



SF Giants Press Clips Tuesday, June 5, 2018

San Francisco Chronicle
Giants rip Diamondbacks for fifth straight victory
Henry Schulman

How many times over the past two months and change were the words spoken in Bay Area living rooms, offices, ballpark seats and establishments where thirsty souls can buy a libation.

“Just play .500 ball until Madison Bumgarner gets back, and the Giants will be OK.”

Guess what? The Giants will be 30-30 when the heart of their pitching staff makes his 2018 debut Tuesday night. They have played some of their best ball of the season ahead of Bumgarner’s arrival and extended their season-long win streak to five games Monday night when they trounced the Diamondbacks 10-3.

The Giants now get the Opening Day they were hoping for, sort of, with Bumgarner on the mound and their record even, but 1½ games out of first place in the National League West.

Still, that’s as close as they've been since April 7, not long after Bumgarner had surgery to repair his busted pinkie.

“That means we did our job,” starter Derek Holland said. “With all the injuries that have happened, everybody came in and filled their spots and did a good job keeping us in this race.

“Now we’ve got to continue to keep doing it. This is the time we’ve got to gain ground and make some moves and get where we feel we should be.”

The Giants hit four homers, all solos.

Andrew McCutchen and Brandon Crawford hit theirs consecutively to tie the game and launch a launch a seven-run fourth inning against Zack Godley, a day after their five-run inning against the Phillies’ Jake Arrieta.

Pablo Sandoval and Nick Hundley added solo homers to fluff the score long after the game was settled.

Alen Hanson and Buster Posey contributed two-run doubles in the big inning. Sandoval’s three hits also included a right-handed RBI single off T.J. McFarland.

“We’re taking advantage of every opportunity with men in scoring position,” Sandoval said, not literally, of course. But figuratively, he was spot on.

The Giants have become a much better clutch-hitting team lately.

“I kept saying this team is loaded with veterans who are good at hitting with runners in scoring position,” manager Bruce Bochy said. “They have a nose for RBIs. That’s why we’re winning.”

And here is where the pitchers raise their hand, too.

For most of Bumgarner’s time away, the Giants desperately needed his innings. Now, he just needs to keep pace.

The starters are 4-0 with a 2.25 ERA during the win streak. They got victories from Chris Stratton, Andrew Suarez and Dereck Rodriguez bookended by two Holland starts. He won in Denver to start the streak and had a four-inning no-decision against Arizona.

Holland spotted the Diamondbacks a 2-0 lead, during a 32-pitch fourth inning, on Ketel Marte’s

two-run double.

The Giants wasted no time getting even. McCutchen homered for the second straight game to start the bottom half, and Crawford followed with an even more impressive opposite-field drive.

The bases were loaded in a 2-2 game when Bochy sent Hanson to hit for Holland, joking with his starter that he need to have a .200 average before he gets to bat in that situation.

Hanson threaded the needle between third baseman Jake Lamb and the bag to bring home two for a 4-2 lead. After reliever Fernando Salas wild-pitched home a run to make it 5-2, Posey crushed a two-run double to the warning track in right-center.

Pierce Johnson got the win after throwing two shutout innings. He will have to carry the victory to Sacramento. He was optioned after the game to clear a roster spot for Bumgarner.

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants draft catcher Joey Bart with 2nd overall pick; plays Buster Posey's position
John Shea

Suddenly, the Giants are extremely deep at the catching position.

The team with the most celebrated catcher in the big leagues used the second overall pick in Monday's draft on the most celebrated catcher in college ball.

The Giants, who have won three World Series in the Buster Posey era, selected Georgia Tech catcher Joey Bart, a 6-foot-3, 225-pounder with a power bat and powerful arm who visited San Francisco last week for a workout at AT&T Park.

"I grew up in Atlanta, I love Atlanta," Bart said, "but it's just a different feel (at AT&T). The wind and the air are so much cooler. I think it's close to 100 degrees out here today. Just to feel that thin air and be right there on the water and the bay was really cool. Just a different feeling.

“I loved hitting out there. I could’ve hit out there all day long.”

After the Tigers selected Auburn pitcher Casey Mize with the top pick, the Giants followed by taking the first position player. Bart had an ACC-leading .359 average with 16 homers and threw out 36 percent (12 of 33) of attempted base stealers.

In the second round, the Giants drafted 6-foot-11 pitcher Sean Hjelle of Kentucky, who was 7-5 with a 3.44 ERA in 15 starts. In 2017, he was SEC Pitcher of the Year.

Bart, 21, is an intriguing pick because of the presence of Posey, 31, a five-time All-Star and fixture behind the plate who’s signed through 2021 with a club option for 2022.

“First and foremost, I know what a special day it is for him,” Posey said. “Just congratulations to him and his family. Not knowing much about the organization when I was drafted — he might not know much about it, either — I know he’s very lucky to be taken by a franchise with a storied history and one that takes care of its players not only while they’re here but after they’re gone.

“Hopefully, it works out for both sides.”

Just less than two years after Posey was drafted from Florida State, following 172 minor-league games, he was the Giants’ everyday catcher. That was late May 2010. If Bart has a similarly quick path to the majors, he’d arrive during the 2020 season, at which time Posey will be 33.

Though Posey’s top value to the Giants is at catcher, it’s no secret he could turn into a full-time first baseman in the distant future, though first baseman Brandon Belt also is signed through 2021.

That’s a story that’ll unfold over the next couple of years. For now, the Giants feel fortunate they got Bart with the second pick, their highest selection since drafting Will Clark second in 1985.

“Right now, Buster’s our catcher,” manager Bruce Bochy said. “That’s how I look at it. Now,

when this kid gets to a point where he is ready to come up and catch, we'll see where we're at.

"When you have what I believe is the best catcher in the game with us, he's our guy. So I don't even think about that until it's time to think about it.

"At that point, maybe it'll be time for Buster to make a move. We don't know. I don't think he knows. We do know this: He's our catcher and will remain our catcher until we and he think otherwise."

Naturally, Posey said, he's not looking that far ahead.

"No," he said, "honestly, with us being in June, it's trying to figure out the best way to try to win a game. Again, it's more congratulations to him. It's a big day for him."

Scouting director John Barr, who has overseen Giants drafts since he selected Posey as the fifth pick in 2008, called both catchers coming out of the ACC fierce competitors and athletic defenders, adding that Bart is a power hitter and Posey was a good overall hitter.

The tentative plan is for Bart to report to Arizona once he's signed. The Giants' bonus pool for the top 10 rounds is \$11.748 million, and the slot value for Bart is \$7.494 million. Agent Victor Menocal is representing him in negotiations.

Perhaps an endorsement deal with BART can be arranged, even though when Bart was in the Bay Area, he used Uber.

"Once I figured out it was called the BART, I was like, 'Wow, this might be meant to be,'" Bart said. "It was kinda funny."

San Francisco Chronicle

**Buster Posey to Giants' top draft pick Joey Bart: cangrats, kid
John Shea**

Buster Posey offered congratulations to the Giants' top pick in Monday's draft, Georgia Tech catcher Joey Bart.

"First and foremost, to me, I know what a special day it is for him," Posey said in an interview before the series opener against the Diamondbacks. "Just congratulations to him and his family. Me not knowing much about the organization when I was drafted — he might not know much about it, either — I know he's very lucky to be taken by a franchise with a storied history and one that takes care of its players not only while they're here but after they're gone.

"Hopefully it works out for both sides."

Posey, 31, is 10 years older than Bart, the ACC player of the year who was drafted second overall and could be on the fast track with the Giants, as Posey was after getting drafted 10 years ago this month as the fifth overall pick out of Florida State. Posey was an everyday catcher in the big leagues by May 2010.

If it takes Bart about as long to become a fixture in the majors — say, the summer of 2020 — how would the Giants handle a two-catcher scenario? Would Posey become the everyday first baseman?

It's something they don't need to worry about at this moment.

"Right now, Buster's our catcher," manager Bruce Bochy said. "That's how I look at it. Now, when this kid gets to a point where he is ready to come up and catch, we'll see where we're at.

