



# Padres Press Clips

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<b>Article</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Page</b>
Perdomo, Padres work a win against defending champion Astros	SD Union Tribune	Acee	2
Franchy Cordero likely not long for El Paso, will play when he joins Padres	SD Union Tribune	Acee	4
Padres Mailbag: What's wrong? What's wrong?! What's wrong with this team?!!	SD Union Tribune	Acee	6
Talking with ... Padres reliever Jordan Lyles	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	10
Perdomo, Pirela rise to occasion vs. champs	MLB.com	Cassavell	12
Healthy Cordero could force tough decisions	MLB.com	Cassavell	14
Top takeaways from first week in NL West	MLB.com	Gilbert	16
Lucchesi breaks through for Padres starters	Padres.com	Center	17
Bryan Mitchell's Padres debut didn't help justify a bewildering acquisition	The Athletic	Palmateer	19
“When your best player is your hardest worker”: Eric Hosmer is doing what the Padres hoped he would	The Athletic	Lin	21
Pirela's 3 hits, 2 RBIs lead Padres over Astros 4-1	Associated Press	AP	23
Padres again challenging teenage prospects	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	25
Astros' Cole aims to end trend vs. Padres	STATS	STATS	28
Franchy Cordero Makes Rehab Debut with Triple-A El Paso	FriarWire	Center	30
This Day in Padres History—April 7	FriarWire	Center	32
Andy Address, 4/6	FriarWire	Center	33
#PadresOnDeck: Trio of Affiliates Top ESPN's Most 'Stacked' List	FriarWire	Lafferty	37
Pitchers Margevicius, Bachar, Lauer Make Strong Starts to Open Minor League Season	FriarWire	Center	39
The Padres Have an Unusual Bullpen – Might It Also Be Super?	FanGraphs	Sawchik	41

# Perdomo, Padres work a win against defending champion Astros

Kevin Acee

They're still celebrating at Minute Maid Park.

On Monday, the [Houston Astros](#) unveiled a gold [World Series](#) pennant above the left field wall. Their rings, with the 118 diamonds, 11 of them making up the large "H" in the center, were handed out to players and staff on Tuesday.

Fans received miniature replica World Series trophies on Friday. Replica rings will be given away Saturday.

The Astros are still winning, too.

Or were, until the [Padres](#) came to town.

[Luis Perdomo](#) scratched out five innings, the bullpen pitched a dominant four innings at the end, Jose Pirela had three hits and drove in two runs on Friday, and a 4-1 victory was the Padres' second win in eight games and the defending champions' second defeat in eight games.

This wasn't about topping the best. The Padres were just trying to be better.

"It's time for us to play good ball," manager Andy Green said before the game in direct response to a question about this series being something of a litmus test. "... The fight to prove what we have, especially coming off the homestand we had, that's inside every one of the guys right now."

The Padres took a rare early lead — just the second time this season they have scored in the first inning and the second time they have scored before their opponent — when Pirela singled and came around on a walk, an error and passed ball.

Perdomo threw an abundance of pitches early against a not just potent but stubborn group of hitters that fouled off a lot of his offerings. But he didn't allow a run until the third inning — on two singles and a sacrifice fly.

The Padres chased Astros starter [Lance McCullers Jr.](#), who did not lose in 11 home starts in 2017, by stringing together five successive hits for two runs in the fifth.

Perdomo followed with his first perfect inning, as he got the heart of the potent Astros lineup in order in the fifth.

He had reached 97 pitches at that point, not the most efficient evening but certainly effective against the AL's top-hitting team and a definite improvement over a March 31 outing that had the Padres' brass almost at wits end with his continued inability to pitch aggressively.

Perdomo knew what was at stake.

"If I'm not going to out here to pitch for my job or make sure I keep it, what am I doing?" he said. "So I definitely have that mentality."

The Padres will wait to see if the 24-year-old right-hander takes this into upcoming outings.

"I sure hope so," Green said. "Because it's obvious we put urgency to him and we've tried to give him a sense of 'It's time to go.' He stepped up today."

The bullpen continued what Perdomo started.

The Astros would not reach base in two innings against [Jordan Lyles](#) and one against Kirby Yates. And Brad Hand, pitching the day after he allowed three ninth-inning runs on three walks and a hit to take the loss against the [Colorado Rockies](#), got the save with a scoreless ninth.

"It was a well-pitched game all around," Hand said. "... That's what it's about — picking each other up. Pitching is what wins ballgames. if we can pitch, we'll be alright."

Hitting and scoring is important, too, especially for a team that hadn't done much of either in the season's first seven games.

"I think across the board there were better at-bats today," Green said.

Before Hand came in, the Padres had added their final run on back-to-back doubles by [Eric Hosmer](#) and Christian Villanueva in the ninth. Hosmer's extra base was simply his knowing the location of the Astros outfielders in the shift and the situation of the game.

"I know these guys play me toward left-center a little more, and I knew it was up toward center," Hosmer said. "It was a situation where I put my head down and with two outs late in the game there, I thought it was a good time to take a chance."

It was the latest example of Hosmer practicing what he preaches. And he was among those preaching before Friday's game.

"These are the defending world champs," Hosmer said. "That's the message we sent coming in — we have to be on top of our game or we could flat out be embarrassed today. The urgency was there. I think that's what we've got to get good at is being consistent brining that type of energy and coming to play every day."

# Franchy Cordero likely not long for El Paso, will play when he joins Padres

Kevin Acee

Franchy Cordero joined the Triple-A El Paso Chihuahuas in Las Vegas on Friday to start a rehab assignment that will likely have him back in San Diego sooner than later.

“We could use, one, his bat, two, his athleticism, three, his left-handed stick,” said manager Andy Green, who presently has only [Cory Spangenberg](#) as a left-handed hitter who plays the outfield. “... If he shows he’s healthy, shows he’s flying around the field, he’s somebody I’d expect to see at some point in time.”

The 23-year-old Cordero hit .343 with five doubles, two home runs and a triple in 35 spring at-bats before injuring his groin March 15. He also struck out 13 times.

Cordero spent most of the past week at Petco Park, and by Thursday he was running extremely well.

When he rejoins the [Padres](#), he will be used in at least two outfield spots.

“If he was with us he wouldn’t be with us to sit,” Green said. “He’d be with us to play.”

How much he plays — or how much someone else sits and/or Jose Pirela moves into second base — could depend on the health of [Wil Myers](#), currently on the disabled list with nerve irritation in his right arm.

“He’s toolsier than anybody here,” Green said of Cordero. “There’s more raw twitch, more explosion, more speed. It’s impressive what’s inside him. It is a matter of the consistency.”

## Lamet throws again, longer

The man who was arguably the Padres’ best starting pitcher in [spring training](#) threw Friday in the outfield at Minute Maid Park.

Dinelson Lamet, who played catch from 45 feet on Thursday in San Diego, his first time throwing since injuring his elbow March 25, moved it to 60 feet Friday.

Lamet was not available afterward, and Green said he hadn’t received a report.

“Hopefully it was good news and it felt good today,” Green said. “It’s the start of a throwing program. We’ll see how he progresses. We’re just going to move through the process, do our best to do good by him and make sure every step of the way along the way he’s feeling good. If he

checks off a certain distance, we'll extend it. We'll keep going step by step until we find out how he is."

#### New catcher in El Paso

The Padres acquired minor league catcher Brett Nicholas from the [Texas Rangers](#) in exchange for a player to be named later or cash.

Nicholas was a Pacific Coast League All-Star in 2017 for Round Rock, the Rangers' Triple-A affiliate. He will join the Chihuahuas, providing a left-handed bat and depth in the event the Padres recall Raffy Lopez.

# Padres Mailbag: What's wrong? What's wrong?! What's wrong with this team?!!

By **Kevin Acee**

We're seven games in.

But already, there are questions. Lots of questions.

No need to pace ourselves. Let's jump right in.

Remember, though, I'm in the same boat as you — trying to find things out day-to-day, watching and enjoying the trying to enjoy the heck out of the process.

I don't have a handle on the full list of who exactly is in play, but I assure you there are deals upon deals upon deals discussed every day. Only a few players are untouchable. I bet we could count them on one hand.

This truly is a bridge year. Or maybe it's even the walkway year leading to the bridge year.

What I mean is, they want to see a number of prospects prove themselves this year. If/when that happens, they know which ones are good enough to be part of their future and also which ones might help them in trades for major leaguers. The same is true for some of their major leaguers. Everyone is being evaluated in the ways of: "Can they help us win now – and in 2020 and beyond?"

Too late.

I'll give you credit for submitting this before Christian Villanueva's three home runs on Tuesday.

[Chase Headley](#) can be a valuable part of this team. There is no guarantee he will or will not. But he has a lot to offer.

He has more to offer if he can get on base. Sometimes walks and hits come in bunches, and I think that has especially been true for Headley in his career.

The plan was always to get Villanueva playing time. He is being challenged to earn more of it.

I am not 100 percent on which narrative, but I will proceed as if you mean the negativity that many seem to feel toward him.

I am trying to understand it. Does [Wil Myers](#) need to be better? Yes. But I do hear an awful lot of hate on this guy. It seems highly disproportionate.

Here's what is fact: he's an extremely talented player who has yet to live up to his potential — and has acknowledged that in no uncertain terms. He has invested in himself and invested in others. He has done everything he's been asked to do on the field and off. He's switched positions, tried to be a leader, is a stand-up guy, worked on his body and mind. And he hit 30 homers and was on base at a .328 clip last season — in a down year.

