



Padres Press Clips

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Kevin Towers, longtime Padres GM, has died

Dennis Lin and Tom Krasovic

Kevin Towers, the general manager who delivered the Padres' last National League pennant and three other division titles, died Tuesday morning after a long fight with cancer. He was 56.

Towers was diagnosed with anaplastic thyroid cancer near the end of 2016.

Towers was the Padres' general manager from 1995-2009. He guided San Diego to the top of the National League West on four occasions, including a World Series appearance in 1998.

He was the Arizona Diamondbacks' general manager from 2010-14.

Towers was effective at crafting trades with a wide spectrum of general managers and acquired several of the players for the 1998 team that set a club record with 98 victories and beat two 100-win teams in the playoffs before losing to the 114-win Yankees in the World Series.

Thanks in part to the upgrades made by Towers — including the acquisition of '98 mainstays such as Kevin Brown, Wally Joyner, Greg Vaughn, Chris Gomez, Sterling Hitchcock and Quilvio Veras — the Padres created momentum going into the November 1998 general election in which voters approved funding for a downtown ballpark. Petco Park opened in 2004.

Towers' cancer diagnosis did not become public knowledge until October. With permission from the Towers family, Houston Astros manager A.J. Hinch displayed Towers' name on a placard in a Stand up to Cancer spot during Game 4 of the World Series.

"He means a lot to me," Hinch, a former assistant general manager for the Padres, said afterward. "He's meant a lot to the people within the game for many, many years. He's done everything in the game. I wanted to put someone on there that was a baseball person that has resonated across the game at so many levels for so many years, and we just keep rooting for KT to have a recovery."

Tony Gwynn documentary reminds us why he is 'Mr. Padre'

Kevin Acee

It would have been fantastic if the new documentary on Tony Gwynn was 44 minutes of him laughing.

And “Mr. Padre” is replete with a virtual medley of Tony Gwynn giggling. It had to be.

Laughing and hitting a baseball were two of his greatest gifts. He did both with almost unmatched virtuosity.

That high-pitched chortle, which punctuated so many of Gwynn’s sentences, is still music.

Beyond that, there is a dizzying assortment of information in the biographical program “Mr. Padre” that will air Tuesday night (5 and 9 p.m. PT) on MLB Network. Again, there would have to be.

There is plenty of good stuff about his greatness, the sweet swing and his pioneering of the use of video as a teaching tool, his love for the game and San Diego and his family.

The story of how he first met his wife provides context to their bond. His children speaking of key moments in his life and the days leading up to his death are wrenching.

More than anything, “Mr. Padre” is a reminder that the reason Gwynn’s death was such a blow was because he had been so extremely full of life.

And in the end, the most substantial gift “Mr. Padre” gives us is recalling one of the game’s greatest hitter’s greatest attributes — his humility.

He was a humble, humble man.

As the documentary’s narrator aptly describes, the “anti-superstar superstar.”

I will take care herein to not spoil any anecdotes or give away the best scenes. Your chuckles and chills and tears should be as spontaneous and unfettered as those who watched the “Mr. Padre” premiere Friday night inside the Parma Payne Goodall Alumni Center at San Diego State.

From the front row where Gwynn’s family sat watching throughout the couple hundred invited season ticket holders, there was a raw reaction to so much of what they saw and heard.

“Some of that footage, I hadn’t seen,” Tony Gwynn Jr. said a short while after wiping away tears and addressing the crowd along with Gwynn’s friend and agent, John Boggs. “... It was awesome. I laughed, I cried, I laughed again.”

There is a good chance that no matter how closely you followed Gwynn’s 20 seasons as a Padre, you will learn something about the man we call Mr. Padre.

Dang, it was so good.

Jerry Coleman’s calls of some of Gwynn’s biggest hits are interspersed throughout the hourlong program. It is just about the perfect melding of the two lost treasures.

There is so much to capture about Gwynn that a 44-minute running time might not seem adequate. But succinct storytelling such as Tim Flannery recalling what happened before and after a rain delay in Cincinnati in 1996 helped accomplish the task.

“He knew what the pitcher was going to throw before the pitcher knew what he was going to throw,” Flannery said.