"When you have what I believe is the best catcher in the game with us, he's our guy. So I don't even think about that until it's time to think about it.

"At that point, maybe it'll be time for Buster to make a move. We don't know. I don't think he

knows. We do know this: He's our catcher and will remain our catcher until we and he thinks otherwise."

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"No," he said, "honestly, with us being in June, it's trying to figure out the best way to try to win a game. Again, it's more congratulations to him. it's a big day for him."

San Francisco Chronicle
Giants did a good job staying afloat while Bumgarner recuperated
Henry Schulman

Happy Draft Day. The Chronicle has learned that Ryan Vogelsong and Mike Murphy are still arguing over which player they will select with the second pick. I hear they're going to go rogue and write down any names they want.

Meanwhile....

"Just play .500 ball till Bumgarner comes back."

How many times have you heard someone say that since his hand was broken by a line drive six days before the season opener?

Guess what? If the Giants can beat the Diamondbacks on Monday night and extend their win streak to five games, they will be 30-30.

Five hundred is the definition of average, but it's hard to call the Giants average because we really don't know which team to look at ?

The one that's 17-10 at home or the one that's 12-20 on the road?

The one that started the year 7-11? The one that then went 12-4? The one that then went 6-

15? Or the one that has gone 4-0 since and held the Phillies to a Jake Arrieta homer in three games over the weekend?

One hopes that once the team gets whole we can get a better idea, but that is now weeks away with Brandon Belt and Johnny Cueto out, and even then, there's no guarantee everyone else will stay healthy before those two return. Medical Whack-a-Mole seems to be the Giants' 2018 way.

The vibe is more positive than negative heading into the week with a winning streak on the line and Madison Bumgarner due back Tuesday night.

Inside the clubhouse, the players are bullish on the offense.

They have scored 242 runs, which ranks 10th in the National League. Their OPS+ (where 100 is league average), is fourth-best at 102. The disparity can be explained by their .238 average with runners in scoring position, which ranks ninth.

They have not been a good clutch-hitting team.

But they have the tools, as they showed in their weekend sweep of the Phillies, who sent two pretty good pitchers and one upper-echelon starter to the mound at AT&T Park.

Scoring five runs in an inning against Jake Arrieta on Sunday showed the Giants pitchers something.

"That's our offense this year," reliever Mark Melancon said after his successful season debut.

"It's night and day from last year. It's such a good feeling having that knowledge that you can be down and still come back."

The Giants just need to do it consistently - or don't fall behind.

One great benefit of that is not having to play catch-up against the other teams' best relievers, as the Phils had to do all weekend. Philly has a rookie reliever named Seranthony Dominguez,

who has not allowed a major-league run. He did not throw one pitch all weekend.

The Giants eventually will miss Belt. There's no way around it. You can't lose the league's second-best OPS+ (162) and not feel the effects. But slumping hitters such as Evan Longoria and Andrew McCutchen can help lighten the load if they start producing.

McCutchen had a nice game Sunday with a double and three-run homer.

Incidentally, the league leader in OPS+ is Atlanta's Freddie Freeman (166).

Shifty thoughts: You always know you had a good series when someone from the other team rips into his own organization on the way out of town.

Arrieta was none too pleased with the Phillies' defensive shifts, which by one statistical measure have actually cost them runs, not saved them.

The Phillies surely had an interesting flight to Chicago.

Monday's game: The Giants' winning streak began in Denver on Wednesday night when Derek Holland beat the Rockies. The lefty allowed a three-run Nolan Arenado homer eight pitches into the game then shoved the ball down Colorado's throats the final four innings.

The Giants scored of the game's final eight runs and won 7-4.

Holland is carrying a 4.94 ERA into Monday's game. He does not care.

"You can't worry about stats like that, or anything," he said. "If you give your team a chance to win every time you step foot on the field, you'll have a pretty successful season. I've got to continue to keep plugging away. I'm not going to get caught up in what my ERA is and all that crap, because to me, it just matters when you show up each day and give your team a chance to win."

By that measure he had a better May than April.

In the season's first month the Giants were 1-4 in Holland's starts. In May, 3-3.

Roster note: The Orioles claimed left-handed reliever D.J. Snelten off waivers from the Giants, who designated him for assignment to clear a 40-man roster spot for Melancon.

San Jose Mercury News

Bochy's aggressive call pays off, Giants extend win streak to five games

Kerry Crowley

SAN FRANCISCO—In a season in which his starting staff has been decimated by injuries and his bullpen taxed on a daily basis, Giants manager Bruce Bochy hasn't played much poker.

The cards have rarely been in his favor and the skipper often has to fold his hand ahead of schedule. So when an opportunity arose to go all in on Monday, Bochy took it.

He pushed in his chips, relied on the strength of his numbers and watched his club clobber the Diamondbacks 10-3.

With the bases loaded and one out in the bottom of the fourth, Bochy called on pinch hitter Alen Hanson to bat for starting pitcher Derek Holland. It's a gamble Bochy couldn't have taken without a well-rested bullpen, and it was a roll of the dice that appeared destined to fail when Hanson fell behind 0-2.

But after Hanson fouled off three straight curveballs, he rewarded Bochy's confidence by poking a two-run double down the left field line that helped the Giants break a 2-2 tie.

"What a great at-bat the way he grinded out that at-bat," Bochy said. "Really fouled off some tough breaking balls and it was pretty obvious that's the way they were going. Then he started to get his timing and he got a two-seamer away and found a good place to put it."

Shortly after Andrew McCutchen and Brandon Crawford led off the inning with back-to-back home runs, a single by Pablo Sandoval and walks by Hunter Pence and Gorkys Hernández loaded the bases with Holland due to bat.

Though the left-hander had only surrendered two runs and four hits over four innings of work, Bochy had the benefit of a fresh, effective group of relievers lined up for the late innings. The skipper sent Hanson to the plate and the Giants never looked back.

After a wild pitch allowed Hernández to score, catcher Buster Posey launched a two-run double into right center field to push the Giants ahead 7-2 and help the team to its first seven-run inning since September 30, 2016.

“We took advantage in that inning,” Sandoval said. “McCutchen hit the homer. After that, Crawford. We were working and working every pitch to score more runs and Hanson pinch hitting, coming from the bench, a huge double.”

With a win over the first-place D’Backs Monday, the Giants closed the gap in the National League West to 1.5 games and extended their season-best win streak to five games. It’s the club’s longest such streak since the Giants won six in a row from June 26-July 2, 2017.

While Bochy’s offense has risen to the occasion since returning home from a 2-6 road trip, the success of the Giants’ starting staff over the last three games allowed the skipper to manage in aggressive fashion.

San Francisco opened a six-game homestand by sweeping Philadelphia on the strength of three straight quality starts from Chris Stratton and rookies Andrew Suárez and Dereck Rodríguez. The trio combined to allow one run over 19 innings against the Phillies, forcing relievers to throw just eight innings over three days.

Though Holland needed 82 pitches to last four innings Monday, Bochy turned to Reyes Moronta who logged a shutdown inning in the fifth before calling on fellow rookie Pierce Johnson to pitch the sixth and seventh.

“Give a lot of credit to Boch,” Holland said. “That’s a tough decision to make. He probably said he wanted to keep me out there but at the same time, if we’re going to get a chance to score some runs, we’ve got to go for it.”

The home runs that opened the scoring for the Giants in the fourth helped the club erase the two-run lead the D’Backs took in the top half of the inning on a two-run, two-out double by Ketel Marte.

McCutchen’s blast to left field to lead off the inning was his second in as many days after he went the entire month of May without a home run. Crawford’s seventh home run of the season came on a night where he reached base in all four plate appearances and raised his average to .320, a National League-leading mark among shortstops.

After falling to 25-30 in Colorado last week, the Giants have reeled off five straight wins ahead of the return of ace Madison Bumgarner. The left-hander is scheduled to make his 2018 debut Tuesday after missing the first two-plus months of the regular season with a fractured pinky.

“We missed him,” Bochy said. “A bad break there the last game of spring training but I know he’s excited about coming back. We’re a better club with him. That really improves this rotation.”