[Darren Balsley](#) is a big part of it. He has to be.

If that doesn't work, then there is [Eric Lauer, who won his Triple-A debut](#) with six strikeouts in six innings Thursday, and possibly [Robbie Erlin](#) or [Jordan Lyles](#).

There is also Cal Quantrill, who just needs to figure out a few things, like varying his pitches more effectively.

What we're talking about, at this point, is [Luis Perdomo](#) and Bryan Mitchell pitching like their jobs depend on it. Because they do.

Probably at least a month or so. This is the time to find out what he can do. He needs to pitch with more conviction, or some in the organization will lose patience.

Let's put it this way: It might be a race between him and Perdomo to see who can stave off Lauer from getting called up.

I think Joey Lucchesi has every opportunity to be here to stay.

His ascension from first to second start was what you're looking for. His mentality is tough to beat.

Next assignment: Coors Field. I look forward to seeing how he navigates that.

I get to watch baseball every day. I get to be in a ballpark every day. I get to talk to people about baseball every day. I get to learn more about baseball every day.

Yes, he has immunity if you mean to ask if there is any chance in the world he will be fired this year.

It was only just in August that he signed a contract extension through 2021, because they believe very strongly he is the guy to get them into that period where they are contending on a yearly basis.

I have met few guys who get a process and embrace all sides of a process like Green. I believe that's how the ownership and A.J. Preller feel as well.

That said, we are entering the realm where his managerial moves are being dissected by everyone. Just like the players, the [Padres](#) need to know if this is their guy to maximize the talent he's given when their championship window is open.

You might see [Cory Spangenberg](#) in there soon. There is a lot of love for Cory in the organization, and he brings a lot of energy as well as versatility and ability. And he's getting on base.

There were signs Manual Margot was getting it. There really were. And his upside is believed to be pretty high.

So he will get time. He's learning the intricacies of being a (hopefully) leadoff hitter and (hopefully) elite baserunner at the major league level. That's tough. The Padres can afford to give him that time to learn this season. And he is among those about whom they do need to find out: Is he good or can he help them be great?

I sense sarcasm. But I'm not entirely sure.

How about this? If the Padres were to get to the 2020 Series, it might be unprecedented in terms of average age.

The 2020 Padres could feature a lot of 20- to 23-year-olds.

The 2016 Cubs were young, the 2017 Astros had youth. The 2020 Padres could be like the best college team ever with some chaperons named Mr. Hosmer, Mr. Myers and a few others.

That said, they have always maintained they would supplement their core with veterans (via trade and free agency) once they believe they are truly close. They already have Hosmer, who will be 30 in 2020. So perhaps we look for a sign in their major league moves over the next two offseasons.

I think if people were excited about this team contending, that was misplaced excitement.

Man, this truly is about the process. I get it if you can't enjoy that, if you're that sick of losing that you just can't stomach watching this sausage being made.

But your assertion that the product on the field is secondary is off-base.

Don't just take my word for it about how the losing tears up Green and Preller and ownership. Look at all the team has invested internationally, in the draft and in Myers, Hosmer. Heck, even look at [Freddy Galvis](#). It's not inconceivable he could be around the next couple years, but he is pretty much for the now so they don't stink at shortstop. He's making almost \$7 million; they probably could have found someone a lot cheaper if they didn't care.

You asked, I'm telling you truths.

Wayne who?

(And if you're making a reference to the erroneous assertion by the radio host that he was threatened with his credentials, maybe you didn't hear the radio host had to apologize to Wayne Partello and the Padres because it turned out it wasn't true.)

Kirby Yates, [Craig Stammen](#).

This has been talked about a fair amount — well before Brad Hand's ninth-inning blow-ups recently. We should look forward to the Padres being in more situations where there are high-leverage situations in the seventh or eighth inning that call for a lefty.



Eric Lauer. Nothing more to see in the minors. Only thing left to find out is if his fastball plays in the majors. It's one of those things where he won't wow you, he just gets the job done.

# Talking with ... Padres reliever Jordan Lyles

**Jeff Sanders**

*The Padres' first road trip of the season is a trip down memory lane for right-hander [Jordan Lyles](#). Now 27, the Padres reliever was originally drafted by the [Houston Astros](#) in the first round in 2008 and was traded to the [Colorado Rockies](#) five years later.*

**Union-Tribune:** Your career started in Houston and continued in Colorado. What do you think about when you revisit those places?

**Lyles:** I haven't been back to Houston since I played there. Every year I've been injured, so this will be my first time back since 2013. It will be fun to go to the ballpark. I've always enjoyed Minute Maid and I'm pretty familiar with Coors. I had some good times and bad times there. Overall, it's just baseball at the end of the day.

**U-T:** You grow up hearing baseball is a business. How jarring was it when you were actually on the other end of a phone call telling you you'd been traded?

**Lyles:** It was just different. I just didn't know what to do. After that phone call was made, I just sat there and started going over things in my head. It was kind of shocking just getting away from the team that drafted you. After all that settled in, it was time to go and start a new chapter.

**U-T:** You were traded after the first of three 100-loss teams in Houston. What was it like to see that organization win a World Series last year?

**Lyles:** I have a few friends over there. Dallas Keuchel is one of my good friends. Mostly, I was excited and happy for the fans. When I was there it was tough for them. A lot of losing seasons. It was tough on Houston fans.

**U-T:** The Rockies designated you for assignment last season. You signed a minor league deal here for the last couple months of 2017. What led you to returning for 2018?

**Lyles:** When I got designated by Colorado last year, we fast-forwarded to 2018 and San Diego last year was a good opportunity and we felt 2018 was a possibility to end up here. We went ahead and got that started at the end of last year. This offseason, it wasn't about the money or the best offer. I liked it here my two months in the organization last year and I wanted to be back with (pitching coach) [Darren Balsley](#). The few guys I met in the clubhouse, they were really good. I wanted to come back. ...

**U-T:** Balsley's had that effect on quite a few pitchers who've come through here. What did he tell you that was most helpful?

**Lyles:** I don't know where to start with that. I was with him a month last year. Just right away, his verbiage, the way he talked, was just different. Everything he says about pitching, I really

enjoy. He knows how to relate to the guys. He doesn't know all the answers – he'll tell you that – but when he speaks he's definitely a person to listen to. ... He just relates on a different level.

**U-T:** How would you assess your [spring training](#)?

**Lyles:** It started off rough. I had a few bad outings and then we decided to move to the bullpen. I had some scoreless outings after that point, but overall it was a couple runs here and there and some bad innings got in the way.

**U-T:** Some starting pitchers will focus on maybe two of their pitches when they move to the bullpen. How will you use your stuff in long relief?

**Lyles:** I'm going to try to keep everything. I would prefer to have all of my pitches and use them accordingly to the scouting reports, to different hitters, to lefties and righties. I think I'm going to be doing a little bit of everything – not just long – so in the short outings I might not show all four pitches. In long outings, like the other night when you have to get through the lineup a time and a half, I'll probably show everything because it's going to be lefties and righties during those longer outings.

**U-T:** Andy Green spoke last year of your four-seamer vs. two-seamer usage. Where are you with that as you enter this season?

**Lyles:** Going into spring training this year, they wanted me to focus on four-seamers more. Then I started using two-seamers. It's something I can go back and forth between. If I follow up a fastball with another fastball, I like to do the opposite. If I go four-seamer away, I'm probably going to follow it up with a two-seamer away. It's just different weapons. It's something extra the hitter needs to think about.

**U-T:** In a perfect world, is that a 50-50 split?

**Lyles:** This year, it's more 60-40, four-seam over two-seam. Really, the hitter dictates a lot of that stuff. If I'm trying to get a groundball double play, I'm probably going to the sinker, down and away to the lefty. It just depends on who's in the box and what the scouting report says.

# Perdomo, Pirela rise to occasion vs. champs

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

Apr. 6th, 2018

HOUSTON -- The Padres departed San Diego on Thursday facing quite a few question marks after a disappointing season-opening homestand. Perhaps all they needed was a trip to Houston to face the defending World Series champs.

Turning an apparent mismatch on its head, **Luis Perdomo** out-pitched **Lance McCullers Jr.** on Friday night, and the Padres beat the Astros, 4-1, at Minute Maid Park. **Jose Pirela's** two-run double in the fifth put San Diego on top, and Houston didn't manage a hit after that.

In almost every facet, the Friars were better than what they showed during their 1-6 start in San Diego. They got five innings of one-run ball from Perdomo, whose rotation status seemed tenuous after a poor outing against Milwaukee. They got a shutdown ninth from closer **Brad Hand**, who had struggled twice in similar situations. And they got timely offense, which proved especially elusive at Petco Park.

It made a winner out of Perdomo, who bounced back in a big way. He struck out four and allowed four hits, while making excellent use of his slider. When the Padres took the lead in the top of the fifth, he responded by breezing through the heart of the Astros' order, setting down **Alex Bregman**, **Jose Altuve** and **Carlos Correa** on 11 pitches.

"We've put urgency to him, and we've tried to give him a sense of, 'Hey, it's time to go,'" Padres manager Andy Green said. "He stepped up today. ... He was outstanding."

Perdomo's progression has been a somewhat frustrating one for the Padres. A year ago, he didn't take the steps forward that the club had hoped for and slumped to a 4.67 ERA.