A former Gwynn teammate and then Padres third base coach, Flannery recounts some of the finest stories about Gwynn in Mr. Padre. So does former Padres pitcher Greg Booker, a friend of Gwynn’s since they were drafted together in 1981. Ted Leitner and former Union-Tribune reporter Bill Center, as almost no one else could, encapsulate what Gwynn meant to the Padres and San Diego.

A pregame exchange between Gwynn and Ken Griffey Jr. got one of the night’s biggest laughs.

The documentary is packed with tidbits you had forgotten and others you never knew.

Maybe you are familiar with the story of how Gwynn, a point guard on the SDSU basketball team, was pointed out to Aztecs baseball coach Jim Dietz by Bobby Meacham. But perhaps you never knew the rich tale of how Padres General Manager Jack McKeon first discovered Gwynn.

You hear both detailed in “Mr. Padre” in such a way that that they’re new for anyone.

And the fact is, Gwynn’s feats with the bat were so preposterous that even the things a casual Padres fan might know — like that he hit better than .350 in five straight seasons — still leave you in awe when you hear them out loud.

For any San Diegan who loved the man, which is pretty much any San Diegan who was around from the time he arrived at SDSU in 1977 to his death in 2014, there is no expiration date on hearing over and over Gwynn’s quest for .400 that was truncated by the 1994 strike.

There are details of a contract impasse averted because, as the narrator said, Gwynn was “an icon who decided there was only one place he wanted to play for two decades.”

The clip from his 2007 Hall of Fame induction speech in which he said he had told the people of San Diego they would be up on the dais with him so he hoped San Diego was as nervous as he was reminds us how much he cared for us. He mentioned San Diego profusely in that speech.

And it is the footage of the call informing him he had been voted into the Hall that so perfectly strikes at the core of Gwynn's character. You see him so nervous and uncertain before the call, so overcome afterward.

Tony Gwynn Jr. recalled after the premiere, which was his first time seeing the film, that it was that January day that he realized his dad had been serious all those years when he had admonished people it was no certainty he'd end up in Cooperstown.

Now those of us who so revered him can relive some moments along his way to that immortality. And those across the country who maybe didn't know much more than his batting average will be better for learning who Mr. Padre really was.

Royals make trade involving ex-Padres, clear salary for pursuit of Eric Hosmer

Dennis Lin

The Kansas City Royals completed a trade Monday that involved two former Padres, cleared a decent amount of salary and presumably strengthened their position in a race with San Diego.

In dealing first baseman/designated hitter Brandon Moss and left-hander Ryan Buchter to Oakland, the Royals shaved a reported \$5 million in payroll while continuing to broadcast their intent.

Barely more than two weeks before spring training, homegrown first baseman Eric Hosmer remains unsigned. The Padres have been the only other public suitor for the 28-year-old, who is seeking a long-term contract in his first and possibly last foray into free agency.

“The economic part of it is very real to us,” Royals General Manager Dayton Moore told the Kansas City Star.

Monday’s exchange left the Royals without a natural first baseman. The Athletics surrendered controllable pitchers Jesse Hahn — like Buchter, an ex-Padres arm — and Heath Fillmyer.

Kansas City’s payroll now resides in the neighborhood of \$107 million, according to Cot’s Contracts. In pursuit of Hosmer, the Royals still might face larger obstacles than the Padres, who have roughly \$70 million committed for 2018.

But even before Monday’s trade, one source said the Padres believed the Royals may have made a more lucrative proposal to Hosmer.

The Padres’ offer, extended weeks ago, is for seven years and less than \$140 million, though the exact margin remains unknown. A report that the Royals offered seven years and \$147 million has been refuted, but team officials have been public about their interest in retaining Hosmer.

The Padres have not indicated much willingness to increase their offer.

“I think we were pretty creative in the way we put a contract proposal together,” Executive Chairman Ron Fowler said in a recent radio interview. “We like it. I don’t know if (agent Scott Boras) likes it.”

If negotiations come down to a relatively small difference, the Padres may be open to tweaking their terms, according to sources. A significant overhaul seems unlikely.

Former D-backs, Padres GM Towers dies

San Diego won NL pennant in 1998; Arizona made 29-game turnaround in 2011

By Oliver Macklin MLB.com [@basebollie](#)

12:39 PM ET

Former Padres and D-backs general manager Kevin Towers, a widely beloved figure with a huge personality, died Tuesday from complications related to a rare form of thyroid cancer. He was 56.