Bumgarner is expected to be available for about 90 pitches against Arizona and could help the Giants move above .500 for the first time since the club was 22-21 on May 15.

Following a seven-run fourth inning for the Giants, first baseman Pablo Sandoval crushed his third home run of the season into the right field arcade, extending the lead to 8-2. Sandoval’s solo shot came on the first night of the 2018 MLB Draft, which is ironic considering it was his walkoff home run on the final day of the 2017 regular season that prevented the Giants from securing the first overall pick.

Starting in place of first baseman Brandon Belt, who is sidelined for the next three weeks after undergoing an emergency appendectomy, Sandoval pounded out three hits including a seventh-inning single that produced his first RBI as a right-handed hitter this season.

Pinch hitter Nick Hundley capped off a four-home run night for the Giants with a pinch hit solo home run in the ninth inning, his first pinch hit homer since September 4, 2010.

San Jose Mercury News

Bart reveals passion for Giants after franchise tabs him No. 2 overall

Kerry Crowley

SAN FRANCISCO—Thirty three years after the Giants selected Will Clark with the No. 2 overall pick in the 1985 MLB Draft, Clark was in uniform at AT&T Park when the franchise was on the clock Monday.

With the No. 2 selection in the 2018 MLB Draft, the Giants chose Joey Bart, a catcher out of Georgia Tech.

“I said dang, I hope the Giants want me because that’s where I want to be and everything worked out for the greatest,” Bart said. “God had my back tonight and I can’t wait to be in San

Francisco.”

Bart joins Clark, a six-time All-Star and Giants special instructor, as the highest-selected draftee in the franchise’s history. The Giants have never held the No. 1 overall pick and only selected in the top five on five different occasions since the draft began in 1965.

A highly touted power hitter who led the ACC in batting average in 2018, Bart impressed the Giants with his bat control and well-rounded skill set.

“Gifted defensively, had a big year with the bat, led the ACC in hitting, second in slugging, just had a big year on both sides of the ball,” manager Bruce Bochy said. “You look at him, he’s a man. A good sized kid that’s really developed his game.”

The Giants made one additional selection Monday, tabbing Kentucky right-hander Sean Hjelle with the 45th overall pick. Hjelle is listed at 6-foot-11 and recorded 91 strikeouts in 99 1/3 innings this season while posting a 3.44 ERA for the Wildcats.

Hjelle was the SEC Pitcher of the Year in 2017 and Giants scouting director John Barr said the organization was excited a pitcher of his caliber was still on the board in the second round.

“Overall, we’re ecstatic to get two guys that we think can contribute to the Giants,” Barr said.

Forty five minutes before the Detroit Tigers opened the draft by taking Auburn pitcher Casey Mize with the top choice, Clark was on the field chatting with outfielder Hunter Pence and infielder Alen Hanson as they took batting practice.

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Clark, third baseman Matt Williams (1986), pitcher Jason Grilli (1997) and catcher Buster Posey (2008) are the four players the franchise has tabbed with top five picks, and all four went on to earn All-Star nods during their major league careers.

Like Posey, Bart is a native of Georgia and a product of an ACC school. A 2018 All-American and a Golden Spikes Award semifinalist, Bart was originally drafted in the 27th round of the 2015 draft by the Tampa Bay Rays but chose to attend college.

The Giants hosted Bart for an informal workout on Thursday where he met with Barr, vice president of baseball operations Brian Sabean and general manager Bobby Evans.

“Just to feel that thin air and be right there on the water and the bay was really cool,” Bart said. “It was a really different feeling.”

Bart hit 16 home runs and 12 doubles while batting .359 for Georgia Tech this season, but developed a reputation as one of the strongest two-way prospects in college baseball thanks to his command of his pitching staff.

“He looks like he’s pretty advanced,” Bochy said. “I don’t know where he’s going to start for us, but you look at the size of this kid and the success that he’s had, plus the intangibles. He’s been calling his own game so that’s always nice to know.”

Barr said Bart will likely begin his professional career in the Arizona Rookie League, but if the Giants want to accelerate his development, he could end up in the Northwest League with Salem-Keizer or play for Low-A Augusta this summer.

“Where they start, as we say, it doesn’t matter,” Barr said. “It’s where they finish is really the most important thing.”

Bart is determined to rise through the organization quickly and eager to meet Posey, who he said was one of his favorite players growing up. One day, he could take Posey’s place behind the plate if the Giants elect to move the heart of their franchise over to first base.

“I felt like they really needed me for the future and they really wanted me as well,” Bart said. “They always want to win. They’re not looking to rebuild every year like some organizations, may give it three years and then we’ll be good, the Giants want to win now and that’s what really attracted me to them.”

Though the Giants plan for Bart to stick at catcher in the minor leagues, Barr said he believes Bart is athletic enough to play elsewhere on the diamond.

Since Posey’s selection in 2008, four of the last nine first round draft choices by the Giants have been traded. The franchise did not have a first round pick in 2016 after forfeiting a selection to sign free agent Jeff Samardzija.

Seven of the players on the Giants 25-man roster were drafted by the franchise, including 2011 first round choice Joe Panik and 2012 first round selection Chris Stratton.

San Jose Mercury News

Draft day considerations and the players linked to the Giants at No. 2

Kerry Crowley

SAN FRANCISCO—The Major League Baseball Draft begins at 4 p.m. PT Monday and this year, the Giants won't wait long to make their first selection.

The Giants hold the No. 2 overall pick for the second time in franchise history and the first since they tabbed Will Clark out of Mississippi State with the No. 2 selection in 1985.

The franchise have held top-five selections four times in its history and has a strong track record of choosing impact players near the top of the draft. After selecting Clark in 1985, the Giants drafted Matt Williams in 1986 and chose another future All-Star, Jason Grilli, with the fourth overall pick in 1997.

The Giants' most recent opportunity to pick in the top five came in 2008, when San Francisco hit the jackpot with Buster Posey at No. 5.

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After winning three World Series during the first half of the decade, the Giants became accustomed to picking near the back half of the first round. The organization still managed to find impact talent like first rounders Joe Panik in 2011 and Chris Stratton in 2012, but many of the franchise's recent top selections have either been traded or dealt with struggles during their ascent through the minor leagues.

The Giants have traded four of their last nine first round choices while 2010 first round pick Gary Brown took just seven at-bats with the major league club before retiring.

As the club's current core ages, the Giants know this year's evaluation process carries an extraordinary amount of weight. Finding an All-Star-caliber talent with the No. 2 overall choice is critical, but players drafted at the beginning of the second and third rounds will also be scrutinized.

There are a number of different ways the Giants can approach the No. 2 overall pick, as they must balance their desire to draft the best player available with locating an athlete with minimal risks who can soar through the system and play with their current core.

Though the vast majority of draftees need multiple seasons in the minor leagues before

receiving their first major league opportunity, the Giants stand to benefit from selecting a more polished college talent.

Auburn pitcher Casey Mize is a legitimate option if the Detroit Tigers pass on him at No. 1 overall, while Florida pitcher Brady Singer has also been tied to the Giants. Georgia Tech catcher Joey Bart and Wichita State third baseman Alec Bohm are considered the top college power hitters available, but the Giants don't necessarily have a need for a catcher or third baseman.

And that's why baseball's draft is so tricky.

Teams rarely bypass superior talent because a player profiles at a position where they have a star locked up, but drafting Bart and expecting him to contribute with the current core by the end of 2019 or the start of 2020 creates a conundrum.

Would Buster Posey be ready to move to first base by 2020? What would the Giants do with Brandon Belt if Bart can play every day and Posey is clearly on the move to first base?

These decisions are hardly easy, especially for an organization that has struggled to develop starting pitching depth since selecting Madison Bumgarner 10th overall in 2007.

The best-case scenario for the Giants might be for the Tigers to take a position player and for Mize to fall into their laps, because he's a big-framed pitcher with three pitches, a fastball that can ramp up to 97, and a right-hander who reportedly possesses impressive control.