When he allowed five runs over four innings against Milwaukee on Saturday, questions arose about whether Perdomo might be best served to develop at Triple-A. He quashed a few of those concerns on Friday night.

"I'm going to keep working as hard as I can, to make sure every start from here on out is just like that," Perdomo said.

The bullpen took care of the rest. **Jordan Lyles**, **Kirby Yates** and Hand combined to hold Houston hitless over the final four frames. It was a similarly impressive response from Hand, who entered a tie game in the ninth against Colorado on Thursday and surrendered three runs.

"It was nice to get right back out on the mound, myself," Hand said. "You can't worry about what happened yesterday, just go out there and compete today."

Pirela's three-hit night sparked the Padres' offense, which strung together five consecutive hits against McCullers in the fifth. Pirela singled and scored in the top of the first, then stunned the Minute Maid Park crowd with an opposite-field two-run double in the fifth.

"He's been the energy for us," Green said. "He's having great at-bats."

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

**Air Jordan:** For the most part, Perdomo was very good. But with 97 pitches over five innings, he put the Padres' bullpen in a bit of a bind. Enter Lyles, the former Astro. The right-hander continued his impressive start to the season with perfect innings in the sixth and seventh. He struck out four in the process, then robbed **George Springer** by snaring a liner right back to the mound.

**Hustlin' Hoz:** The Padres refused to settle for a two-run cushion in the ninth. Facing Astros closer **Ken Giles**, **Eric Hosmer** smacked a two-out liner to straightaway center field. Taking note of the Astros' off-kilter outfield alignment, he turned on the jets around first and slid safely into second for a double. One batter later, Hosmer scored easily when **Christian Villanueva** ripped a double into the left-field corner.

"He's been known for heady baserunning for some time," Green said. "That's what he does. ... That was a great time to take a chance."

#### SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Hosmer has hit safely in 11 consecutive games in Houston, dating back to his time in Kansas City. He's tied with **Ryan Braun** and **Ryon Healy** for the longest active streak at Minute Maid Park, where he owns a .371 career batting average in 17 games.

#### VILLANUEVA OK

The Padres got a bit of a scare in the seventh inning when Villanueva took a fastball from **Collin McHugh** squarely off his left wrist. After being evaluated by a team trainer, Villanueva remained in the game -- then ripped his RBI double in the ninth.

"He seems OK," Green said. "He was fine swinging, had a big hit for us in the ninth inning as well. ... I was nervous when that ball hit him."

#### WHAT'S NEXT

**Bryan Mitchell's** Padres tenure got off to a rough start, as he allowed five runs over five innings Monday. He'll look for a bounce-back effort on Saturday in Houston, where he recorded a three-inning save for the Yankees in June. To do so, Mitchell will need to find more success with his curveball, which he threw for just six strikes in 20 pitches on Monday. Game time is set for 4:10 p.m. PT.

# Healthy Cordero could force tough decisions

Green: Prospect's lefty bat would 'be very helpful right now'

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

Apr. 6th, 2018

HOUSTON -- In mid-March, [Franchy Cordero](#) was on the fast track to the big leagues. Arguably the Padres' best hitter during Spring Training, Cordero found himself as a favorite for an outfield place on the Padres' Opening Day roster.

Instead, he'll open his season with Triple-A El Paso, the result of a groin injury he sustained 10 days before breaking camp in Peoria, Ariz.

Cordero, the club's [No. 10 prospect](#) according to MLB Pipeline, began a rehab stint on Friday night. The 23-year-old outfielder could be destined for a callup as soon as he proves himself healthy.

"We could use 1, his bat, 2, his athleticism, and 3, his left-handed stick," Padres manager Andy Green said. "We're a righty-dominant outfield and to have a left-handed bat you could throw in there against right-handed pitching, it'd be very helpful right now."

"He's a guy we thought was going to be a big part of this when spring started. He showed that through Spring Training. If he shows he's healthy, shows he's flying around the field, he's somebody I'd expect to see."

Cordero batted .343/.465/.714 while excelling defensively during an outstanding Spring Training. During his brief time in the Majors last season, however, Cordero was too often victimized by the strikeout, whiffing 44 times in 99 plate appearances.

When he did make contact, Cordero was a force. His 90-mph average [exit velocity](#) led the team. The hard contact and elite speed boosted Cordero to a .400 batting average on balls in play.

"When he puts the ball in play, he's going to get more hits than a lot of people because he hits the ball hard and he runs fast," Green said. "It's simple, actually."

The Padres could be faced with a decision when Cordero returns to full health. [Wil Myers](#) -- who is battling nerve irritation in his right arm -- could also return later this month, giving San Diego a very crowded outfield.

But if Cordero hits like he did this spring, the Padres might be forced to make room for him.

"He's toolsier than anybody here," Green said. "There's more in there -- more raw twitch, more explosion, more speed. It's impressive what's inside of him. It's a matter of the consistency."

Headley back in Houston in new role

[Chase Headley](#)'s 2017 campaign ended at Minute Maid Park in the American League Championship Series. He batted .389 as the Yankees lost to the Astros in seven games.

"That's baseball at its best, two good teams at each other's throat going back-and-forth," Headley said. "I certainly wish it had gone the other way, but it was fun to be a part of, just a special series."

Headley's start to the 2018 campaign hasn't matched his October success. Following an offseason trade to San Diego, Headley is the only Padres position player without a hit this year (0-for-12) entering Friday's game. He's been limited to pinch-hit at-bats with fellow third basemen [Cory Spangenberg](#) and [Christian Villanueva](#) off to hot starts.

"I don't really know yet what this is going to lead to, if this is going to be the norm, who knows," Headley said. "You just do the best you can to prepare yourself, expecting to play every day. ... It's hard, especially for a guy that's used to playing every day. But I'll figure it out. I have no doubt."

**Padres add catching depth**

The Padres acquired Minor League catcher [Brett Nicholas](#) from Texas on Friday morning in exchange for a player to be named later or cash.

The lefty-hitting Nicholas batted .238/.262/.397 in 21 games for the Rangers last season. He'll back up [Raffy Lopez](#) in Triple-A.

"He's another left-handed bat with some pop," said Green. "He'll pair with Raffy there, and at some point in time, we might see Raffy here, so that just gives us some depth."

**Lamet continues throwing**

Padres right-hander [Dinelson Lamet](#) continued his throwing program Friday, playing catch at about 60 feet. He's recovering from a flexor strain in his right elbow, which he sustained at the end of Spring Training.

The club hasn't divulged results of an MRI on Lamet's elbow. But his current progression lends itself toward optimism that he'll return in May, as was the team's initial hope.

# Top takeaways from first week in NL West

By Steve Gilbert MLB.com @SteveGilbertMLB

Apr. 6th, 2018

The late Kevin Towers spent all 18 years of his career as a general manager in the National League West and he was fond of calling it "The Wild West" for its unpredictable nature.

The Dodgers have dominated in recent years, but last season the division was wild in another way, with both the D-backs and Rockies grabbing the league's Wild Card spots.

This year, NL West teams wasted no time in getting down to business with season-opening matchups between the Dodgers and Giants and the D-backs and Rockies. The Padres opened against the Brewers, but followed that with a four-game set with the Rockies.

An added wrinkle to all the early matchups is the fact that the Dodgers ([Justin Turner](#)), D-backs ([Steven Souza Jr.](#) and [Jake Lamb](#)) and the Giants ([Madison Bumgarner](#) and [Jeff Samardzija](#)) are all missing key pieces.

How it will play out remains to be seen, but since it's the NL West, it figures to be wild.

## Padres

What we know now: The Padres are willing to give their youngsters playing time. [No. 9 prospect Joey Lucchesi](#) was the callup when [Dinelson Lamet](#) hit the DL with an elbow injury. [Christian Villanueva](#), who hit three home runs in a game, is receiving playing time at third base over [Chase Headley](#). [Manuel Margot](#) has been the leadoff man. Expect the club to continue to emphasize youth as the season goes on, particularly in its callup decisions. Even when they come up on the short end of things the Padres find ways to make it difficult on other teams -- a trait they get from their manager, Andy Green.

What we still don't know: There are some very important health questions lingering over two key members of the future. Lamet is out until at least May with a flexor strain in his elbow. The Padres remain optimistic, but they haven't yet disclosed the results of his MRI. Meanwhile, [Wil Myers](#) has been placed on the DL with nerve irritation in his right arm. The injury appears less serious than Lamet's, but it's troublesome nonetheless.

The bottom line: The Padres have been building one of baseball's best farm systems over the past few years and they entered the season with one of the Majors' youngest rosters. They are going to embrace that youth. There are significant questions surrounding their rotation, but don't expect them to go outside looking for answers. San Diego is content to build from within this season.



# Lucchesi breaks through for Padres starters

Rookie left-hander is first Padres starter to allow no runs

By Bill Center San Diego Padres

Apr. 6th, 2018

Padres' rookie left-hander Joey Lucchesi pitched five scoreless innings against the Colorado Rockies at Petco Park.

He gave up only one hit and three walks while striking out seven. In fact, the only hit was a game-opening single by **Charlie Blackmon**. The three walks all came in the first two innings. Lucchesi retired the last 10 Rockies he faced.

Not only was it a notable second Major League start for Lucchesi, it was notable among all seven Padres starts this season.

Lucchesi was the first Padres' starting pitcher this season to work five scoreless innings. He was also the first starting pitcher to take a shutout into the fourth. Before Lucchesi, the Padres starters had given up 16 runs in the first three innings of the first six games.

