



Padres Press Clips

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Article	Source	Author	Pg.
Padres' Preller looks to jump-start offseason at GM meetings this week	SD Union Tribune	Acee	2
Bud Black up for NL manager of the year	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	6
Hawaii-born Yates returns to where it all began	MLB.com	Cassavell	9
How Padres fared in Monday's AFL action	MLB.com	Staff	11
With Hosmer at First, Josh Naylor and Austin Allen Considered Emergency Options	FriarWire	Center	12

Padres' Preller looks to jump-start offseason at GM meetings this week

[Kevin Acee](#)

Now it begins.

A.J. Preller has been a part of meeting after meeting at Petco Park.

Preller and his bosses. Preller and his staff. Preller and his staff and coaches.

Now the Padres' general manager will meet with his peers.

Major League Baseball's GM meetings are this week at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa.

The annual three-day conference — ostensibly for the purpose of housekeeping but also the occasion of a plethora of confabs — officially begins Tuesday and signals the start of the offseason. December's Winter Meetings is where the action usually is, but the GM meetings is where conceptual takes steps toward becoming actual.

Preller has spoken plenty with other general managers and player agents (who will also be lurking at La Costa). Those conversations are virtually unceasing.

But even in this age of technology that makes far-away feel close, nothing can replicate the convenience and comfortability of face-to-face dealing. For those inclined to deal, being in the same place facilitates real discussions.

“It's always a good time to start to check some things off,” Preller said. “You start with a lot of ideas and possibilities, then you start to find out what is realistic. ... You really start to flesh those things out.”

In the months before the trade deadline, the Padres' personnel department zeroed in on other teams for more reasons than a possible deal in July. It was to see where that talent could line up with the Padres' needs. Likewise, many calls taken and made in July and August were chum in the water for possible bites in November, December and January.

The Padres have made lists, revised those lists and then revised them again. They have Plan A and Plans B, C and D. There are subsets of all those as well, plus derivatives of those subsets.

This week will provide further refinement of those lists.

Deals may not be consummated at La Costa, but flirtation will become serious in some instances.

“You just want to leave there with as many answers and a clear sense of what’s realistic and what’s probably not going to line up free agent-wise and trade-wise,” Preller said. “You find out ‘This is what it’s going to cost’ and ‘This is what it’s going to be in terms of a trade.’ ... We are definitely prepared. We’ve put together target groups, different game plans. You start to work your way through them.”

What the Padres have planned between now and spring training is not as grand as the winter of 2014-15. Barring an unforeseen convergence of events, it won't even have the drama of Hosmer Watch '17-18.

Big-market teams purportedly held back money last offseason in order to participate in the big-money Bryce Harper and Manny Machado sweepstakes. Both are potentially in line for more than \$30 million a year over five to 10 years.

Additionally, the loaded free-agent market features starting pitchers Patrick Corbin, Nathan Eovaldi, J.A. Happ and Dallas Kuechel. Among a number of solid top position players available are Michael Brantley, Yasmani Grandal, A.J. Pollock and [Josh Donaldson](#).

As creative and surprising as the Padres have been acquiring players via trade and free agency under Preller and the current ownership, they likely won't ever be players

in a market that involves potentially making someone the highest-paid player in MLB history. Presently, they don't seem to be in a spot where the supporting cast justifies anything close to that.

"It's kind of a continuation of the plan we've put in place," Preller said of the plan this offseason. "We'll try to continue to add to what we've got going on."

That might sound humdrum. To a certain extent, this process of building a franchise from rubble is like shining a light on a wine cellar. There might be something going on, but it is indiscernible on a day-to-day basis. There is little more than anticipation to enjoy while waiting for the fruits of maturation.

But there should be multiple moves before February that at least slightly shake the foundation. Considering the projected time frame for success that points to contention by 2020, the supposition is for there to be significance to this offseason — both in who the team acquires and who it lets go.

The Padres expect to be better in 2019. Realistically, that probably doesn't mean contending. Rather, the hope is it means interesting and promising. For even that to happen, they need a few players.

Who the Padres add will be a mix of stand-ins and players they expect to be around when they take the next steps — to contender and postseason participant and perhaps even, for the first time in what will be more than a half-century of existence, champion.

The competition to be in their starting rotation is already crowded. However, in that most of the current list of competitors are rookies-to-be or players who have started 26 or fewer games in the major leagues, there is room for more in the field.

The Padres also are eyeing third base as a possible spot for improvement in the starting lineup. They have Wil Myers, but he can play an outfield spot. They have Hudson Potts, but he's at least a year away.

Things change. That's why they will see what's out there on the trade market.