In the past few days, the franchise has also been tied to high school pitcher Cole Winn, a right-handed prospect general manager Bobby Evans has reportedly scouted in person several times. High school prospects tend to be riskier bets near the very top of drafts, but moving on Winn would likely allow the Giants to sign a player under slot value and save some cash to make bigger splashes in the second and third rounds.

Regardless of how the Giants approach the No. 2 overall pick, scouting director John Barr and the rest of the front office have spent countless hours deliberating over and developing multiple plans of action.

Much of what the Giants do will depend on how the Tigers handle their pick, but many of their draft decisions will likely reflect the sense of urgency that should be felt inside the organization. The key decision-makers know the Giants are short on pitching talent at the upper levels of the

minor leagues, and cognizant of how the eventual success of the No. 2 overall pick and even the second and third round choices could impact their job security.

In a few short hours, the Giants will fill out a card and lock in their top draft choice. It's still too soon to know who they'll pick and what will lead to that decision, but we do know this: They need a star.

MLB.com

Homers spark mammoth frame in Giants' win

John Hickey

SAN FRANCISCO -- Maybe no one but the Giants thought they'd be where they are Tuesday morning, back at .500 after 60 games, just 1 1/2 games out of first place in the National League West and surging after Monday's 10-3 win over the first-place D-backs.

A club that had been written off when starters **Madison Bumgarner** and then **Johnny Cueto** went on the disabled list has survived that 1-2 kick in the gut. And now Bumgarner is due to come off the disabled list Tuesday for his first MLB start of the season.

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"It's the Giants' way," first baseman **Pablo Sandoval** said. "It's exciting. And now we get to see our ace come back and throw the ball the way he does."

Sandoval hit one of four Giants homers Monday, all of them solo shots and three of them to lead off innings. Sandoval's came in the fifth inning, but the one that excited him most came from **Andrew McCutchen** an inning earlier.

The D-backs had just scored twice on a **Ketel Marte** double in the fourth when McCutchen opened the bottom of the inning with his fifth bomb. **Brandon Crawford** followed with a blast of his own, and the deficit was neutralized. Before the inning was over, the Giants would add seven more runs. "That's the good thing; we took advantage in that inning," Sandoval said. "McCutchen hit that home run and after that Crawford, and then we're working and working every pitch to score more. After they scored two, McCutchen really awakened us."

Pinch-hitter **Alen Hanson** brought in two runs with a double, and after a replay reversal put **Joe Panik** on base as a hit batter, the Giants scored three more times, the last two on a **Buster Posey** double. Sandoval and pinch-hitter **Nick Hundley** then hit leadoff homers in the fifth and eighth innings.

Hanson's hit broke the game open, but it also cost Giants starter **Derek Holland** the win. Hanson hit for Holland in the fourth with one out and the bases loaded. Manager Bruce Bochy joked with Holland that if he were averaging .200, he would have thought about letting him hit. Instead, reliever **Pierce Johnson** -- who was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento following the game to clear a roster spot for Bumgarner's return -- got his third win with two scoreless innings.

"I guess I've got some work to do," Holland, hitting .053, said, breaking into a grin. "I know that had to be a tough call for Bochy. If we've got a chance to score some runs, we've got to go for it. Hanson did a great job stepping right in there. We put up seven that inning, and that's huge for us."

On May 1, the Giants were 6 1/2 games behind the D-backs. Heading into Tuesday, they are just 1 1/2 back and on a roll. Not only do they have a five-game winning streak, but they just scored 10 runs against a D-backs pitching staff that allowed them just 14 runs in six April games.

"It was good to break out," Bochy said. "We got down two, and we came back. What a great at-bat for [Hanson]. That got the ball rolling. And that was the ballgame.

"Now it will be exciting to have Madison back. He's our guy, along with Johnny, and we've missed them."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Hanson stepped in with the bases loaded and one out in the fourth inning and just missed a bases-clearing double into the right-field corner on an 0-2 pitch. On the next pitch, he doubled into the left-field corner, scoring two runs and breaking a 2-2 tie.

HE SAID IT

"I'm a diehard fan. I have been for three days." -- *Longtime Dallas Mavericks fan Holland, who was wearing a Golden State Warriors cap after the game*

UP NEXT

The Giants welcome back their ace Tuesday in Bumgarner, out with a broken pinkie in his left hand since March 23, when he was hit by a liner in San Francisco's final Cactus League game. He made two official Minor League rehab starts, going 8 1/3 innings in which he struck out 15 while allowing one run.

MLB.com

Giants pick C Bart 2nd, tall righty at No. 45

Chris Haft

SAN FRANCISCO -- When the Giants last owned the MLB Draft's No. 2 overall pick 33 years ago, they used it to select somebody who became an icon: Will Clark. Possessing that pick again Monday, they chose somebody who resembles and could replace **Buster Posey**, another icon.

• **Draft Tracker: Follow every Giants Draft pick**

More coverage ▾

Meet Joey Bart, who parallels Posey in more ways than one. They're both Georgia natives. They're both converted catchers who embraced their new position immediately. And they both can hit. Posey has done it enough to make five All-Star teams and win four Silver Slugger awards; Bart recorded a slash line of .359/.471/.632 with 16 home runs and 38 RBIs in 57 games as a junior at Georgia Tech. His batting average and slugging percentage ranked second in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Posey became a big league regular in two seasons. Should Bart sign with the Giants and develop that quickly, he'd be ready to serve as San Francisco's backstop in 2021, the final guaranteed year on Posey's contract (the Giants hold an option for 2022).

Bart acknowledged his admiration for Posey during a conference call with reporters.

"I've liked him forever," said Bart, 21.

He's a semifinalist for two player of the year awards, the Golden Spikes Award and the Dick Howser Trophy, as well as the Johnny Bench Award for being the nation's top collegiate catcher. Posey won all of them.

"For my name to be put up there with his is just unreal," Bart said.

The Giants used their second-round Draft choice on 6-foot-11 Sean Hjelle, a right-hander from the University of Kentucky who was the Southeastern Conference's Pitcher of the Year as a sophomore in 2017.

"We're ecstatic to be able to get two guys who can contribute to the Giants in the near future," scouting director John Barr said.

Barr reiterated his emphasis that the club never drafts for need at the Major League level. He did point out, however, that he and Giants scouts spoke to several ACC coaches who opposed Georgia Tech and insisted Bart was among "the best they've seen."

Bart avoided saying anything that might have made Posey seem like his intended prey.

"Those comparisons are cool," said Bart, who bats and throws right-handed. "But he's on a whole 'nother level."

Bart reached levels that were virtually unmatched this year among his peers. As a junior, he led the ACC in batting average and ranked second in slugging percentage. Defensively, he committed two passed balls, matching the league's lowest total, and posted a personal-best .992 fielding percentage.

Bart is the fifth Yellow Jacket to be named the ACC's Player of the Year and the first since Mark Teixeira in 2000. He's also Georgia Tech's first catcher to be first team on both the All-America and All-ACC squads since Jason Varitek in 1993.

Moreover, Bart eclipsed right-hander Kevin Brown as Georgia Tech's highest Draft pick. Brown went fourth overall to the Texas Rangers in 1986.

One thing Bart didn't do during a visit to San Francisco last week for a pre-Draft workout was ride BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit, the railway system that links the entire Bay Area).

If he gets his way, he'll receive numerous opportunities to experiment with public transit.

"I'd love to get there as soon as possible," Bart said. "That's one thing that attracted me to the Giants. I felt like they really needed me for the future and really wanted me as well and they always want to win. They're not looking to rebuild like some organizations."

Barr was far from certain that Hjelle, 21, still would be available with the 45th overall pick.

"That was a waiting game to see if he was going to make it to us," Barr said.

Hjelle commanded attention after finishing 11-4 with a 3.89 ERA as a sophomore. He wasn't as prolific this year but remained successful, posting a 7-5 mark with a 3.44 ERA.

"We like the way he handles himself," Barr said. "He doesn't look like a 6-foot-10 or 6-foot-11 pitcher because he moves so well. You expect him to be a little more gawky or something, but he actually moves his feet and he has a feel. He throws strikes. We see him being a starter in the big leagues."

