ready to go for spring training, but he was out longer than they initially anticipated and missed the Arizona Fall League. He's still only 20, but his 95 innings in 2017 are the most he has ever thrown. If he can handle a starter's workload, Sanchez has the potential to anchor a rotation.

2. [Anderson Espinoza](#), RHP, Padres

Espinoza was the No. 1 international pitching prospect in the 2014 class, then saw his status skyrocket the next year when he dominated the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League with an electric fastball and feel for pitching well beyond his years. The next year, the Red Sox traded Espinoza to the Padres, but he didn't pitch in 2017 or 2018, with rehab attempts that didn't go well before he had Tommy John surgery in August 2017.

After two years on the shelf, it's hard to know what to expect from Espinoza when he returns to the mound, but we should at least have a better idea of how to project him once we get to see how his stuff looks post-surgery.

3. [Victor Robles](#), OF, Nationals

Robles has been injury-prone throughout his career, a trend that may continue given how close he stands to the plate and his aggressive, all-out mentality. In early April, he hyperextended his left elbow and didn't return to Triple-A Syracuse until July 27. Robles has the talent to be a perennial All-Star, with the ability to hit at the top of a lineup while playing Gold Glove-caliber defense at a premium position in center field. Keeping Robles healthy all season would be a major boost for the Nationals.

4. [Nate Pearson](#), RHP, Blue Jays

Pearson was the No. 28 overall pick in the 2017 draft. By the time he finished that season with short-season Vancouver, he looked like he should have gone higher, with an uptick in his stuff and a dominant showing there.

In 2018, Pearson didn't pitch in a game in April due to a back injury. He returned on May 7, then in the second inning a line drive broke his right forearm and ended his regular season. After the season, Pearson pitched in the Arizona Fall League, where he ran his fastball up to 104 mph. He also had a 6.20 ERA and walked 13 batters in 20 innings, though some rust is to be expected. A full healthy season from Pearson will give a much clearer picture of his future after bad luck derailed him in 2018.

5. [Alex Reyes](#), RHP, Cardinals

Reyes missed the 2017 season due to Tommy John surgery, but everything was going right for him in his return to the mound in 2018. Reyes struck out 44 batters in 23 innings in Triple-A Memphis last year, showing the same high-octane fastball and devastating breaking ball he had before the operation. Reyes, who made his major league debut in 2016, returned to the big leagues for one outing on May 30, but then had season-ending surgery to repair a torn lat the next month.

With exactly 50 MLB innings, Reyes fell one out shy of exhausting his prospect eligibility. Reyes also missed a month in 2016 with a sore shoulder, then 50 games in 2016 due to a suspension when he tested positive for marijuana, so despite being 24, Reyes' 101.1 innings in 2015 are a career high. There's significant durability risk with Reyes, but he also has the upside of a No. 1 starter.

6. [MacKenzie Gore](#), LHP, Padres

Gore's elbow and shoulder were fine in 2018, the problems were on his fingers. The Padres put Gore on the disabled list twice last year due to blister issues, so Gore finished May with just eight innings pitched and didn't go more than five innings in a start until July. The blister issues returned at the end of August, so the Padres shut down Gore at that point with just 60.2 innings for low Class A Fort Wayne, though with an impressive 74-18 K-BB mark. It was a frustrating first full season for Gore, the No. 3 overall pick in the 2017 draft, but he remains one of the most talented pitching prospects in baseball.

7. [Luis Robert](#), OF, White Sox

Robert combines exciting upside with swing-and-miss risk that we've pointed out since he was still in Cuba. That risk showed up more than the upside did in Robert's first season with the White Sox last year, although I think it would be a mistake to take too much away from Robert's 2018 struggles without accounting for the context of his season.

Robert had been in a layoff from competitive baseball since leaving Cuba, then while adjusting to a new country, he never got an opportunity to get his timing back at the plate. He tore a ligament in his thumb that kept him out the first two months of the season, then played for a little less than a month before re-injuring that thumb and missing another month. So Robert played just 50 games between two Class A levels last year, never staying on the field for more than one month at a time. Robert's profile still includes contact and pitch recognition risk, but he also just needs to stay healthy and get a fair opportunity to get his timing back.

8. [George Valera](#), OF, Indians

Valera ranked as the No. 5 international prospect in a loaded 2017 class. With a sweet swing reminiscent of [Robinson Cano](#) and a good idea of the strike zone, Valera is an advanced hitter who was earning praise from scouts who saw him during extended spring training, but he played just six official games because of a broken hamate bone. Once Valera stays healthy and starts to build a performance record for himself in pro ball, he could move up our rankings quickly.

9. [Estevan Florial](#), OF, Yankees

With [Justus Sheffield](#) traded to Seattle, Florial is the top prospect in the Yankees' system. He also hit just .255/.354/.361 with a 26 percent strikeout rate and three home runs in 75 games for high Class A Tampa last year. The strikeouts and pitch recognition issues are red flags for Florial, but he also broke the hamate bone in his right wrist in May—a possible mitigating factor in Florial's season, especially given the lack of game power despite above-average raw power. Being a year removed from that injury and facing Double-A pitching for the first time will make 2019 a pivotal year for Florial.

10. [Wander Javier](#), SS, Twins

Javier was one of the top international prospects in a 2015 class that also included [Vladimir Guerrero Jr.](#), [Juan Soto](#), [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#), [Andres Gimenez](#), [Leody Taveras](#) and [Cristian Pache](#). While all of those players (aside from maybe Taveras) will start 2019 at Double-A or higher, Javier has yet to play a game above the short-season leagues. Hamstring troubles limited Javier to nine Dominican Summer League games in 2016, but he flourished when he jumped to Rookie-level Elizabethton in 2017. Instead of building on that last year, Javier missed the entire 2018 season with a torn labrum in his left shoulder.

Javier just turned 20, so he's not behind schedule in terms of his age, but in three years he has played just 50 minor league games. Even with his injury setbacks, Javier is still the No. 4 prospect in Minnesota's system, with high-end tools and athleticism at a premium position and a good performance record in his limited playing time.

Padres to pay Blue Jays \$1.5M in Clayton Richard trade

6:14 PM PT

Associated Press

TORONTO -- The [San Diego Padres](#) will pay [Toronto](#) \$1.5 million on Aug. 15 as part of last weekend's trade that sent left-hander [Clayton Richard](#) to the Blue Jays for Canadian outfielder Connor Panas.

That cash will cover half of Richard's \$3 million base salary in the final season of a \$6 million, two-year contract.

The 35-year-old Richard was 7-11 with a 5.33 ERA in 27 starts for San Diego last season. He is 68-79 with a 4.46 ERA in 10 seasons in the majors with the Padres and [Chicago White Sox](#) and Cubs, with a National League-best 60.3 ground-ball percentage over the last four years.

Panas, 25, hit .232 with nine home runs, and 39 RBI in 105 games last season for the New Hampshire Fisher Cats in the Class AA Eastern League. The left-handed hitter from Toronto was selected by the Blue Jays in the ninth round of the 2015 draft.

The trade was announced Sunday.