Teams have been eyeing the Padres' young corner outfielders, Hunter Renfroe and Franmil Reyes. The Padres could also use a relief pitcher and one of their catchers as currency in trade. Really, Eric Hosmer is the only player on the major league roster that is a virtual certainty to be in San Diego in 2019. And the Padres are open to moving some of their large crop of prospects if doing so helps them improve.

The work toward all that begins in earnest this week.

Bud Black up for NL manager of the year

Jeff Sanders

In [Bud Black](#)'s best season in San Diego, a 90-win season and a second-place finish in the [NL West](#), the San Diego State product edged [Dusty Baker](#) by one point in voting to win the Senior Circuit's manager of the year award in 2010.

Last year, Black finished third – behind Arizona's Torey Lovullo and Los Angeles' [Dave Roberts](#) – after leading the [Rockies](#) to a wild-card berth and a third-place showing in the division. This year, Black is again a finalist after guiding Colorado to back-to-back playoff berths for the first time in franchise history and nearly knocking the [Dodgers](#) off their throne in the NL West.

This year's competition: The [Brewers](#)' Craig Counsell on the heels of a push into the NLCS and the [Braves](#)' Brian Snitker after a surprise finish atop the [NL East](#).

Black's Rockies won 91 games and forced a Game 163 to decide the division, which he lost to Roberts' Dodgers. Milwaukee won an NL-best 96 games atop the [NL Central](#) and Atlanta won 90 games.

The finalists were announced Monday by the Baseball Writers Association of America. A complete list of all award finalists and the dates for each announcement follows:

Monday, Nov. 12, 3:00 p.m.:

AL Jackie Robinson [Rookie of the Year](#)

- Miguel Andújar ([New York Yankees](#)), Shohei Ohtani ([Los Angeles Angels](#)), Gleyber Torres (Yankees)

NL Jackie Robinson Rookie of the Year

- Ronald Acuña, Jr. (Atlanta Braves), Walker Buehler (Los Angeles Dodgers), Juan Soto ([Washington Nationals](#))

Tuesday, Nov. 13, 3 p.m.:

AL Manager of the Year

- Kevin Cash ([Tampa Bay Rays](#)), Alex Cora ([Boston Red Sox](#)), Bob Melvin ([Oakland Athletics](#))

NL Manager of the Year

- Bud Black (Colorado Rockies), Craig Counsell (Milwaukee Brewers), Brian Snitker (Braves)

Wednesday, Nov.14, 3 p.m.:

AL Cy Young Award

- [Corey Kluber](#) (Cleveland Indians), [Blake Snell](#) (Rays), [Justin Verlander](#) (Houston Astros)

NL Cy Young Award

- Jacob deGrom (New York Mets), Aaron Nola (Philadelphia Phillies), [Max Scherzer](#)(Nationals)

Thursday, Nov. 15, 3 p.m.:

AL Most Valuable Player

- Mookie Betts (Red Sox), José Ramírez (Indians), Mike Trout (Angels)

NL Most Valuable Player

- [Nolan Arenado](#) (Rockies), Javier Báez (Chicago Cubs), Christian Yelich (Brewers)

Hawaii-born Yates returns to where it all began

Padres closer training in island state for All-Star Tour in Japan

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com

SAN DIEGO -- [Kirby Yates](#)' offseason still hasn't started.

The Padres' closer -- who has reinvented himself into one of the most dominant back-end relievers in the National League West over the past two seasons -- takes off for MLB's All-Star Tour with Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB) later this week. He's currently going through workouts with that group of stars in his native Hawaii.

"Wearing a Major League uniform in the state of Hawaii -- that opportunity doesn't always come around, and I'm extremely fortunate and appreciative of that," Yates said.

Yates took 10 days off at the end of the season before revamping his throwing program. He says he's surprised at how good his bullpen sessions have felt and that he's back into game shape and ready for three or four appearances over the seven-day trip.

It's a nice career stage for Yates, who hasn't received much notoriety despite an excellent 2018 campaign in which he posted a 2.14 ERA and whiffed 90 hitters in 63 innings. Since the Padres claimed Yates off waivers in April '17, he's developed one of the nastiest splitters in baseball, and he took over as closer when [Brad Hand](#) was dealt to Cleveland following his appearance at the All-Star Game. Many felt as though Yates was equally deserving of that All-Star spot.

That recent success figures to make Yates a sought-after piece on the trade market this winter as well. The Padres have a very deep bullpen, and Yates, 31, has two years of team control remaining. He'd likely be a nice piece for a contending team's 'pen while the Padres look to supplement their roster elsewhere.

That said, there are no imminent trade talks regarding Yates, and his focus remains on the All-Star Tour.

"When they asked me, I jolted a little bit," Yates said. "I don't want to say I was surprised, but it was just really cool to be invited to something like this."