The Draft continues Tuesday with Rounds 3-10. The MLB.com preview show begins at 9:30 a.m. PT, with exclusive coverage beginning at 10 a.m. PT.

The Athletic

Giants stay safe, A's take a big leap of faith on first day of the MLB Draft

Melissa Lockard

Day 1 of the MLB Draft delivered a number of surprises, as several projected top-10 picks fell deep into the first round and a few names were called that were not expected to go in the top 15. The A's made the most surprising selection of all when they took two-sport star Kyler Murray with the ninth overall pick. The Giants, meanwhile, were fairly predictable with their selections and found two players who should help their system immediately.

Below is an analysis of the Giants and A's Day 1 MLB Draft selections.

Giants select a battery with their first two picks

The Giants had two selections on Day 1 and they went with two accomplished players from collegiate powerhouse conferences: Georgia Tech catcher Joey Bart and Kentucky right-hander Sean Hjelle. In Bart and Hjelle, the Giants selected two players with high floors (meaning they are likely to reach the big leagues), but both also offer upside.

Bart is the headline pick as the Giants' highest selection since they took Will Clark second overall in 1985. In my first-round mock draft, Bart to the Giants was one of four picks I predicted correctly (we're grading on a curve, right?). I didn't project the second round, but it didn't shock me that the Giants were interested in Hjelle. As an organization, the Giants love tall pitchers and Hjelle puts that on a different level with his 6-foot-11 frame. He's been a performer in a top college baseball conference and there is still upside in his projection. Both are safe picks, but both players have the potential to be impact players in the big leagues.

Bart is a big (6-3), strong (225 pounds) right-handed hitter with above-average bat speed and enough leverage in his swing to hit for power. His biggest weakness coming into this season was his plate discipline, but he showed significant improvement in that area, jumping his walk rate from 7.69 to 15.07 percent from last season to this one. Bart projects to be a middle of the order bat.

Defensively, Bart has an above-average arm and he has improved his foot work behind the plate during his collegiate career. He threw out nearly 40 percent of would-be basestealers this year. Bart has a high baseball IQ and should adjust to the pro-style of game-calling well.

The Giants are obviously set at catcher at the big league-level for the next few years with Buster Posey, but Bart was arguably the top college position player available, and once Auburn right-hander Casey Mize went first overall to the Tigers, there wasn't a college pitcher who had a higher ceiling than Bart had as a position player. Catchers generally develop a little more slowly than other position players because of their defensive responsibilities, but the Giants have the

luxury of time at the catcher position. And if Bart zooms to the big leagues, he can ease his way into a role with the Giants by working with Posey as the backup catcher for a season or two.

Hjelle was an important member of the Wildcats staff for all three of his seasons at Kentucky. He was the closer as a freshman, but has been a workhorse starter the past two seasons. At 6-11, he was the tallest pitcher in the SEC. Tall pitchers can sometimes struggle to repeat their mechanics and command their pitches, but Hjelle has good command of his fastball and his curveball, which is a legitimate swing-and-miss out-pitch.

Hjelle's fastball sits in the 90-93 mph range, but his length down the mound makes the pitch appear harder to the hitter. He has added a few ticks to his fastball over the past year and there may be a few more ticks of velocity left to gain once he's worked with professional pitching coaches for a few seasons. He utilizes a three-quarters delivery that also adds some deception. Hitters rarely get a good look at the ball coming out of Hjelle's hand. His changeup wasn't used that often in college, and the development of that pitch will determine whether he can reach the big leagues as a starter or if he moves into a back-end-of-the-bullpen role.

A's go long for their first selection, stick with plus athletes on Day 1

While the Giants' first selection was expected, the A's went way off the projected path with the ninth overall pick in the draft, selecting Oklahoma outfielder Kyler Murray. Murray has been a top-15 draft talent since his high school days in Allen, Texas, but his draft stock has always been clouded by his status as one of the top amateur quarterbacks in the country.

In 2015, Murray took himself out of consideration for the MLB Draft, telling teams he absolutely would not sign, as he intended to go to Texas A&M and play quarterback and centerfield. Murray spent one year in College Station before he transferred to Oklahoma, where he played football last season and baseball the past two seasons (he had to sit out the 2016 football season, per NCAA transfer rules). He is one of the top candidates to take over as the starting quarterback for Oklahoma this fall, replacing Heisman Trophy winner Baker Mayfield.

Murray told reporters on a conference call after the draft that he was definitely playing football for the Sooners in the fall, and A's scouting director Eric Kubota confirmed later in the evening that the A's had spoken to Murray's representatives and that they had assurances that Murray would play football this fall and then commit to baseball full-time after that. Because of his football commitment, even if Murray signs, he won't suit up for the A's until spring training 2019.

There's no question that from a talent-perspective Murray has a chance to be a special player. He rates at the top of the scouting scale for pure athleticism. His bat speed is well above-average, as is his foot speed. His throwing arm rates only average thus far, but given the arm strength he's shown as a quarterback, he should get more out of his arm with more reps

throwing a baseball. Murray isn't particularly big at 5-11, 195 pounds, but he is well built and he generates plenty of power from his frame. If everything comes together for him, Murray has a chance to be a five-tool center fielder.

That being said, even without the football considerations, there are still plenty of questions as to whether he will be able to reach his ceiling. Murray didn't play baseball for more than a year before suiting up for Oklahoma in 2017, and it showed. He hit only .122 in 49 at-bats. He then played in the Cape Cod League, where he still hit under .200. However, he has had a strong season for the Sooners this year, batting .296/.398/.556 with 10 home runs and 10 stolen bases. There has still been plenty of swing-and-miss to his game this season (24.78 K%), but his performance has been good enough to move him into Day 1 consideration on several draft boards.

Not many had him in the top 10, however, and the A's certainly take on plenty of risk with this pick. They wouldn't have selected him if they didn't feel comfortable that they would sign him, but they will be holding their collective breath from August until January, as Murray tries to avoid serious injury playing in the Big 12 for a team that always has national championship aspirations. Then assuming he escapes injury, he'll go right from football to spring training a month or so later, where he will have seven weeks to train his body and mind for baseball before likely being thrown to the full-season wolves.

The A's showed a willingness to take on a rawer college talent in 2015 when they selected Richie Martin from Florida, knowing that Martin still had plenty of development to do at the plate. It was a rough first three seasons in the pros for Martin, but he looks to have turned a corner in Double-A so far this season. Although they are different in terms of hitting skills (Martin is more of a leadoff type, whereas Murray projects as more of a run-producer), Murray's development path as a baseball player may end up mirroring Martin's offensively.

Of course, Martin was the 20th overall pick in 2015, so a miss at that spot wouldn't be quite as devastating as a miss with the ninth pick. That being said, the A's have a deep system at the moment, so if there was a time to take a risk on talent, this would be that time. The A's don't have the luxury of chasing the top talents in the international amateur market because they are in the penalty box this summer, so acquiring a talent like Murray was only going to happen for them in the draft. Still, there is no question that this is a risky pick.

The A's next two Day 1 picks were a little more conventional. With the 50th overall selection, the A's picked Dallas Baptist University centerfielder Jameson Hannah. Hannah brings traditional leadoff skills as a plus runner with a good feel for the barrel and the knack for seeing a lot of pitches. He has a solid, line-drive swing that could develop into a home run stroke as he develops.

Hannah was a solid three-season performer at Dallas Baptist, where he hit well over .300 all

three seasons and he improved his walk-rate each season. He doesn't strike out a lot and he uses the whole field well. Despite his speed, Hannah didn't run a lot in college, but he should have the speed to be a basestealing threat in the pros. He isn't quite as fast and he hits for more power, but Hannah has a similar offensive profile to the A's second overall pick last season, shortstop Kevin Merrell. Defensively, Hannah should have the speed and instincts to stay in center field.