Padres starting pitchers went into Lucchesi's start Thursday with a 6.25 earned run average. They had allowed 22 runs on 41 hits and 14 walks in 31 2/3 innings over the season's first six games.

## NOTEBOOK:

--LHP **Robbie Erlin** allowed a hit with three strikeouts in two scoreless innings Wednesday night. Erlin, who is returning from "Tommy John" elbow reconstruction surgery in May of 2016, has allowed two runs on four hits and a walk with three strikeouts over 5 2/3 innings in two relief appearances. Padres manager Andy Green said Erlin could be in line for a more prominent role, including possibly a start - but added Erlin will not be allowed to approach 200 innings this season.

--OF **Hunter Renfroe** is 4-for-14 with three walks in his first 17 plate appearances this season. Green said he'll soon be getting some starts against right-handed pitching, possibly as soon as this weekend in Houston. Renfroe has a double and a triple for a .412 on-base percentage and a .500 slugging percentage.

--SS **Freddy Galvis** was 2-for-3 Thursday afternoon and has reached base in all seven of the Padres' games. He is 8-for-24 (.333) with a home run and five RBIs plus four walks for a .429 on-base percentage. He had the highest on-base percentage of his career last season at .309.

--Third base has become a strange early-season dilemma for the Padres. As Padres manager Andy Green said recently, he's looking for someone to take the job. Three players - **Chase Headley**, **Cory Spangenberg** and **Christian Villanueva** - have started games at third. Veteran Headley is 0-for-8 in his three games (two starts) at third with four strikeouts and a walk. Spangenberg has two homers and three RBI in five at-bats in his two games at third base. Christian Villanueva, who had the eighth, three-homer game in Padres history Tuesday night, is 3-for-13 in three starts at third with the three homers and five RBIs.

--Jose Pirela's two assists while in left field Tuesday night was not only a career high, it was the first two-assist game for a Padres' outfielder since [Melvin Upton Jr.](#) on Aug. 27, 2015, at Washington.

# Bryan Mitchell's Padres debut didn't help justify a bewildering acquisition

By Dustin Palmateer

When the Padres acquired Bryan Mitchell from the Yankees back in December, it felt like a curious move. The Padres got Mitchell for extra outfielder Jabari Blash, but they also had to take on Chase Headley's one-year, \$13 million contract, adding a player who didn't make much sense to a rebuilding team that traded him away three-and-a-half years prior. Even before a [strange offseason conspired](#) to keep Headley and the Padres together, it was a lot of finagling for a pitcher who had never cracked a top-100 prospect list or even ever performed all that well.

In four seasons with the Yankees, Mitchell accumulated just 98 1/3 innings. He posted a 4.94 ERA, striking out only 5.9 per nine while walking 4.0 per nine in the majors, with up-and-down minor-league numbers. On the plus side, the A.J. Preller-led Padres have been good at rejuvenating failed pitching careers. Brad Hand and Kirby Yates were cut from the Marlins and Angels, respectively, and are currently the Padres' best relievers. Starters Drew Pomeranz and Trevor Cahill both performed well above expectations in half-season cameos in San Diego before being traded for prospect reinforcements.

It made sense to give the Padres the benefit of the doubt then and to wonder what they saw in Mitchell. His curveball, for instance, could have piqued their interest. It's an offering Eno Sarris [once tagged as a pitch-to-watch](#), thanks to its movement and velocity. Further, getting Mitchell out of the launching pad otherwise known as Yankee Stadium and into still pitcher-friendly Petco Park couldn't hurt. Mitchell, for his part, didn't impress in spring training but was given an early nod for a rotation slot, anyway. (It's not that hard to crack the Padres' rotation these days.)

Given the shroud of mystery surrounding his acquisition, Mitchell's Padres debut, which took place on Monday night, became appointment viewing for Padres fans. It didn't go well. As Dennis Lin [chronicled right here at \*The Athletic\*](#), Mitchell was dinged for five runs in five innings, walking three and recording no strikeouts. He got just four swinging strikes on 94 pitches.

As Lin noted:

"Against Colorado, he missed his target time and again. The Rockies gazed at those misfires and, often operating ahead in the count, crushed others."

But just how often did he miss his target, and by how much?

In an attempt to answer those questions, I went back and watched Mitchell's start again, noting, for each pitch, both catcher A.J. Ellis' target and the subsequent location of Mitchell's offering. I broke down the plate into 25 zones, nine of them in the strike zone and an additional 16 surrounding it, just like the [strike zone map](#) you see on Brooks Baseball. I then tabulated how often Mitchell hit his target (at least finding the same zone that Ellis wanted), how many times he missed by just one zone and how many times he missed by two or more zones.

The results were not pretty.

It's easier to see just how ineffective Mitchell was with a video clip and a couple of pictures.

That's a typical Mitchell miss. Ellis had his target low and away to the righty — his favorite spot to set up — and Mitchell's fastball, a flat cutter, leaked middle-middle. Ian Desmond did not miss.

Speaking of that location — down and away to righties, down and in to lefties — Ellis flashed his target there all night. He set up in roughly that spot 44 different times, as if his glove would eventually will wayward pitches closer to their desired target; Mitchell hit the mitt on just five occasions.

Below, you can see that target from Ellis, with the locations of all 44 of Mitchell's pitches when his catcher was posted there (yellow dots are fastballs, and red dots are curveballs).

Based on the scattered dots above, you'd hardly know Mitchell was aiming for that low-and-away corner if I hadn't told you first — he missed *up* in the zone (or higher) 17 different times.

The problem, as Lin noted, is that Mitchell missed his spots in two different ways, and neither was productive. When he missed by just a little bit — like on Desmond's homer — his pitches tended to funnel into bad parts of the hitting zone, and Rockies hitters pulverized them. When he missed by a lot, many of the pitches were easily recognized as no threat to the strike zone. So, Rockies hitters coolly spit on them, waiting for something to crush.

Of course, not all pitchers need good command to succeed in the majors. Mitchell's teammate, Dinelson Lamet, has the raw swing-and-miss stuff to get by without consistently hitting his catcher's target.

Mitchell and Lamet throw strikes and induce swings at almost exactly the same rate. But Lamet — thanks to a more electric fastball and a whiff-hunting slider — gets batters to swing and miss far more frequently on stuff inside and outside the strike zone. Since Mitchell can't get the same kind of swinging misses, he must be finer, working the edges of the strike zone and getting ahead in the count.

It won't get any easier for Mitchell in his second start, as he faces the Astros, the league's best offense, on Saturday night in Houston. Last season, the Astros' 121 wRC+ led baseball by 13 points, and they also paced the league in both contact rate and ISO, a rare combination of strikeout avoidance and power. They haven't slowed down this season, notching a 143 wRC+ through the first handful of games.

If Mitchell is to find success in start No. 2, he'll have to get his pitches to go in the general direction of where he and his catcher want them. Otherwise, the Astros could take the Rockies' blueprint against Mitchell — lay off the balls, crush the strikes — to another level.

# “When your best player is your hardest worker”: Eric Hosmer is doing what the Padres hoped he would

By Dennis Lin

HOUSTON — The fastball sizzled out of Ken Giles’ hand at 98 mph. Eric Hosmer laced an apparent single into center field with equal force. He did not, however, settle for a single.

Ninety feet from the plate, Hosmer made a hard left turn and continued charging across dirt. He slid headfirst into second for a two-out double. The next batter, Christian Villanueva, sent another double to left. Hosmer sped around third and jogged the last several steps into home, scoring an insurance run late Friday at Minute Maid Park.

The Padres’ eventual 4-1 victory over the reigning World Series champions will likely register as a blip. San Diego moved to 2-6, the reverse of Houston’s 6-2. A massive gap continues to exist. Plays like Hosmer’s ninth-inning scramble will be forgotten by most.

And yet, those types of plays will be remembered inside the organization, especially if the Padres one day succeed in closing the gap. Hosmer may hold the largest contract in franchise history, but he was signed so that he might share a wealth of experience.

“When your best player is your hardest worker,” said first base coach Skip Schumaker, “it really makes it a lot easier for everyone to follow.”

Through eight games, the Padres have adhered to a well-worn path, frustrating their fans more often than not. Hosmer alone cannot alter their fortunes. The organization’s most highly-anticipated reinforcements are teenagers, still years away from making a consistent impact.

In the meantime, efforts like the one Hosmer put forth Friday will be replayed for their benefit.

The Astros, a team powered as much by intellect as talent, had examined the odds. Hosmer is known to hit an inordinate amount of balls to left-center, so, with two outs and the bases empty, center fielder George Springer stood to the left of where he is typically positioned.

Giles’ first pitch arrived over the inner half of the plate. Hosmer responded by lining a drive past shortstop Carlos Correa, who’d stationed himself near the second-base bag. Springer raced a considerable distance to intercept the bounding ball, pivoted and threw a one-hopper to Jose Altuve, who offered a half-hearted attempt at a tag. The second baseman already knew; Hosmer was safe.

“I know these guys would play me towards left-center a little more,” Hosmer said. “Just knew [the ball] was up towards center, and it was a situation where I put my head down and thought I could make it. Two outs, late in the game there, I thought it was a good situation to take a chance.”

Hosmer’s ability to process the game under pressure long ago ceased being a secret. “He’s been known for heady baserunning for some time,” Padres manager Andy Green said. The most famous example — Hosmer’s mad dash home in the ninth inning of Game 5 of the 2015 World Series — is etched in Kansas City lore. Friday, he showed similar decisiveness.