Towers held the position of special assistant to the GM/player personnel for the Reds at the time of his death.

Born on Nov. 11, 1961, in Medford, Ore., Towers was drafted by the Padres in 1982 and pitched for the organization through 1989. Injuries derailed his playing career in Triple-A, but he was then hired as a scout for San Diego in 1990.

Towers was the Padres' scouting director in 1994-95 and was promoted to GM in 1995, a role he held until October 2009. He was 33 when he was named GM, one of the youngest to attain such a position. The Padres won the National League pennant in 1998.

"We are profoundly saddened by the loss of Kevin Towers, who passed away early this morning after a courageous battle with cancer," the Padres said in a statement. "Kevin spent nearly 30 years in the Padres organization as a player, scout and front-office executive. He led our club with strength, conviction and unwavering determination, and was beloved by all who knew him. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family, especially his wonderful wife, Kelley."

Towers succeeded Jerry Dipoto as GM of the D-backs beginning in 2011 and last worked for the club in 2014.

Towers helped complete trades that landed the Padres Greg Vaughn, Kevin Brown, [Adrian Gonzalez](#) and [Heath Bell](#), among others. His signing of free-agent closer J.J. Putz during his first months as D-backs GM in 2010 helped turn the team around, as Putz registered a career-high 43 saves and Arizona rebounded from 65 wins in 2010 to 94 in '11 and won the NL West title.

In between his time with the Padres and D-backs, Towers worked for the Yankees as a West Coast scout.

Gwynn's SD impact highlighted by 'Mr. Padre'

MLB Network special premieres today at 5 p.m. PT

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

6:14 AM ET

SAN DIEGO -- Reverence for Tony Gwynn, as both a person and a ballplayer, has extended throughout San Diego and the entire baseball landscape for decades.

Tonight, [MLB Network](#) will once again pay tribute to the life of the Hall of Fame outfielder with the premiere of "Mr. Padre," a documentary capturing Gwynn's career and his lasting legacy.

It's the latest installment in the "MLB Network Presents" documentary series, and the hour-long special features interviews with dozens of former teammates, friends, family members and acquaintances of Gwynn.

"There was some video on there that I had never seen, some of it even with me being in it," Gwynn's son Tony Jr. told MLB.com. "I was locked into a lot of it. Ultimately, I thought that was the best documentary to date that kind of pulled the curtain back in terms of how he interacted with people -- not just with his teammates, but with people in general."

The documentary, which premieres today at 8 p.m. ET/5 PT, begins by focusing on Gwynn's achievements within the game of baseball. Those are, of course, too numerous to count, but they include eight batting titles, 15 All-Star appearances, seven Silver Slugger Awards and a lifetime .338 batting average.

The story's focus quickly morphs to center on Gwynn's impact on the baseball world, specifically in the city of San Diego. A poignant moment centers around Nationals right-hander [Stephen Strasburg](#), a San Diego native. Strasburg, who would later play for Gwynn at San Diego State University, is pictured as a smiling youngster decked out in Gwynn gear.

"As a kid, I wanted to be just like Tony Gwynn," Strasburg says. "... The impact he had was priceless."

Along with Strasburg, the documentary features interviews with a handful of prominent baseball figures, including Bruce Bochy, Tony La Russa, Jack McKeon, Mike Schmidt and Harold Reynolds.

A particular favorite moment for Gwynn Jr. centered around a conversation between Gwynn and Ted Williams after the 1994 season. The documentary dives into how Gwynn used that conversation to catapult his offensive game to unprecedented heights. Essentially, he began to add power to a batting average that routinely sat around .350.

Toward the end, the documentary's focus shifts to Gwynn's battle with salivary gland cancer, from which he ultimately passed away in 2014. The tone resets to center on Gwynn's impact in San Diego and his always-affable relationship with fans and fellow ballplayers.

The special features interviews with a handful of family members, including a front-and-center role for Gwynn Jr.

"Part of what I'm still left on Earth to do is to keep his legacy alive," Gwynn Jr. said.

It has already been received extremely well in San Diego, where SDSU played host to a preliminary special screening on Friday night. In the eyes of Gwynn Jr., that's merely a testament to his father's unbreakable bond with the city.