The A's final Day 1 pick was shortstop Jeremy Eierman, who went 70th overall. Eierman came into the spring as a projected first-round pick after he hit 23 home runs and stole 17 bases for Missouri State as a sophomore. Eierman spent last summer with Team USA and playing on the Cape, and many projected him to dominate as a junior. Instead, he backslid a bit, dropping in nearly every offensive category (except K%, which he improved slightly). He still had a strong year — posting a .916 OPS with 10 home runs and 30 stolen bases — but the drop in production pushed him to the 70th pick.

Eierman is an interesting offensive talent in that he has above-average power for a middle infielder, but he also runs well. There is a lot of swing-and-miss to his game, but he also walks a fair amount and he's shown the ability to hit for average. Eierman is big for a shortstop at 6-1, 210 pounds and may eventually have to move to third base, a position he has some experience playing. For now, he has the arm strength to stay at short and is likely to begin his career at that spot. In some ways, Eierman is a similar player to current A's utilityman Chad Pinder in terms of his athleticism and power projection.

The Athletic

If Giants draftee Joey Bart gets on the express track, what happens with Buster Posey? Andrew Baggarly

Joey Bart had a feeling he wouldn't get past the Giants with the second overall draft pick.

They followed him all through the Cape Cod League and his junior season at Georgia Tech, when the 21-year-old catcher slugged his way to ACC Player of the Year honors. He met with their scouting director, John Barr, even before his breakout season helped to separate himself from a crowded field. The Giants had called so many of his former coaches and populated the stands for so many of his best performances. He was well acquainted with their area scout, Luke Murton, a former Yellow Jackets player. They knew everything down to the way he buttered his toast.

And besides, it seemed fitting that the Giants, who were selecting their highest since taking Buster Posey fifth overall in 2008, would be intrigued with another Georgia-born catcher out of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

The kicker came last week when Bart and his father flew to San Francisco for a workout at AT&T Park that more or less amounted to a final job interview. Sometime before or after bumping into Madison Bumgarner (“He is a very big human being”), throwing to bases and swatting a series of batting-practice offerings into the bleachers, he took note of the local transit system.

Hate to disappoint you here, but no. Bart did not ride BART.

“We took an Uber to the field and back,” Bart said. “But once I figured out it was called the BART I was like, ‘Wow, this might be meant to be.’ It was kind of funny.”

Whether Bart gets on an express track or not, the Giants used their highest pick since they took Will Clark second overall in 1985 and they took the player that they felt would be the biggest difference maker on a major league roster.

Yes, they have Posey behind the plate. Yes, they have Brandon Belt at first base. Yes, both players are signed to guaranteed deals through 2021 (and Posey has an option for 2022). Oh, and if you’re thinking third base for Buster, Evan Longoria is signed through 2022 as well.

There is an obvious logjam here. The Giants will figure that out later.

For now, they enjoyed a nice night when they could get excited about the present as well as their future. Posey hit a two-run double, Andrew McCutchen, Brandon Crawford, Pablo Sandoval and Nick Hundley hit home runs and Hunter Pence returned to the lineup with a productive game — his single up the middle came off his bat at 109.6 mph, the hardest hit ball of the game — as the Giants took a 10-3 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks.

If you recall, it was Sandoval’s walk-off home run in the 162nd game last season that nudged the Giants behind Detroit in Monday’s draft order. In the minutes leading up to the first overall selection, Barr acknowledged he wasn’t sure which way the Tigers would go.

But the Tigers held to early draft speculation and took Auburn pitcher Casey Mize, and as Bart sat on his living room couch in suburban Atlanta surrounded by family and friends (and a few mounted creatures on the wall behind him), he was surprised at how quickly the Giants’ pick came in.

He wasn’t holding his cellphone when the text buzzed. His father was. And he gave him enough of a wink to end all suspense.

Then Rob Manfred announced Bart’s name on TV, and everyone in the room leapt up and cheered.

“Dang, I hope the Giants want me,” he remembered thinking, “because that’s where I want to be.”

Bart was named first-team All-America by two publications and is a semifinalist for the Golden Spikes Award as the nation’s top amateur (which Posey won), the Dick Howser Trophy as the top collegiate player (which Posey won) and the Johnny Bench Award as the top collegiate catcher (Posey again).

He posted a .471 on-base-percentage, a .632 slugging percentage and hit 16 home runs. He had 24 multi-hit games. Against Florida State, with Barr and three other Giants scouts in attendance, he hit a home run that traveled halfway to Amicalola Falls.

"I don't know if you saw the highlights," Barr said. "It was ... real far."

Barr and his staff used the club's second-round pick (45th overall) to draft a future batterymate for Bart, selecting University of Kentucky right-hander Sean Hjelle (pronounced "Jelly") who is every bit of his listed height of 6-foot-11 and profiles as a major league starter.

Minutes after making that selection, Barr met with reporters in a lounge behind the press box. He took Posey in his very first draft as the Giants' scouting director 10 years ago. It is much easier to give evasive answers when the questions come at you from an open road.

How does Bart compare to Buster?

"I'm not going to compare," said Barr, his face reddening. "I can't tell. My smile might be bigger? I don't know."

Posey will turn 32 next spring and remains an elite pure-hitting lineup presence, even if he hasn't approached the 24 home runs he hit while winning NL MVP honors in 2012. The debate is so old it's gone stale: when will Posey move off the position in order to maximize his offensive capabilities? The question was never a fair one, and it's something of a moving target. Watch how he controls a game, or breaks down a lineup or how he remained under control in three of the most pressurized playoff runs in franchise history and you understand that his value remains highest when he lowers that hockey-style mask over his still smooth face.

But every player has an expiration date. And the Giants bought themselves a fresh gallon of milk.

Bart became a catcher when he was 11 years old and the kid on his team who had been wearing shinguards was diagnosed with diabetes. He took over in practice that day, and hasn't played anywhere since.

"I love the position," he said. "I love everything about it. I wouldn't want to play any other position on the field."

Ask Barr or Posey or manager Bruce Bochy and it's the same answer: they'll worry about how it all plays out later.

"We have a philosophy here, and that's throughout our organization, we don't draft for need for what our big league club is, because a lot can happen in one year," Barr said. "We try to draft who we feel is the best player when it was our turn to pick. We clearly felt Joey was the best pick at the No. 2 slot, and when it came time at 45 with Sean Hjelle there, we decided that was the best pick for us at that time.

"We all know how difficult it is to get to the major leagues. The two guys we were able to get today, it was a good day."

Bart listed Bryce Harper and Posey as the players he most admired while growing up, which may or may not inspire you to buy a sports car you don't really need. He said he hasn't met Posey, but looks forward to that opportunity.

"I'd love to be that guy as soon as I can," he said. "Buster's one of the best in the game, so whenever he's done, hopefully I can learn some things from him and go forward from there. I feel I've learned a lot in college, played against a lot of good players in my conference, and played in some great summer leagues as well and that's prepared me for professional baseball.

"I'd love to get there as soon as possible. That's what really attracted me to the Giants. I felt like they really needed me for the future and really wanted me as well."

The Athletic

Several promising arms emerging with Low-A Augusta for the Giants

Melissa Lockard

The Augusta GreenJackets are off to a strong start to the 2018 season, and their pitching staff has been a big part of their early success. Through Saturday, the Giants' Low-A affiliate was second in the South Atlantic League in team ERA (2.76), third in strikeouts (509), and first in WHIP (1.15).

The GreenJackets' staff is led by pitching coach Clay Rapada, who spent parts of seven seasons pitching in the big leagues. Rapada has served as the GreenJackets' pitching coach for the past three seasons.

Coming out of spring training, Rapada was optimistic about how his staff would perform, but they've even outpaced his preseason expectations.

"I thought I had a good group," he said in a phone conversation on Thursday. "There were just a lot of pieces that had to fall into place. They've been able to apply a lot of teachings very quickly. It's kind of glued together quicker than expected."

Rapada says the staff features a lot of pitchers with different strengths that complement each other well.

"Each guy has a couple of traits that are not the same. One guy has really good fastball command, one guy has really good secondary stuff, another guy has really good feel for his changeup," Rapada said. "So there's a nice mix with the starters. Same thing with the bullpen. We have quite a few unique deliveries and guys with really good stuff. I think it's just a combination of not seeing the same type of stuff or delivery (from pitcher to pitcher) that makes our staff so unique."