“He obviously hunted a double right out of the gate,” Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. “That’s the right play out of a hitter. I’m not surprised by him but more surprised that he hit it where he hit it.”

The evening, as a whole, qualified as unexpected. Luis Perdomo, the right-hander who has tested the Padres’ patience, out-dueled the World Series-tested Lance McCullers Jr. Houston’s potent offense managed only four hits against Perdomo and a trio of relievers. Former Astro Jordan Lyles fired two perfect innings. Closer Brad Hand preserved a three-run lead in the bottom of the ninth — after witnessing Hosmer’s alert cardio work from the bullpen.

“It’s a testament to him,” said Hand, who rebounded from a 31-pitch meltdown Thursday afternoon. “He saw something there and took advantage of it.”

The Padres likely left something on the board in the fifth. Left fielder José Pirela drilled a two-run double and tried to take an extra base on a throw toward home. Astros first baseman Marwin González thwarted him by cutting off the relay. Two singles followed, neither scoring a run.

“[Pirela] runs hard everywhere,” said Schumaker, who oversees San Diego’s baserunning instruction. “It’s by no means a reckless play. But smart teams and good teams, they play the game right. And the throw was on line. Marwin knew when to cut it.”

Four innings later, Hosmer and Villanueva combined to supply what the Padres might have missed. Hand would not require the additional cushion; the lefty worked around a one-out walk to secure the game. Yet the point of Hosmer’s ninth-inning scramble still resonated.

The Padres’ leader, if he could help it, was not leaving anything to chance.

“These are the defending world champs,” Hosmer said. “That’s kind of the message we sent coming into here — we’ve got to be on top of our game, or we could flat out get embarrassed by these guys. I think it was a good message. I think the urgency from the club today was there. I think that’s what we’ve got to get good at, is bringing that type of energy and coming to play like that every single day.”

# Pirela's 3 hits, 2 RBIs lead Padres over Astros 4-1

9:35 PM PT

Associated Press

HOUSTON -- The [San Diego Padres](#) knew they'd need to play much better than they had been after losing six of their first seven games entering Friday night's series opener with the [Houston Astros](#).

Timely hitting, an improved performance by [Luis Perdomo](#) and a stellar outing by their bullpen allowed them to do just that to get a 4-1 victory, ending Houston's five-game winning streak.

"The message we sent coming in here was: 'We've got to be on top of our game or we could just flat-out get embarrassed by these guys,'" Padres first baseman [Eric Hosmer](#) said. "So I think it was a good message. I think the urgency from the club was there and I think that's what we've got to get good at is being consistent at bringing that type of energy and coming to play like that every single day."

[Jose Pirela](#) had three hits, including a tiebreaking, two-run double in the fifth inning that helped the Padres to the interleague win.

The game was tied 1-all when [Austin Hedges](#) doubled off [Lance McCullers Jr.](#) (1-1) with one out in the fifth and [Manuel Margot](#) followed with a single. Pirela doubled to right-center for a 3-1 lead. Hosmer, who has an 11-game hitting streak in Houston, hit a two-out double in the ninth off [Ken Giles](#) and scored on a double by Villanueva.

The Astros had just four hits -- all singles -- after piling up 18 runs and 28 hits in a three-game sweep of Baltimore. San Diego's pitchers retired 16 straight batters before [Marwin Gonzalez](#) walked with one out in the ninth.

"Very quiet. Pretty quiet night all around," manager A.J. Hinch said of Houston's offense. "We couldn't piece too many things together. They obviously got some match-ups and pitched their game plan pretty well."

Luis Perdomo (1-1) bounced back from a tough outing in his first start to yield one run and four hits in five innings. He allowed a single to [Evan Gattis](#) starting Houston's fourth before retiring the next six batters. [Jordan Lyles](#), a first-round pick by the Astros in 2008, took over in the sixth and sat down the next six Astros, with four strikeouts, before [Kirby Yates](#) struck out two in a scoreless eighth. [Brad Hand](#) walked one in a scoreless ninth for his second save.

"For us any win's good right now," manager Andy Green said. "We want to get rolling, want to get in the win column. For me today, our pitching was outstanding. Perdomo, much better than his first time out. That's a tough lineup, a tough lineup to navigate for everyone. He threw the ball incredibly well."

McCullers allowed three runs, seven hits and three walks in five innings in the first meeting between these teams since 2015 and San Diego's first visit to Houston since 2012.

[Carlos Correa](#) had an RBI for the Astros.

There were two on and one out in the first after Pirela singled and Hosmer walked. An error by McCullers allowed both runners to advance before he struck out Villanueva. The Padres took a 1-0 lead when Pirela scored and Hosmer took third on [Brian McCann](#)'s passed ball.

[George Springer](#) singled to start the third before a one-out single by [Jose Altuve](#). Houston tied it at 1-all on Correa's sacrifice fly.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Astros: 1B [Yuli Gurriel](#), on the disabled list after breaking his hand in February, went 2 for 4 as the designated hitter in his second rehabilitation game with Double-A Corpus Christi.

Padres: Villanueva was shaken up in the seventh inning when he was plunked on the left wrist by [Collin McHugh](#). Villanueva fell to his knees and remained there for a couple of minutes while Green and a trainer checked him out. Villanueva remained in the game.

#### THEY SAID IT

Perdomo on if he feels like he's pitching for his job right now: "I think so. I think every time going out there, I have that mentality. If I'm not going out there to pitch for my job or to make sure I keep it, then what am I doing?"

#### UP NEXT

[Bryan Mitchell](#) (0-1, 9.00 ERA) will start for San Diego in the second game of this three-game set on Saturday. He'll look to bounce back after allowing five runs and eight hits in five innings of a 7-4 loss to Colorado. Houston starter [Gerrit Cole](#) (1-0, 1.29) allowed one run and two hits with 11 strikeouts in an 8-2 win over Texas in his Astros debut on Sunday.



# Padres again challenging teenage prospects

**Jeff Sanders**

The [Padres](#) will again push their young prospects in 2018.

Sixteen teenagers are starting the year on full-season rosters typically populated by college-aged prospects, highlighted by 19-year-old **Fernando Tatis Jr.** opening the season at Double-A San Antonio.

Infielders **Eguy Rosario** (18), **Hudson Potts** (19) and **Kelvin Melean** (19) and left-hander **Adrian Morejon** (19) will open the season at high Single-A Lake Elsinore, while 11 more teenagers will suit up for low Single-A Fort Wayne, including 17-year-old infielder **Justin Lopez** as the youngest Padres minor leaguer playing baseball games outside extended [spring training](#)..

The Padres are counting on growing pains. They expect their players be better for it. Their prospects appreciate the challenge.

“I think all the guys who go out are good-character guys,” the 19-year-old Potts said this week upon reporting to Lake Elsinore for his second full season in the organization. “I think we’re all mature for our age. You’ll see it throughout the year that we’re all mentally strong and up to the task.”

The seventh youngest player in the Midwest League last year, Potts certain proved that last year.

In time.

He was hitting .219 as last as July 3. Then, as his teammates rallied from a 19-39 start to forge a playoff berth, Potts hit 13 of his 20 homers and posted an .870 OPS over the final 56 games of the season.

His numbers in August alone were staggering: .346 batting average, .397 on-base percentage, .664 slugging percentage and eight homers.

Experience, he said, was the best teacher.

Which is what the Padres were counting on all along.

“I just stuck with my approach the whole year,” said Potts, who homered twice in eight Cactus League at-bats this spring. “I think it was just being mentally strong the whole year. I think something just clicked after playing all those games. It was something I had never done on a daily basis. I was seeing how pitchers attacked me and the people around me. Just being more educated about the game.”

## Lining them up

Left-hander **MacKenzie Gore** is slated to make his 2018 debut on Tuesday as the sixth starter in low Single-A Fort Wayne's rotation (both the Padres' A-ball affiliates employ six-man rotations to help manage workloads). Here's how the rotations were lined up to start the season.

- **Triple-A El Paso:** LHP Eric Lauer (won Thursday, 6 IP, 2 ER), RHP Walker Lockett, RHP Brett Kennedy, RHP Chris Huffman, RHP Kyle Lloyd.
- **Double-A San Antonio:** RHP Cal Quantrill (no-decision Thursday, 3 2/3 IP, 1 ER), LHP Logan Allen, RHP Miguel Diaz, LHP Jerry Keel, RHP Jesse Scholtens.
- **High Single-A Lake Elsinore:** RHP Lake Bachar (won Thursday, 6 IP, 0 ER), LHP Adrian Morejon, RHP Reggie Lawson, RHP Pedro Avila, RHP Ronald Bolanos, RHP Emmanuel Ramirez.
- **Low Single-A Fort Wayne:** LHP Nick Margevicius (no decision Thursday, 5 2/3 IP, 0 ER), LHP Aaron Leasher, RHP Mason Thompson, LHP Osvaldo Hernandez, LHP Tom Cosgrove, LHP MacKenzie Gore.

## Spring cuts

Otay Ranch High's **Fernando Perez**, a third-round pick in 2012 out of Central Arizona, was among the releases from minor league camp this spring, according to Baseball America.

The 24-year-old Perez hit .297/.353/.513 with 11 homers in 60 games this winter in Mexico but had a .581 OPS in 63 games at Double-A San Antonio in 2017, his highest level in six years in the organization.