"I tell the story a lot about his last free agency, and me pushing him to go to Cleveland to be a DH and maybe extend his career," Gwynn Jr. said. "It's moments like these that are a reminder that -- not only when you're 17 that you don't know a lot about anything -- but that also, he had a much bigger purpose in mind when he made that decision.

"When you get the reaction like we got at the premiere and that we've gotten, you get the reminder -- that's why he stayed. He felt so strongly about this city and the people in it."

Kevin Towers, former GM of Padres, Diamondbacks, dies at 56

10:03 AM PT
ESPN News Services

Former [San Diego Padres](#) and [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) general manager Kevin Towers has died after a battle with thyroid cancer. He was 56.

Barry Axelrod, Towers' friend and former agent, told The Associated Press that Towers died Tuesday at a hospital. Towers' wife, Kelley, was at his side.

Axelrod said Towers was admitted to a hospital with fluid on his lungs a few days ago, and friends and family members thought he would be able to go home Tuesday.

Towers was diagnosed with anaplastic thyroid cancer in 2016.

He spent 14 seasons as the Padres' GM, from 1995 to 2009, and he helped build San Diego's 1998 team that reached the World Series.

After spending a year as a special assignment scout with the [New York Yankees](#), Towers joined the Diamondbacks as their GM in September 2010 and served in that role for nearly four years. He oversaw the 2011 Diamondbacks team that went 94-68 and won the National League West. As he spoke last week about being elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame, former Padres closer Trevor Hoffman grew emotional when he mentioned Towers' influence on his career.

[Houston Astros](#) manager A.J. Hinch held up a sign honoring Towers during baseball's "Stand Up to Cancer" moment at last year's World Series. Hinch said Towers "means a lot to me" and that he "means a lot to the people within the game for many, many years."

"He's done everything in the game," Hinch said after Game 4 of the World Series. "I wanted to put someone on there that was a baseball person that has resonated across the game at so many levels for so many years, and we just keep rooting for [Towers] to have a recovery."

Tatis Jr. Leads Bountiful Padres List on 3 Prospect Rankings

MLB Pipeline lists seven Padres among baseball's top 100 prospects

By Bill Center

The three major rating systems of minor league prospects have come to the same conclusion—the San Diego Padres have a formidable minor league system.

MLB Pipeline became the latest to recognize the strength of the Padres farm system Saturday with its list of the top 100 minor league prospects.

Seven Padres made the [MLB Pipeline list](#), including six in the top 50.

Earlier, ESPN also ranked seven Padres among its Top 100 prospects while Baseball America ranked six Padres among its top-100 list. Overall, all three ranked the Padres minor league system among the top three among the 30 Major League teams.

The top Padre prospect on all three lists is 19-year-old shortstop **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, who was ranked the game's third-best prospect by ESPN's Keith Law and was eighth on the MLB.com list and ninth by Baseball America.

Left-handed pitcher **MacKenzie Gore**, the Padres' top draft pick last June, is a consensus top-20 prospect, while second baseman **Luis Urías**, right-handed pitchers **Cal Quantrill** and **Michel Baez** and left-handed pitcher **Adrian Morejon** are on all three lists.

Only the Atlanta Braves with eight players have more prospects than the Padres on the MLB.com list compiled by **Jim Callis**, **Jonathan Mayo** and **Mike Rosenbaum**.

But six Padres are ranked among the top 50 prospects by MLB.com. No team comes close to matching that total—which leads to the Padres having the top overall score among the MLB.com ranking.

Following Tatis on the MLB.com list is Gore at N^o19, Urías at N^o36, Quantrill at N^o40, Baez at N^o42, Morejon at N^o50 and right-handed pitcher **Anderson Espinoza** at N^o89.

Behind N^o3 Tatis Jr. on the ESPN list is Gore at N^o14, followed by Urías (38), Baez (51), Morejon (72), Quantrill (81) and left-handed pitcher **Logan Allen**(89). Baseball America had Gore at 26th, Baez at 28th, Urías at 32nd, Quantrill at 52nd and Morejon at 66th.

While Urías, who is only 20, signed with the Padres in 2013 and Gore was the club's first-round pick last June, the majority of the Padres on the top-100 lists were acquired in 2016. Urías is the Padres' lone top-100 prospect acquired before 2016.