Although many on his staff are in their first full professional seasons, Rapada has been impressed with how they have responded when facing a team a second or third time.

"For a lot of these guys, this is really the first time they have faced professional hitters that have had 400-500 at-bats under their belts," Rapada said. "The second time around (facing a

pitcher), they aren't going to get beat just on natural stuff. It's all about execution and pitching – whether it's a mistake or a purpose pitch – to execute to get a guy out."

Hard-throwing right-hander Garrett Cave, the Giants' fourth-round pick last season, was the most high-profile pitching prospect on the GreenJackets' staff coming into this season. Cave struggled with his command in college and continued to struggle to throw strikes at the start of this season, but over his last five starts, he's walked nine in 24 2/3 innings after walking 20 in 18 innings in April. Rapada says the key for Cave has been to calm his delivery.

"He's probably the most high fast-twitch pitcher I have," Rapada said. "He's really quick with a lot of motions, so if you can just calm everything down and get him into a rhythm and tempo, I feel like his command has improved dramatically after his first three starts here."

Cave can reach the upper-90s with his fastball and Rapada says Cave also offers a slider and a curveball that play well off each other.

"For me, they are quality secondary pitches that can get him to upper levels," Rapada said.

Jason Bahr, a fifth-round pick out of Central Florida last season, has been one of the top starters in the Sally League all season. A reliever during his senior year at UCF, Bahr has made a seamless transition to the starting rotation, posting a 2.26 ERA in 51 2/3 innings so far this season. He has a 70:17 K:BB.

"He's really developing his secondary stuff, plus he has above-average fastball command. He's able to move it in and out," Rapada said of Bahr. "The development of his changeup and his slider have kind of put him on the radar."

Left-hander John Gavin — an eighth-round pick last year out of Cal State Fullerton — came to pro ball with polish and experience. He has also gotten off to a strong start, posting a 2.01 ERA in 44 2/3 innings over his 10 starts this season.

"He has a good plan when he's out there. As far as the mental side, he has the thought process, the step-by-step of how he wants to get hitters out," Rapada said of Gavin. "Having a feel for a changeup along with above-average command of his fastball makes him very dangerous in this league."

Left-hander Joey Marciano and right-hander Aaron Phillips have also impressed out of the GreenJackets' starting rotation despite being less experienced against top-level competition than Bahr and Gavin. Marciano has risen out of the obscurity of being a 36th-round pick into a legitimate prospect with a strong start to his pro career. Rapada calls the Southern Illinois alum the "most raw pitcher" on the staff.

"His willingness to learn and his hard work is, to me, what really separates him," Rapada said. "He's like a dry sponge, soaking up everything. His aptitude is pretty good to be able to apply it."

Phillips landed on the 7-day disabled list this week, but the 2017 ninth-round pick had pitched well before being placed on the shelf. The 6-foot-5 right-hander has walked only two in 30 1/3

innings while striking out 33. Phillips attended St. Bonaventure and Rapada says he, like Marciano, came into pro ball “mechanically raw.”

“There’s a lot to work with. There’s a lot of ability and a lot of upside with both of those guys,” Rapada said. “There’s a lot more in the tank that, once they get more in-tune with their bodies and start syncing everything together, there’ll be a lot more velocity and some more life to their secondary stuff.”

Reliever Franklin Van Gorp has been nearly flawless this season, posting an 0.68 ERA in 26 2/3 innings. The 2017 25th-round pick thrives on deception, according to Rapada.

“His delivery is unique,” Rapada said. “He’s shown some flashes of fastball command. He’s a guy who’s lived off of his secondary stuff and it’s played this first half.”

Sidearmer Frank Rubio also uses a unique delivery to get results.

“His ability to throw the fastball inside and out and pound the strike zone has been impressive,” Rapada said.

“I feel like with his combination of stuff, command and mentality, he has a lot of potential to go far as a reliever,” Rapada said.

The Athletic

Giants Analytics: Stratton and Suarez’s gems, McCutchen’s new approach

Owen Poindexter

With the returns of Joe Panik, Mark Melancon, Hunter Pence, Alen Hanson and Madison Bumgarner, the Giants are finally getting the reinforcements they’ve been starved for all season. Soon we will have a sense if those players can be who they were the last time they took the field (Panik already looks like himself). Meanwhile, the team got two much-needed performances from promising young starters, and Andrew McCutchen should bust out of batted ball purgatory any day now.

Stratton discovers his curveball

After a stellar, if lucky, beginning followed by a rough patch, Chris Stratton spun off his best start of the year on Friday. While he had lost the feel for both his fastball and curve when things went south, both were in full effect in Stratton’s most recent start. He used his curveball at the highest rate of any start this year, firing it off once per five pitches. Hitters couldn’t lay off, but they tended to swing over as the pitch dropped below the zone. Over 19 pitches, the curve produced a nifty 26 percent whiff rate.

His fastball wasn’t as visually wily, but the results were, if anything, more dramatic. It wasn’t,

and isn't, much of a swing and miss pitch, but every time the Phillies made contact, the result was a groundball. Stratton achieved that by keeping the pitch down and away, taking a page from the Ty Blach playbook. That's not something we should expect to continue, but it will be interesting to see if Stratton continues to be sparing with the high fastball. He also had his best spin rate on the fastball that he's had all year, which likely made it more difficult for hitters to line up the pitch.

Stratton is still tinkering with his formula, but constructing a winning plan is a lot easier with a wipeout pitch. If the curveball turns into a real strength for him, it will make the rest of the arsenal play up.

Suarez swaps out the fastball

By strikeout and walk numbers, Andrew Suarez is something close to an ace. His K-BB% of 18.7 is 35th among all starters, entering Sunday's action (K-BB% is one of the best stats for predicting future performance). And yet, the results haven't been there, and the biggest reason why is that Suarez has given up nearly a home run per start and a .343 BABIP.

The weak spot has been his fastball. Hitters have been teeing off on the pitch, hitting .367 with a .735 SLG against it. Suarez's response: throw the fastball less. Here are his pitch distributions for each start this year.

At the start of the year, he was mostly fastballs and sliders. Since then, the trend has been fewer fastballs and more sinkers, with the slider holding steady and sometimes becoming the most thrown pitch, depending on the game. His gem on Saturday also had the highest use of his curveball — 16 percent — since his season debut. He's become less predictable: what started as a clear distribution has become an almost even mix of his main three pitches.

It's easy to see why Suarez is making these choices when you look at his pitch outcomes.

Andrew Suarez	Count	AVG	SLG	BABIP	Whiff/Swing	GB/BIP
Four-seam	202	.367	.735	.417	6.9	33.3
Slider	187	.182	.327	.242	27.3	57.1
Sinker	130	.355	.387	.423	13.5	57.7
Curve	90	.211	.368	.273	33.3	41.7
Changeup	70	.182	.455	.100	19.2	81.2

Against the fastball, hitters are Mike Trout with a higher BABIP. When facing the slider or curve,

hitters turn into Kelby Tomlinson with a lower BABIP. Many pitchers around the league are experimenting with radically reduced fastball usage, and we may see the trend lines continue for Suarez's pitch usage. There's no reason he necessarily has to throw a plurality of four-seamers. Based on the outcomes, he ought to see if his slower pitches are equally effective if he throws them more often.

McCutchen's new approach

Andrew McCutchen has a new approach to swinging this year: doing less of it. From 2012-2017, he swung at 44-47 percent of pitches each year. This year, he's down to 41 percent. The results are just what you'd expect on strikeouts and walks: more of both. His 21.9 K% would be a career high, and his 13.2 BB% would be higher than all but one previous season. That increase in strikeouts is driven by an uptick in called third strikes: his looking strikeout percentage is elevated this year, both as a proportion of his strikeouts and his total plate appearances.

More strikeouts and more walks is not necessarily good or bad. The real question is how it affects the results when the bat leaves the shoulder, and that's where things get interesting.