"Everybody wants their rest and to get into their normal offseason activity," Yates continued. "But if I thought that would've been a concern and I wouldn't be ready for next season, I wouldn't have done this. ... It'll be a really, really cool experience."

When he returns, a busy offseason could await.

GM Meetings open in Carlsbad

The General Managers Meetings began Monday afternoon in Carlsbad, Calif., but Padres GM A.J. Preller won't meet with the media until Tuesday afternoon.

Among the topics he'll be discussing: the starting pitching market, the future of [Freddy Galvis](#) and [the three changes](#) to the San Diego coaching staff.

How Padres fared in Monday's AFL action

MLB.com

Nov. 5th, 2018

Padres (Peoria)

Padres' No. 23 prospect Hudson Potts was 1-for-4, and Blake Rogers had a forgettable relief outing, allowing two hits and two runs (one earned) in 1 2/3 innings while striking out two.

With Hosmer at First, Josh Naylor and Austin Allen Considered Emergency Options

By Bill Center

When the Padres signed **Eric Hosmer** as a free agent last Feb. 19, the club's priorities at first base went through a major change.

The 29-year-old Hosmer is signed through 2025, although he has an opt-out over the 2022 season.

And although Hosmer didn't have the season the Padres expected in 2018, his track record says he is much better than his first season he had in San Diego.

The 6-foot-4, 225-pound Hosmer hit .253 in his first season with the Padres with a .322 on-base percentage, a .398 slugging percentage and a .720 OPS. He had 18 homers and 69 RBIs with a .250 batting average with runners in scoring position.

All his figures were off his career averages and well below his 2017 totals with Kansas City when he had a slash line of .318/.385/.498/.882 with 25 homers and 94 RBIs and finished 14th in the American League Most Valuable Player voting while sweeping both the league's Silver Slugger and Gold Glove awards at first base.

Defensively, Hosmer played like a Gold Glover at first for the Padres. But as a footnote, he had 38 more strikeouts and 25 fewer walks in 2018 than in 2017.

But Hosmer, who the Padres believe will rebound in 2019, is entrenched as the Padres first baseman — so much so that the focus has shifted from developing a prospect at first to preparing an emergency plan were something unexpected to happen to Hosmer, who is also the most durable player currently playing first in the Major Leagues.

The Padres did have a top first base prospect before Hosmer signing his eight-year, \$144 million contract.

And 21-year-old **Josh Naylor** remains the [Padres' No. 15 prospect](#). But shortly after the Padres signed Hosmer, Naylor was moved to left field at Double-A San Antonio. The left-handed hitting Canadian doesn't exactly have a body — 5-foot-11 and 250 pounds — made for the outfield and has struggled at times. But he played left field for the Canadian National Team and has plus speed for a big man and can hit. Some members of the Padres front office believe his bat is close to being Major League ready.

Another prospect who could play first in a pinch is catcher **Austin Allen**. Like Naylor, Allen has a left-handed bat that the Padres like. But then 6-foot-2, 220-pound Allen, who is ranked the [Padres' No. 25 prospect](#) by MLB Pipeline, finds himself backed up behind **Austin Hedges** and **Francisco Mejía** at catcher.

Both Naylor and Allen hit in the middle of Double-A San Antonio's lineup last season and were members of the Texas League's post-season All-Star team. Both could find themselves in the same slot for Triple-A El Paso in 2019.

Naylor led San Antonio with a .297 batting average last year. He had 22 doubles, a triple and 17 homers for 74 RBIs. He also drew 64 walks against only 69 strikeouts and had a .383 on-base percentage and a .440 slugging percentage for a .830 OPS.

Allen hit .290 for the Missions with 31 doubles, 22 homers and 56 RBIs. He had a .351 on-base percentage and a .506 slugging percentage for a .857 OPS.

San Antonio is a historically tough place to hit. **Franmil Reyes** batted .258 at San Antonio in 2017. **Hunter Renfroe** hit .259 for the Missions in 2015. **Luis Urías** hit .296 at San Antonio in 2017.

However, neither Naylor or Austin Allen was the Missions' primary first baseman in 2018. That was 25-year-old **Kyle Overstreet** (.272/.321/.383/.704), who took over when Naylor was moved to left.

The regular first baseman at Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore was 6-foot-6, 254-pound **Brad Zunica**, who turned 23 on Oct. 21. Zunica finished with 20 homers, three triples and 17 homers for 60 RBIs. He hit .251 with a .340 on-base percentage and a .429 slugging percentage for a .770 OPS, but he also struck out 148 times in 431 at-bats.

Zunica was the Padres' 15th-round pick in the 2015 Draft. The Padres haven't selected a first baseman with a pick that high since.

Below Lake Elsinore, no first baseman in the Padres' system hit over .250 with a OPS at or above .700.