Other notable releases include first basemen **G.K. Young**, **Chris Mattison** and **Cole Rutherford**, outfielders **Nick Torres**, **Edwin Moreno** and **Dayon Olmo** and right-handers **Yimmi Brasoban**, **Zech Lemond** and **Adrian De Horta**.

Torres, a fourth-round pick in 2014, was an all-star in the Texas League as recently as 2016.

De Horta and Lemond have since signed with the Angels and Marlins, respectively.

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## FRIDAY'S GAMES

### TRIPLE-A EL PASO (1-1)

- **Las Vegas 5, Chihuahuas 2:** LF Franchy Cordero (.250) went 1-for-4 with a strikeout to begin a rehab assignment, while C Raffy Lopez (.125) and Dusty Coleman (.200) hit their first homers of the season. 2B Luis Urias (.333) went 1-for-3 with a strikeout. RHP Walker Lockett (0-1, 6.75) struck out six and allowed three runs in four innings in the loss. RHP T.J. Weir – promoted from San Antonio – struck out two over two scoreless innings.

**Bad weather**

**Tirso Ornelas** hit his first home run of the season for low Single-A Fort Wayne, but that game was suspended after three innings due to snow and rain with the TinCaps leading Lake County, 6-2. It will be resumed Sunday.

Lake Elsinore's and San Antonio's games in Stockton and Arkansas, respectively, were rained out.

# Astros' Cole aims to end trend vs. Padres

STATS Apr 7, 2018 at 1:01a ET

HOUSTON — After an exceptional first turn through the rotation, [Houston Astros](#) starters have found the sledding a bit rockier three-fifths of the way through a second time around.

With [Justin Verlander](#) and [Dallas Keuchel](#) producing decent but unspectacular starts ahead of him, Astros right-hander Lance McCullers did the same on Friday night against San Diego, laboring through five innings while allowing three runs (two earned) on seven hits and three walks with seven strikeouts. It was a pedestrian effort for McCullers who, like Verlander and Keuchel, works with elevated expectations whenever he takes the mound for Houston (6-2).

“In the third (inning), I felt like I started hitting my groove,” McCullers said. “I felt that my fastball was coming out well. I threw more heaters today than I did the other day. I didn’t throw any changeups, which is on me. I have to do a better job of working that in.

“Overall, I feel like I’m in a good place. ... Just kind of right now, the ball is going where guys aren’t. In the fifth, I have to do a better job of not giving up that (run-scoring) double.”

Right-hander [Gerrit Cole](#) (1-0, 1.29 ERA) will look to stem that tide in his Minute Maid Park debut on Saturday vs. San Diego. Cole is 4-2 with a 1.96 ERA over six career starts against the [Padres](#). He was 1-1 with a 2.77 ERA against San Diego last season while pitching with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Cole recorded 11 strikeouts in his first start of the season, an 8-2 win at Texas, becoming the fourth pitcher in franchise history to record at least 11 strikeouts in his Astros debut. It marked the seventh double-digit strikeout game of his career.

Right-hander [Bryan Mitchell](#) (0-1, 9.00 ERA) is scheduled to make his road debut with the Padres in the middle game of the three-game series. Mitchell joined the club along with infielder [Chase Headley](#) on Dec. 12, 2017, as part of a trade with the New York Yankees.

Mitchell has faced the Astros twice previously, posting a 2.08 ERA over 4 1/3 relief innings.

San Diego manager Andy Green was pleased with the start he received from right-hander [Luis Perdomo](#) in the Padres’ 4-1 win on Friday, but the performance of right-handed reliever [Jordan Lyles](#) was also noteworthy.

Lyles, a first-round pick of the Astros in 2008, spent three seasons with Houston before a trade sent him to Colorado. Following his release by the Rockies, Lyles made five starts with the Padres (2-6) last season after signing with the club on Aug. 8. He transitioned to the bullpen during spring training and the results have been stellar thus far.

Lyles worked two perfect innings, recording four strikeouts, his career-best in a relief effort.

“He’s throwing the ball incredibly well for us since going to the bullpen,” Green said. “As soon as we did that in spring training, the first inning he threw there was a level of aggression to him that you could just see and believe and he did it for three innings in spring training. Every time he’s taken the ball in the season he’s been outstanding. To be able to hand him the ball and be able to get through the teeth of the order, get through six hitters relatively easy, impressive.

“He’s got weapons. The changeup’s real. He’s throwing a real breaking ball right now. He’s throwing the cutter; the fastball is playing alive. I felt really good about him and have ever since he’s been in the bullpen.”

# Franchy Cordero Makes Rehab Debut with Triple-A El Paso

*By Bill Center*

Weather wreaked havoc with the Padres minor league affiliates Friday.

Double-A San Antonio was rained out at Arkansas. And Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore was rained out at Stockton.

But the real weather was at Lake County near Cleveland in the Midwest League. Single-A Fort Wayne was leading 6–2 after three innings when a storm hit. The combination of snow and freezing rain plus 20-mph winds dropped the wind chill temperature to under 25 degrees forcing suspension. The game will be resumed Sunday in Fort Wayne.

The biggest news of the day was at Triple-A where Padres outfielder **Franchy Cordero** began a rehab assignment, going 1-for-4 with a stolen base while playing left field for the Chihuahuas.

The start of Cordero's rehab assignment was one of several moves made by the Padres Friday.

Catcher **Brett Nicholas** was acquired from the Texas Rangers for cash or a player-to-be-named later and assigned to Triple-A El Paso. Right-handed reliever **T.J. Weir** was transferred from San Antonio to El Paso. And right-handed reliever **Jared Carkuff** was transferred from extended spring training to San Antonio.

*Around the Farm:*

TRIPLE-A EL PASO: LAS VEGAS 5, Chihuahuas 2—C Raffy Lopez, whose return to the Padres could be nearer with Brett Nicholas now with El Paso, had a home run in four at-bats and **Dusty Coleman** hit a pinch-hit homer for the Chihuahuas only runs. Starting RHP **Walker Lockett** allowed three runs on six hits and two walks with six strikeouts in four innings to suffer the loss. Weir allowed two hits with two strikeouts in two scoreless innings. RHP **Colten Brewer** issued a walk with a strikeout in an otherwise scoreless inning. RHP **Michael Mariot** allowed two runs on three hits in an inning.

DOUBLE-A SAN ANTONIO: The Missions (0–1) were rained out at Arkansas.

ADVANCED SINGLE-A LAKE ELSINORE: The Storm (1–0) was rained out at Stockton.

SINGLE-A FORT WAYNE: The TinCaps led 6–2 after three innings when the game was suspended. RF **Tirso Ornelas**, a native of Tijuana, was 1-for-2 with a homer, two runs scored and two RBIs. SS **Gabriel Arias** was 2-for-2 with a double, a stolen base and a run scored. 1B **Carlos Belen** was 2-for-2 with a double and a RBI. Starting DH **Esteury Ruiz** was 1-for-2 with two runs scored. CF **Jeisson Rosario** was 1-for-3 with a run scored. LHP **Aaron Leasher** allowed two runs on six hits and three walks with four strikeouts in three innings.

# This Day in Padres History—

## April 7

*By Bill Center*

*April 7, 1970*—First baseman **Nate Colbert** hits a three-run homer as the Padres score an 8–3, Opening Day win in Atlanta.

*April 7, 1973*—Center fielder **Cito Gaston** erases a 2–0 Dodger lead with a three-run homer as the Padres score a 4–3 win at San Diego Stadium.

*April 7, 1884*—Center fielder **Kevin McReynolds** was 3-for-4 with a double and three RBIs to lead the Padres to a 7–6 win over the Cubs at San Diego Jack Murphy Stadium.

*April 7, 1996*—Infielder **Craig Shipley** was 5-for-5 with two doubles, a homer and a hit-by-pitch for four runs scored and a RBI and catcher **Brian Johnson** was 3-for-6 with a double, a homer, three runs scored and five RBIs as the Padres defeated Houston 17–2 in the Astrodome.

*April 7, 2000*—Shortstop **Damian Jackson** was 4-for-5 with a double and two RBIs as the Padres scored a 10–5 win in Montreal.

*April 7, 2008*—First baseman **Adrian Gonzalez** was 4-for-5 with a homer, four runs scored and two RBIs as the Padres scored an 8–4 win in San Francisco.



# Andy Address, 4/6

## Andy Addresses the Astros, Perdomo, Lamet, Cordero

*By Bill Center*

There was considerable news on the Padres front Friday. **Dinelson Lamet** threw and **Franchy Cordero** started a rehab assignment.

But the first order of business for **Andy Green** Friday in Houston was the Astros the any parallels between the Padres rebuilding and that of the Astros, which carried Houston to a World Series title.

“It’s time for us to play good baseball,” said Green after being asked about the Astros. “Obviously, we have respect for them. They are off to a 6–1 start and coming off a World Series title. When you look at film, it’s a real lineup and a very impressive rotation. That’s what it takes to win a World Championship. So the respect is there. I think it is healthy. We need to fight. With the group we have, especially coming off the homestand we had, it’s inside every one of the guys right now.”

“The track Houston followed is not guaranteed. Throughout the years they were building, there was always the question mark about whether or not they would get there. You only get there if you get better every single day and you take advantage of every opportunity you have to improve. We have a long way to go to get there.”