Andrew McCutchen	Hard%	Exit Velo	Launch Angle	HR/FB%
2015	39.4	90.8	13.9	13.6
2016	35.8	89.6	16.1	12.6
2017	35.2	88.4	14.2	16.4
2018	47.7	91.7	13.8	6.7

His hard-hit percent and exit velocity are his highest since 2015. The launch angle is a bit low, but not severely depressed. McCutchen has been hitting the ball harder than he has in years, and yet, the HR/FB% is way down. His exit velocity on fly balls is a robust 94.1 mph, so that's not the problem. AT&T Park may have something to do with it, but not to this degree.

I think it's just bad luck, and his home run today could be the start of a new trend. Home runs are prone to statistical weirdness in short samples, because they involve relatively few events. McCutchen's new approach has helped him hit the ball harder. It should be just a matter of time before that actually shows up in the results.

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As they wait for their ace, Giants get right back near top of NL west

Alex Pavlovic

SAN FRANCISCO — Derek Holland walked up to the microphones late Monday night, a Warriors cap tugged over his curly hair and a koala cartoon on his chest. He introduced himself as Derek Lastname, a nod to a bungled and incomplete graphic that made it onto a national network's broadcast of the game.

When asked about being pulled after four innings, he gave manager Bruce Bochy credit for going to a pinch-hitter who drove in two runs with the bases loaded. When told that he was on pace for 27 strikeouts after whiffing the first four Diamondbacks, he pointed out how hard the feat is. Then he puffed his chest out so the writing on his **t-shirt was clear**.

"But I am...totally koalafied," Holland said.

Yes, these Giants are having fun. And who could blame them? They've won five in a row, they just swept a good Phillies team, and they beat the Diamondbacks 10-3 on Monday by scoring seven runs in the bottom of the fourth, immediately after a two-run double by the visitors. Oh, and they get Madison Bumgarner back on Tuesday night.

The Giants once hoped Bumgarner could come back in time to keep them in the race. Now the hope is that their best player can vault them to the front of the pack. They are 30-30, and just 1 1/2 games behind the Diamondbacks and Rockies, co-leaders of a division that has yet to show a contender.

Players will always tell you that there are no excuses. But in moments of honesty, these Giants will also tell you that they will happily take their current record given Bumgarner's two-month absence.

"That means we did our job," Holland said. "Now we've got to continue to keep doing it. This is the time to gain some ground and make moves and get where we feel we should be."

A week ago, the Giants looked headed for a tailspin. Now it's not hard to picture them grabbing hold of this division.

The lineup is the deepest in the NL West. Andrew McCutchen, Brandon Crawford, Pablo Sandoval and Nick Hundley all homered Monday. Buster Posey had two hits in his new No. 2 spot in the order, including a big two-run double. Hanson is a weapon off the bench. Joe Panik looks suited for leadoff life. Evan Longoria is a vast improvement over last year's third basemen and Gorkys Hernandez has been a revelation. Even Hunter Pence got into the mix Monday.

The bullpen might be the deepest in the NL West, too. Pierce Johnson was optioned back to Triple-A to clear a spot for Bumgarner, but eight remain, and it's the best Giants group in several years.

The rotation has been the weak spot, but the weekend was full of positives and...Madison Bumgarner returns Tuesday night. Did we mention that? Last Tuesday, the Giants dropped their third straight road game and fell to 25-30. What a difference a week has made.

"They've done a great job of bouncing back," Bochy said.

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Giants move back to .500 in last game before Bumgarner's return

Alex Pavlovic

SAN FRANCISCO — When Madison Bumgarner went down at the end of spring training, all the Giants could have realistically hoped for was a chance to compete when he returned. They wanted to stay afloat in the NL West, and they've done it.

Monday night's 10-3 win got the Giants back to .500. They're an even 30-30 with their best player set to return Tuesday night, and they're just 1 1/2 games out of first place in what has turned out to be a weak division.

The Giants have at times looked poised to slip out of a lackluster race, but they found a groove at the right time. Monday's win was the fifth straight and included contributions from all over. The Giants trailed 2-0 heading into the bottom of the fourth, but Andrew McCutchen and Brandon Crawford went back-to-back, igniting a seven-run rally.

Here are the rest of the details...

— A few hours after the Giants drafted a catcher with their highest pick in 33 years, Buster Posey showed how much he's got left in the tank. Posey singled in the first and scorched a two-run double into the gap in the fourth.

— Among the groups that are better this year: The bench. Alen Hanson came off the pine to hit a big two-run double in the fourth and Pablo Sandoval, playing in place of Brandon Belt, hit a solo homer an inning later. Sandoval had three hits. Nick Hundley hit a solo shot in the ninth.

— Reyes Moronta struck out two in an inning of work. In his last 12 outings, he has allowed just one run and struck out 17.

— Derek Holland struck out the side in the first and was headed for a good outing before Ketel Marte lined a two-run double in the top of the fourth. In the bottom of the inning, Holland's

spot came up with the bases loaded. Bochy opted to play the Hanson card. It worked perfectly, even if it cost Holland a shot at the win.

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Giants take 6-foot-11 pitcher Sean Hjelle No. 45 overall in 2018 MLB Draft

Alex Pavlovic

SAN FRANCISCO — The Giants tend to send top draft picks straight to their Arizona facility after they sign. If Joey Bart and Sean Hjelle arrive together, it won't be the No. 2 overall selection who opens eyes.

Hjelle, a right-handed pitcher from Kentucky, is listed at 6-foot-11 and will tower over everyone in the clubhouse if he makes it to the big leagues. The Giants believe he has the four-pitch mix and competitiveness to be a strong member of a future rotation. Scouting director John Barr cautioned not to get caught up in Hjelle's height.

"We love the way he's handled himself. He doesn't move like he's a 6-foot-11 pitcher," Barr said. "You expect him to be gawky but he moves his feet. When he walks past you or you shake his hand, you realize how tall he is. When he's on the mound he controls his body. He really controls his body well, which shows his athleticism. He's a good athlete."

Hjelle (pronounced Jelly) was the SEC Pitcher of the Year in 2017. He had a 3.44 ERA in 2018, striking out 91 in 99 1/3 innings. Barr said Hjelle stuck out as a workhorse type. He pitched 108 2/3 innings the year before, posting a 3.89 ERA and striking out 102. The Giants took him 45th overall.

"It was a waiting game to see if he would make it to us," Barr said.

ESPN.com

What to expect in Madison Bumgarner's return to the mound

Sarah Langs

Madison Bumgarner will make his first start of the season for the San Francisco Giants on Tuesday opposite the Arizona Diamondbacks' Patrick Corbin.

Bumgarner began the season on the disabled list with a fractured finger on his left hand. It was just the second DL trip of his career, the other coming last season for a left shoulder strain sustained in a dirt bike accident.

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The Giants have fared better than expected in Bumgarner's absence, entering play Tuesday at .500 (30-30) and just 1½ games behind first-place Arizona in the NL West.

A look at how important Bumgarner has been to the Giants over the years:

Giants Starting Pitching This Season

		MLB RANK
ERA	4.59	23rd
WHIP	1.37	23rd
Opp. BA	.257	23rd
K pct.	19	25th

- Bumgarner has been a key part of the Giants' rotation since 2010. Without him this season, Giants starters have a 4.59 ERA, which ranks 23rd in the majors.
- Bumgarner was one of the top pitchers in the league from 2013 to 2017. Among pitchers with at least 100 starts in that span, he ranked fifth in ERA (2.91), fourth in WHIP (1.05) and third in opponents' OBP (.271).
- Since Bumgarner's first All-Star season in 2013, the Giants have a .537 winning percentage (79-68) in Bumgarner's starts and a .484 winning percentage (350-373) in games started by their other pitchers. Bumgarner's ERA in that span is 3.12, while the rest of the Giants' starters have a 4.38 ERA.

ESPN Stats & Information

- Bumgarner prides himself on his hitting too and has hit at least three home runs in each of the past four seasons. Last year, he became the first pitcher in MLB history to hit two home runs on Opening Day.