Tatis Jr. and **Anderson Espinoza** joined the club during the 2016 season via trades. Baez and Morejon were added as part of the club's breakthrough, 2016–17 international signing class that includes shortstops Gabriel Arias, **Luis Almanzar** and **Justin Lopez** and outfielders **Jeisson Rosario** and **Tirso Ornelas**.

Also not on the top 100 list is center fielder **Franchy Cordero** (who spent time with the Padres last summer) and close-to-the-majors starting pitchers **Eric Lauer** and **Joey Lucchesi**.

Tatis, who was acquired from the Chicago White Sox on June 4, 2016, in a trade for right-handed starting pitcher **James Shields**, has earned an invite to the Padres' major league spring training camp. He was the N^o2 shortstop in the MLB Pipeline rankings.

Tatis hit .281 with 26 doubles, seven triples, 21 homers, 29 steals and a .390 on-base percentage in 117 games for Single-A Fort Wayne last season before being promoted to Double-A San Antonio where he hit .255 in the final 14 games.

Gore and Morejon, both 18, are considered two of the top left-handed starting pitchers in the MLB.com survey. Gore was second and Morejon sixth.

Gore (third overall in 2017) and Quantrill (eighth overall in 2016) were the Padres top picks in the past two June amateur drafts.

Former GM Kevin Towers, who always celebrated his todays, dies from cancer at 56

Tim Brown

MLB columnist

Yahoo Sports Jan 30, 2018, 8:28 AM

I put my hand on his shoulder and said, “K.T.”

He turned to look.

It wasn’t him. Not K.T. at all. I started to apologize.

“Brownie,” he said.

It was him. Too thin, too slack, too dull in the eyes, but there was a trace of Kevin Towers, the gunslinger, the man who loved life so much, who laughed his way through it, in there still, in his voice.

His wife, Kelley, stood nearby, in the dugout at Petco Park. Walt Jocketty, the longtime big-league general manager and Towers’ friend, too. It was mid-March, the World Baseball Classic was in town, and Towers couldn’t resist a ballgame, maybe his last, but he didn’t think so.

He was 55 years old then, and fighting every step, every word, every thought.

“Hundred-and-seventy-nine pounds,” he said, patting the place where the rest had been. “My high school weight.”

That amused him.

“You look good,” I tried.

“Gonna find a way to beat this damn thing,” he said.

Kelley smiled. Walt nodded.

“Yes, you are,” I said.

Kevin Towers died Tuesday morning at 56. It was the cancer, which he’d fought for 14 months. This would be a good morning to pause and remember that today is important, that all the todays are important, but not like this today.

The game is poorer for the loss of Towers, as is anyone who ever shared a beer and a story and a laugh with him, which was most, and that means the world is poorer for it too.

He was a pitcher, not quite a major league pitcher. He was a pitching coach and a scouting director. He was a general manager twice, first for 15 years in San Diego, then for five in Arizona. He won four NL West titles with the Padres and went to a World Series, in 1998. He won the NL West once with the Diamondbacks. The results weren’t great otherwise, though more often than not he was up against payroll challenges. He hardly complained and, then, sometimes his aggressive methods came to be counterproductive. He was fired twice, which is generally how the job goes, and his final gig was as a scout and special assistant for the Reds.

The job changes people. But not K.T. He liked the job, the life, too much. He loved the game too much to spoil it with insecurities and solemnity. At a time when general managers are younger and more suspicious and afraid to be cornered by an opinion or even a personality, K.T. became part of the old guard and then was run off, but not before he had himself a good time, made a ton of friends, and laughed through most of it. He was always the coolest guy in the room.

When his Diamondbacks traveled three years ago to Australia to play the Dodgers, the flight crossed the international dateline, and skipped St. Patrick's Day entirely. But not on that airplane. Towers ran the aisles butchering an Irish accent. A large green blinking shamrock dangled from his neck. We called him Kev O'Flav. A flight attendant asked the group to settle down a bit, and K.T. grinned like a 12-year-old caught TP-ing the neighbor's oak tree. It was a good party, because K.T. was in the middle of it.

He had thoughts on things.

In 2004, then the general manager of the Padres, Towers got into a car with his manager, Bruce Bochy, following a spring game. He turned to Bochy and said, "Boch, I think I may have screwed up."

"Yeah?" Bochy said.

"I ripped the Dodgers to some writers."