“There is inspiration when you come in here. I was in here four years ago as a visiting coach and there was hardly anyone here, I noticed that when I left tickets today, the prices have gone way up from where they were four years ago. My guess is it’s going to be quite louder than it was four years ago. I was here over a decade ago as a player and it was crazy loud at times. And I’m certain this is about as loud as any place in baseball right now and that’s not the way it was when I came through as a coach. It was as quiet as any place.”

“They’ve definitely changed the atmosphere. The players, **A.J. (Hinch)** they all deserve a lot of credit.”

After a poor first start, right-hander **Luis Perdomo** allowed one run on four hits over five runs Friday night in Houston. Before the game, Green said what he expected from Perdomo.

“It’s a tough lineup,” said Green of the Astros. “It’s a righty dominant lineup. For him, that actually lines up better than usual. That said, he has to execute, he has to hit his spot. If he misses his spots by a large margin, these guys will do damage, especially in this ballpark the way the ball carries. He has to stay on top of his game. He has a pitch that should play very well. It’s going to be all about execution for him.”

Green discussed Dinelson Lamet, who threw on the side Thursday.

“I didn’t get a chance to catch up with anybody after he played catch,” said Green. “Hopefully it’s good news and he feels good today and it’s the start of a throwing program. We’ll see how it progresses. We’re just going to move through the process and do our best to do good by him and make sure every step of the way along the way that he feels good. If he checks off a certain distance, we’ll look to extend it and keep going step by step until we see how he is.”

Cordero started a rehab assignment with Triple-A El Paso Friday night.

“With Franchy, one, we could use one the bat; two, we could use his athleticism, and three, his left-handed stick,” said Green. “We’re a righty dominant outfield and to have a left-handed bat you can throw in there against tough right-handed hitters would be very helpful for us right now. He’s a guy who we thought was going to be a big part of this when spring started. He kind of showed that through spring training.”

“If he shows he’s healthy and shows he’s flying around the field, he’s somebody I’d expect to see at some point in time. He’s toolsier than anybody here. There’s more in there. There’s more raw twitch, there’s more explosion, there’s more speed. It’s impressive what’s inside of him. It’s just a matter of the consistency. What we did see in spring, when he barreled it up, it was crazy hard.”

“His strikeouts were still up, that’s going to be something to watch. You don’t get to succeed at this level striking out in the 30 to 40 percent range. He’s got to put himself on base and put himself on base consistently. He’s got to put the ball in play in order to do that. When he puts the ball in play, he’s going to get more hits than most people because he hits the ball hard and runs faster. For him, we just want to see him put the ball in play. When he does, good things are going to happen.”

“He’d give us a lot more flexibility in outfield positions plus the flexibility we wanted to have in the beginning of being able to bounce **Jose Pirela** into second base. Because of injuries, there hasn’t been a need for that. There’s more flexibility to spread the at-bats around and make sure that everyone stays healthy and fresh and give guys positive matchups. Franchy wouldn’t be with us just to sit.”

Green discussed the slow start of center fielder **Manuel Margot**, who homered in his last at-bat of the homestand.

“With what Manny went through those first seven games, it was good to see him square that ball up Thursday and take some positive momentum into this series,” said Green. “A lot hinges on

him for us and we kind of went through that series with a couple bats struggling and the pitcher's spot in the lineup, so we were a short lineup.”

“We need him to go for us to be good. The hope is he uses that last at-bat as a springboard into this series. It was a rough homestand for Manny. That's OK though. Over the course of 162 games, there's going to be a rough homestand. Just want to hope that last at-bat was a springboard for him. I liked some of the walks in the first few games. They started to lessen as it went on. I'm pleased with his defense in the outfield. The energy level is always great. He gives you all he has every day.”

Green discussed the pressure created by playing from behind through much of the first homestand.

“What happens a lot of times is you want to get it back really quickly and you see guys going with the mindset of how they're going to approach a particular at-bat and they expand outside of their zone because they want to do something special,” said Green. “At a certain point in the game, you have to let it come to you a little bit and stay locked in on what you are looking for and realize you don't get five runs back with one swing of the bat. You have to get on base and that typically starts things off really well for us.”

Green discussed the brilliant start to the season of right-handed reliever **Craig Stammen** who has allowed no runs on a hit in five innings.

“He's huge for us.” Said Green. “The consistency he gives us. He's as good at executing his pitches as anyone in the game of baseball. Watch where he's putting the ball. He sticks it in the glove a lot more than most guys do. That's why he succeeds. It's necessarily raw stuff, it's the ability to execute consistently and pitch to hitter's weaknesses. And he does that very well. Early on last April, it was a fight. He earned that leash as time went on. We stuck with him because we wanted to see if it clicked and it did. He's rewarded that faith.”

The Padres acquired another catcher for Triple-A El Paso today in **Brett Nicholas**.

“It's just catching depth for us as an organization,” said Green. “He's a left-handed bat with some pop. He'll pair with **Raffy (Lopez)** there and at some point in time you might just see Raffy here and that gives us more depth. If we were to call Raffy up at some point in time, they'd be thin in Triple-A. So this fills that need for an extra guy there who can swing the bat and do some things.”

Green discussed the slow start of third baseman **Chase Headley**.

“Chase is in a good spot,” said Green of Headley. “I had a conversation with him today. He's ready to go. Kind of a combination of some rough at-bats and some good ones when guys have reached out and snared line drives. That's how slumps go some times. That's kind of what he's been through in this young season. Helps him to know, ‘Hey, I've been here before.’ His stretch was o-

for-20 something last year. It's good to know, I've been there and come out of it. It's better not to be there at all in his mind."

Friday marked the first time this season that Green managed with the designated hitter.

"Coming in and recognizing game strategy, it's different, chess vs. checkers," said Green. "You don't have to worry about the double switch, you don't have to worry about a lot of different variables. So there's some simplicity to it. But they make it difficult on us."

# #PadresOnDeck: Trio of Affiliates Top ESPN's Most 'Stacked' List

## Missions, Storm and TinCaps boast best MiLB rosters

*By Justin Lafferty*

It's no secret that the Padres are loaded with minor league talent. During Spring Training, MLB Pipeline lauded San Diego as the No. 1 farm system in baseball. Now that rosters have been finalized, [three Padres affiliates stand out in ESPN's list](#) of "most stacked" minor league teams.

ESPN pointed to the [San Antonio Missions](#) (AA), [Lake Elsinore Storm](#) (A-Advanced) and [Fort Wayne TinCaps](#) (A) as having three of the most talented rosters in Minor League Baseball.

The consensus top prospect in the organization, shortstop **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, headlines a promising Missions team. [MLB Pipeline rates Tatis Jr. as the No. 8 overall prospect in baseball](#), while ESPN has him No. 3.

"The Padres will have three affiliates that are loaded with prospects this year, led by Double-A San Antonio, which will feature all-world prospect **Fernando Tatis Jr.** (ranked No. 3 overall) on the left side of the infield," ESPN's **Keith Law** wrote, citing his rankings, "and top-100 prospects **Cal Quantrill** (No. 81) and **Logan Allen** (No. 89) in its rotation along with **Jacob Nix** (No. 16 in the Padres' system). The roster also should include former first-rounder **Josh Naylor** (No. 22 in their system) and lefty reliever **Brad Wieck** (No. 29 in their system)."

Allen is already off to a promising start, hitting a home run in San Antonio's Opening Day loss Thursday to the Arkansas Travelers.

The Storm, who are a short trip up the 15 freeway from San Diego, won their first game against California League rival Stockton. **Edward Olivares**, the [Padres' No. 20 prospect as rated by MLB Pipeline](#), went 2-for-3 with a double out of the leadoff spot.

As ESPN points out, Lake Elsinore has a bevy of top prospects, including pitchers **Michel Baez**, **Adrian Morejon**, **Pedro Avila**, **Chris Paddack** and **Reggie Lawson**. The lineup features 2016 first round pick **Hudson Potts** and Cuban prospect **Jorge Oña**, in addition to Olivares, who came over in an offseason trade with Toronto.

ESPN is also enamored with the talent in Fort Wayne, again citing the site's rankings:

“Low-A Fort Wayne has just one top-100 prospect, but he's a good one, lefty **MacKenzie Gore**, who was N<sup>o</sup>14 preseason and is probably the best pitching prospect on any active roster in the minors right now. The lineup should be extremely young, with **Tirso Ornelas** (N<sup>o</sup>12 in their system), **Esteury Ruiz**(N<sup>o</sup>13), **Luis Campusano** (N<sup>o</sup>17), **Jeisson Rosario** (N<sup>o</sup>24) and shortstops **Justin Lopez** (N<sup>o</sup>23) and **Gabriel Arias** (N<sup>o</sup>21) on the roster, all of whom will play at 18 or 19 this entire season.”

The TinCaps received a stellar effort from starting pitcher **Nick Margevicius** in an Opening Day loss to Lake County. Margevicius fanned 9 in 5.2 innings, receiving a no-decision.

# Pitchers Margevicius, Bachar, Lauer Make Strong Starts to Open Minor League Season

*By Bill Center*

A number of Padres prospects got off to fast starts Thursday night as the minor league seasons started across the land.

Left-handed starter **Nick Margevicius** allowed one hit and no walks with nine strikeouts over 5 2/3 scoreless innings for Single-A Fort Wayne. Right-handed starter **Lake Bachar** allowed two hits and a walk with a strikeout for Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore.