"Oh."

It went like this: "You always think they'll be good, and they end up finding a way to not finish in first place."

The Dodgers won the division that year. The Padres were third.

"Yeah," Towers said years later, grinning, "that wasn't so good."

He'd get mad at teams (most recently the Dodgers) for over-celebrating. He'd get mad at his own team for not retaliating when its hitters were thrown at. He was old-school, certainly. The leaning served some Padres and Diamondbacks teams well, and some not so well. He made solid trades (Adrian Gonzalez from the Rangers, [Kevin Brown](#) from the Marlins). He made awful trades. They all do. They all did. None of it happens in a vacuum. That was the job, and that was what he believed, and in the end that was who he was.

K.T. was OK with all of it. That's what made him so cool. There wasn't ever anyone quite like him, and there won't be again. Man, he did love his todays.

Kevin Towers, former Padres and Diamondbacks GM, dies of cancer at age 56

Towers was one of the most beloved figures in baseball
by [Dayn Perry](#)

Kevin Towers -- the fun-loving, straight-talking baseball lifer who served as general manager of the Padres and Diamondbacks -- has died at the age of 56 from an aggressive form of thyroid cancer.

Towers was originally a right-handed pitcher out of Brigham Young and a former Padres draftee whose playing career ended, partly because of arm problems, at the age of 27 and not long after he reached the Triple-A level. From there, Towers worked as a minor-league pitching coach and then a longtime scout. His ties to and deep respect for the scouting community that would later help define his time as a major-league GM.

In 1995, Towers, at the age of 33, succeeded Randy Smith as GM of the Padres. He would remain in that position for 14 years, and on his watch the Padres, despite constant budget constraints, would make the playoffs four times. In 1998, they won the pennant for the second time in franchise history.

After Towers was let go in October 2009, he joined the Yankees in a scouting role. Shortly thereafter, he was named GM of the Diamondbacks. In his first season in Arizona, the Diamondbacks improved by an astounding 29 games en route to the National League West title. However, successive .500 seasons followed, and then Towers was dismissed late in what would turn out to be a 98-loss season in 2014. The following year, he joined the Reds in a scouting and advisory capacity.

In December 2016, [Towers was diagnosed with anaplastic thyroid cancer](#), a rare form of cancer that almost always carries with a grim prognosis. Most fans and observers were unaware of Towers' fight until Astros manager A.J. Hinch put Towers' name on his placard for [the Stand Up To Cancer tribute during Game 4 of the 2017 World Series](#):

Towers was one of most respected men in baseball. People around Towers idolized him, loved working for him and considered him family. Tough day for baseball.

In addition to his many years in the game, Towers is beloved for his relentlessly affable nature and ability to relate to anyone in baseball regardless of background or predispositions. Towers was one of the first GMs to meld traditional scouting with

analytics in a meaningful way, which speaks both to his open-mindedness -- he was an old-line baseball man down to his bones -- and plainspoken leadership capabilities.

People will remember that, and they'll remember his disarming candor with the media. Moreover, they'll remember him who didn't let the business side of the game diminish the human side of it. This, after all, was a man who [shared his home with Dave Stewart](#) *after* Stewart replaced him as Arizona GM.

Kevin Towers was almost singular in his enthusiasm for the game and his ability to channel that enthusiasm toward building baseball teams. He will be missed as a baseball man but above all as a man.

Former Padres, Diamondbacks GM Kevin Towers Dies at Age 56

MIKE CHIARI / JANUARY 30, 2018

Former [San Diego Padres](#) and [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) general manager Kevin Towers died Tuesday at the age of 56.

According to [MLB.com's Oliver Macklin](#), Towers died after a battle with cancer. In 2016, Towers was [diagnosed](#) with anaplastic thyroid cancer.

Towers served as the Padres GM from 1995 through 2009 and was the Diamondbacks' general manager from 2010 until 2014.

The Padres won the NL West and reached the playoffs on four occasions during Towers' tenure, including a trip to the World Series in 1998, where they lost 4-0 to the New York Yankees.

Arizona won the NL West and reached the playoffs under Towers in 2011.

Towers was a scout for the Yankees between his GM stints, and after his time with the Diamondbacks, he became a scout with the Cincinnati Reds in 2015.

He was the Reds' special assistant to the GM/player personnel at the time of his death.

Prior to his success in the front office, Towers was a minor league pitching coach.

He also pitched at BYU and spent seven years as a minor league pitcher for the Padres after they selected him in the 1982 MLB draft.

Ex-Padres GM Kevin Towers Dies at 56

By [NBC 7 Staff](#)

Published 2 hours ago | Updated 36 minutes ago

Kevin Towers, who once held the longest tenure of any general manager in the big leagues, has died San Diego Padres officials confirmed.

Towers, 56, died Tuesday morning after battling a rare form of thyroid cancer, USA Today reporter [Bob Nightengale posted to Twitter](#).

"Kevin Towers, one of the greatest people this game has ever known, and the ultimate fighter, has passed away from cancer," Nightengale posted.

The Associated Press reported Towers' friend and former agent Barry Axelrod as saying Towers died Tuesday at a hospital. Towers' wife, Kelley, was at his side.

Axelrod said Towers was admitted to a hospital with fluid on his lungs a few days ago, and friends and family members thought he would be able to go home Tuesday

The former General Managers of the San Diego Padres, Towers once said, "I'm a Padre at heart."

Towers was GM of the Padres for 14 seasons before he was fired in 2009 as part of a front office house cleaning by new owner [Jeff Moorad](#).

Shortly after Moorad made the announcement, Towers took the podium.

"I'm a Padre at heart, always gonna root for the Padres," said Towers choking back emotion. "Next year I'm gonna be rooting like a son of a gun for these guys and for Blackie (manager Bud Black), cause it's truly a reflection on some of the work that I've done."

Under Towers, the Padres won four [NL West](#) titles and reached the 1998 World Series.

The team issued a statement Tuesday confirming Towers passed away "after a courageous battle with cancer."

"Kevin spent nearly 30 years with the Padres organization as a player, scout, and front office executive," the team said. "He led our Club with strength, conviction and unwavering determination, and was beloved by all who knew him."

First drafted by the San Diego Padres as a pitcher in 1982, he retired after a few years in the minor leagues. He then moved into scouting.

After leaving the Padres in 2009, Towers went on to [the front office of the Arizona Diamondbacks](#) in 2011 where he worked until 2014.

Former Padres, Diamondbacks GM Kevin Towers dies at 56

Marc Lancaster

Kevin Towers, a longtime baseball executive who assembled playoff teams in San Diego and Arizona, has died of cancer at age 56.

Towers was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in December 2016. His condition was not publicly known until Astros manager A.J. Hinch honored him during MLB's "Stand Up to Cancer" salute during last year's World Series.

Towers served as general manager of the Padres from 1996-2009 and the Diamondbacks from 2010-14. His San Diego teams reached the playoffs four times, including the 1998 World Series against the Yankees, and the D-backs went from worst to first in the NL West in his first two years there.

Towers began his baseball career as a pitcher in the Padres farm system but never reached the majors. He stayed with the organization as a minor league coach and scout, eventually ascending to the GM job

Known around the game as "Gunslinger," Towers was always ready to talk trades with his counterparts and had a reputation as one of the more popular executives in the game.

"He means a lot to me. He means a lot to the people within the game for many, many years," Hinch said of Towers in October, [via the Houston Chronicle](#). "He's done everything in the game. I wanted to put someone on (the "Stand Up to Cancer" salute) that was a baseball person that has resonated across the game at so many levels for so many years, and we just keep rooting for KT to have a recovery."

Former Padres and Diamondbacks General Manager Kevin Towers Dead at 56

By **DAN GARTLAND**

January 30, 2018

Former Padres and Diamondbacks general manager Kevin Towers died Tuesday morning, according to *USA Today's* Bob Nightengale. He was 56.

Towers was diagnosed with a rare form of thyroid cancer in December 2016.

Towers pitched for eight seasons in the Padres system but never cracked the majors. He became a scout after his player career ended in 1989 and was named San Diego's GM shortly after the end of the 1995 season. He remained in that position until 2009, when the Padres fired him after two losing seasons.

The Diamondbacks hired Towers in September 2010 and he was pushed aside in September 2014 when the team installed Tony La Russa as the new head of baseball ops. La Russa then hired Dave Stewart as general manager.