Left-hander **Eric Lauer**, the Padres No.13 prospect, allowed two runs on five hits and a walk with six strikeouts to get the win as Triple-A El Paso opened the season with a 4–2 win at Las Vegas. And **Cal Quantrill**, the No.4 prospect, allowed a run on a hit and five walks and four strikeouts in 3 2/3 innings for Double-A San Antonio.

Offensively, both center fielder **Travis Jankowski** (3-for-5, two runs scored) and second baseman **Luis Urías** (1-for-3 with two walks and a run scored) reached base three times for El Paso, which also got a two-run double by right fielder **Franmil Reyes** and a solo homer by shortstop **Javy Guerra** (2-for-4).

*Around the Farm:*

TRIPLE-A: Chihuahuas (1–0) 4, LAS VEGAS 2—Three relievers followed Lauer, who was credited with the win, with scoreless innings. LHP **Buddy Baumann** allowed a walk with a strikeout. RHP **Kyle Lloyd** struck out two in a perfect inning. RHP **Jonathan Aro** struck out one in a perfect inning to get the save.

Double-A: ARKANSAS 3, Missions (0–1) 1—C **Austin Allen** was 1-for-2 with a homer and a walk. 1B **Josh Naylor** was 2-for-4. LHP **Dillon Overton** allowed a hit with three strikeouts in 2 1/3 scoreless innings. LHP **Brad Wieck** allowed two runs on two hits and a walk with two strikeouts in an inning to suffer the loss. RHP **Jason Jester** issued a walk with two strikeouts in an otherwise perfect inning.

ADVANCED SINGLE-A: Storm 4 (1-0), STOCKTON 0-2B **Eguy Rosario** had two doubles in four at-bats for two runs scored and a RBI. RF **Edward Olivares** was 2-for-3 with a double, two walks and a RBI. LF **Nate Easley** was 2-for-4 with a RBI. 3B **Hudson Potts** had a RBI double in four at-bats. Three relievers followed Bachar and protected the shutout. RHP **Elliot Ashbeck** issued a walk with three strikeouts in two otherwise perfect innings. RHP **Dauris Valdez** walked three with a strikeout in two-thirds of an inning. RHP **David Bednar** got the final out for the save.

SINGLE-A: LAKE COUNTY 3, TinCaps 2 (0-1)—Lake County scored three runs in the bottom of the ninth for the walk-off win. LHP **Ben Sheckler** followed Margevicius and allowed a run on four hits and three walks over 2 1/3 innings. RHP **Joe Galindo** allowed two runs on three walks in a third of an inning. RHP **Jordan Guerrero** issued a walk then gave up on the second hit allowed by Fort Wayne pitchers. CF **Jeisson Rosario** was 2-for-4 with a run scored. 3B **Justin Lopez** was 2-for-4. 2B **Esteury Ruiz** had a double in four at-bats.



## The Padres Have an Unusual Bullpen – Might It Also Be Super?

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by Travis Sawchik - April 6, 2018

The Padres are interesting because they have one of the game's best farm systems. Talents like **Fernando Tatis Jr.** could be difference-makers and change fortunes.

The Padres are interesting because they gave **Eric Hosmer** an eight-year deal when similarly productive corner bats went for far cheaper this winter.

The Padres are interesting because they raided this very site of its previous managing editor and Face of the Franchise, Dave Cameron. The Padres were all about acquiring Faces of Franchises this offseason.

But the Padres are also of interest because they have one of the game's more intriguing bullpens. As you might be aware, bullpens continue to gain a greater share of regular-season innings. Last season, relievers accounted for 38.1% of innings thrown in the regular season, a major league record. In the postseason that jumped to 46.4%. So if the Padres are really going to turn things around, they'll probably need a quality reliever corps and they just might have one.

**Brad Hand** has emerged as one of the top left-handed bullpen arms in the game. At a projected 1.7 WAR, only **Kenley Jansen**, **Felipe Rivero** and **Corey Knebel** were projected by FanGraphs to be better among NL relievers this season. (Knebel suffered a hamstring injury Thursday night.) Rather than deal him at the deadline last summer, the Padres held onto Hand and extended him. But the Padres bullpen is about more than just Hand. In an era when super teams often have super bullpens, the Padres ranked in the top half of our positional power **rankings** at No. 13. They've done it on the cheap, ranking **22nd (\$11.1 million)** in payroll committed to bullpen, according to Spotrac. And there's room for the Padres to beat that FanGraphs' projection.

Hand is supported by two of the more interesting yet relatively unknown — and certainly unusual — relief pitchers in the game entering 2018, **Kirby Yates** and NPB import, mysterious submarine-arm **Kazuhisa Makita**.

The Athletic San Diego **published** a piece on the Padres' bullpen Friday afternoon and noted the Padres have the second-lowest **average fastball velocity** (91.9 mph) at a time when super pens are breaking velocity records.

Yates is not a reason the velocity is an outlier. We'll get to that curious velocity in a moment.

Yates doesn't come with the same name recognition Hand does but his underlying numbers were even better last season.

Selected off waivers from the Angels last April, Yates was quietly one of the more dominant relief arms in the National League. His swinging strike (17.4%) **trailed only Craig Kimbrel**, Jansen, and **James Hoyt**. He posted elite 29.9 K-BB% and a 38% strikeout marks, with his strikeout percentage ranked seventh among all pitchers.

Last season, Yates had three bat-missing offerings. Among all major league pitchers, Yates ranked 17th in whiff-per-swing rate on his fastball (31.7%), according to Baseball Prospectus' PITCHf/x **leaderboards**. That's an unusual rate. His split-changeup ranked sixth among all pitchers in whiff rate (46.8%). And his breaking ball, a slider, missed bats at a 42.8% mark, 98th among all pitchers.

His 2017 velocity remained constant from earlier in his career, but Yates began to attack up in the zone with his high-spin, four-seam fastballs last season. The pitch features above-average arm horizontal movement (-7.4 inches) and spin: 2,329 rpms last season, and a 2,318 average since Statcast has been monitoring him. The MLB average is around 2,200. The pitch was 4.4 runs above average last season according to linear weights.

While his 94 mph velocity remained steady last season — it's slightly down to 93.4 mph early this season — in 2016 his fastball crossed the plate at an average height of 2.46 ft, according to Baseball Savant data. Last season his average fastball height increased to 2.67 ft (The league average was 2.27 feet via Savant). There seems to be some intent to pitch more up in the zone.

A pitcher learning to better utilize a fastball isn't so unusual, but his split-changeup usage is. He increased usage of the split-change from 3% in 2016 to 12.8% last season; it's up to 16.7% in the early going this season. The pitch was 3.3 runs above average last season, according to linear weights.

The changeup is typically used against batters holding a platoon advantage due to its fading action, but Yates trusted his enough to use it at a 10.8% rate against righties last season and a 13.8% rate early this season.

He has consistently buried the pitch, fading it away from lefties and back-footing it against righties.

Consider this fall-of-the-table, right-on-right changeup against **Nolan Arenado** last week:

Beyond Yates, the 25-year-old **Phil Maton** is probably the third most talented arm in the San Diego bullpen, whom Steamer projects for a 25.3% strikeout rate and 8.8% walk rate this season. But Makita is arguably the most interesting arm in the bullpen because of his rare delivery and skillset.

His vertical release is the second-lowest in baseball (2.35 ft.) **trailing** only **Adam Cimber** — another Padres' bullpen arm, a non-roster invite who made the team — in releasing pitches lower.

And Makita's average pitch height upon reach the plate ranks sixth in baseball, **according to Savant**, early this season (2.87 ft.)

Makita's ball actually does rise from its release point. MLB hitters simply don't get many looks like this. But the Padres have multiple such looks in Makita and Cimber. Cimber ranks 13th in average height at the plate (2.68 ft.) early this season.

A look at Matika's release point:

Makita's fastball also averages 79.7 mph; Cimber's average is 85 mph for reference. Makita's curveball advances forward at such a methodical pace, sometimes around 50 mph, it's not even registering a speed, according to PITCHf/x (0.0 mph). Pitch-labeling systems are having trouble marking his pitches. Can a pitcher be effective with such a velocity? Early this season, in a very small sample, Makita has generated a 20.4% swinging strike mark.

Here's a three-pitch strikeout against **Ryan McMahon** last week:

Good morning

Good afternoon

Good day, sir

And check out this knee-buckling curveball— I say “curveball,” though PITCHf/x didn't track it — facing **DJ LeMahieu**.

In Makita and Cimber, the Padres have cornered the market on submarine-style arms.

Facing Makita — and Cimber — appears to be an awkward proposition for major league batters. Will batters better adjust in the NL West with more looks? We'll see.

He's probably not going to maintain the 6.3% swinging strike rate he produced last year in the NPB, or his 6.6% mark from 2016, though former FanGraphs compatriot Eno Sarris **found** plate-discipline and batted-ball trends in the NPB and MLB are remarkably similar.

Still, when Makita transitioned from the rotation to the bullpen after the 2015 season he became a better pitcher — an excellent command pitcher. He walked five and struck out 35 in 62 innings last year with the Seibu Lions. He posted a 2.30 ERA/3.29FIP last season in Japan. Will it translate? The season will tell. But even if he's just a mid-innings, mid-leverage arm, that's a find at \$3.8 million spread over two years. The entire Padres' bullpen could be a cheap find.

The Padres are slowing turning things around and when and if they do, the bullpen, with this group, could have played a significant role. If nothing else, it's a fascinating group built at low cost.