During his time in San Diego, the Padres made four playoff appearances, including a National League pennant in 1998 when they were swept by the Yankees in the World Series. The Diamondbacks won the NL West in Towers's first season in charge but failed to finish above .500 in his final three years.

Former Padres, Diamondbacks GM Kevin Towers dies at 56

Gabe Lacques, USA TODAY Sports Published 11:30 a.m. ET Jan. 30, 2018 | Updated 1:24 p.m. ET Jan. 30, 2018

Kevin Towers, whose aggressive approach to scouting, development and player acquisition defined his career as a major league general manager and produced playoff appearances for the San Diego Padres and Arizona Diamondbacks, died Tuesday after a long battle with thyroid cancer.

He was 56.

"We are profoundly saddened by the loss of Kevin Towers, who passed away early this morning after a courageous battle with cancer," Padres executive chairman Ron Fowler and general partner Peter Seidler said in a statement. "Kevin spent nearly thirty years in the Padres organization as a player, scout, and front office executive. He led our club with strength, conviction and unwavering determination, and was beloved by all who knew him. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family, especially his wonderful wife, Kelley."

Towers, a first-round pick of the Padres in 1982 out of Brigham Young, never made it past Class AAA as a right-handed pitcher. But once he joined the Padres for good as their scouting director in 1993, Towers launched a two-decade career as an executive that saw him thrive even as the industry shifted from traditional scouting methods to incorporate analytics.

He was named Padres general manager in 1995, a tumultuous time for Major League Baseball and the franchise. MLB was still roiled by a work stoppage that canceled the 1994 World Series and delayed the start of the 1995 season.

The Padres' credibility was even lower, after former owner Tom Werner's trades of Fred McGriff and Gary Sheffield in 1993 demoralized the fan base amid a 101-loss season.

Under new owner John Moores, who purchased the team in 1994, Towers helped fuel a comeback. The franchise was re-made on Dec. 28, 1994, when then-GM Randy Smith pulled off a 12-player trade with the Houston Astros. Coming to San Diego: Third baseman Ken Caminiti and outfielder Steve Finley.

They went 47-70 in 1994 and 70-74 in '95, Towers' first year as GM. A year later, they were National League West champions, fueled by Caminiti's MVP season and also by a classic Towers deal – swapping shortstops and catchers with the Detroit Tigers as he brought in Chris Gomez and John Flaherty, and shipped out Andujar Cedeno and Brad Ausmus.

In 1998, the Padres made the World Series, and Towers' fingerprints were all over the club, most notably ace Kevin Brown, for whom Towers surrendered top prospects Rafael Medina (a pitcher who never panned out) and first baseman Derrek Lee (who certainly did).

Lefty Sterling Hitchcock, slugger Greg Vaughn, second baseman Quilvio Veras – this unlikely group coalesced to stun the Atlanta Braves in the NL Championship Series before they were swept by the machine-like '98 New York Yankees in the World Series.

The timing was fortuitous for the franchise, however. Two weeks after the World Series, a ballot measure that helped provide the political and financial framework to finance a new ballpark passed with 60% of the vote. Six years later, Petco Park opened.

Despite their sparkling ballpark in the Gaslamp District, the Padres remained very much a small-market club, but Towers' opportunism often enabled them to punch above their weight. He orchestrated one of his greatest trades in January 2006, when he acquired first baseman Adrian Gonzalez from the Texas Rangers, giving up pitchers Aki Otsuka and Adam Eaton.

While Rangers GM Jon Daniels went on to become one of the game's top executives, he was taught a lesson by the old scout on this deal. Gonzalez helped the Padres to the 2006 NL West title and was a three-time All-Star who hit 161 homers in five seasons in San Diego.

Towers' stint with the Padres lasted until 2009, when he was fired after consecutive losing seasons. He worked as a special assignment scout with the Yankees before his hiring by the Arizona Diamondbacks as their GM in September 2010.

One year later, the Diamondbacks won their most recent NL West title, losing a five-game Division Series to the Milwaukee Brewers. In May 2014, the club hired Tony La Russa to oversee Towers and the baseball operations department and that September, he resigned.

Towers' battle with cancer was not widely known beyond a close circle of associates, until Houston Astros manager A.J. Hinch scrawled Towers' name on a "Stand Up To Cancer" card during Major League Baseball's annual awareness moment during a World Series game. Two months later, Towers passed away quietly in San Diego.