



Padres Press Clips

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Keith Law's 2019 top prospects: Nos. 50-1

If you're not going for it in today's MLB environment, you're -- well, let's not say "tanking" and instead go with "developing." Teams that build from their farm system through the draft, the international market and trades of veterans for prospects keep reaching and winning the World Series.

The [Kansas City Royals](#) had the No. 1 farm system in baseball in 2011 and won two pennants, including a World Series championship in 2015. The [Chicago Cubs](#) hit the top five in 2013, ranked No. 1 in 2015 and won the World Series in 2016. The [Houston Astros](#) had the No. 1 farm system in baseball in 2014 and won their first title in 2017. The [Boston Red Sox](#) just won a World Series with homegrown former top-100 prospects at all three outfield spots, third base and shortstop and used three other top-100 prospects to trade for [Chris Sale](#) and [Craig Kimbrel](#). I don't think any of this is a big coincidence: Teams can't buy championships. They can buy a player or two to finish off a good roster, but the bulk of a pennant-winning roster comes from within, either through cheaper players the team developed from its farm system or veterans acquired by trading such prospects. Winning the farm system rankings can feel a bit like winning the offseason. It doesn't guarantee success -- now or in the long run -- but it's better to start with a whole boatload of young talent in your organization when you're building toward a championship run.

This year's prospect-rankings package continues with the top 50 prospects in the minors. For the first half of the list, [click here](#).

Editor's note: Ages are as of July 1, 2019. Players with experience in foreign major leagues are ineligible and players who have lost Rookie of the Year eligibility (more than 130 at-bats, 50 innings or 45 days on the active 25-man roster) are not included in these rankings.

1. **Fernando Tatis Jr., SS, [San Diego Padres](#)**

Age: 20 (1/2/1999)

Bats: R | Throws: R

6-foot-3 | 185 pounds

Top level: Double-A | 2018 rank: 3

The minors are loaded with top position-player prospects right now, with the first four on my list signed as free agents from Latin America. That group is led by the budding superstar Tatis, who brings an offensive profile that would make him a star at a corner position but who also has the athleticism and skills to potentially stay in the middle of the field. Tatis emerged as an elite prospect right after the White Sox traded him to the Padres for [James Shields](#) in June 2016 after extended spring training, and he has done nothing but improve ever since, with only an injury last July holding him back.

Tatis looks like a younger Manny Machado, but he is stronger than Machado was at the same age, and there are similarities between their games across the board. Tatis has crazy strength for his age and has shown an advanced approach at the plate, leading the Midwest League in walks as an 18-year-old in 2017. The Padres jumped him over High-A last year to Double-A San Antonio, and after a bad April, Tatis hit .327/.400/.572 from May 1 until his season ended on

July 19 with an injury. He did that as the youngest regular in the Texas League by a margin of six months.

Tatis has plus power and bat speed already, with the ideal bat path for line-drive power, though it gets a little bit long sometimes, which might give him some swing-and-miss in the inner third of the strike zone. He has continued to show the skills to stay at shortstop, from plus hands to above-average range both ways to a 70-grade arm, along with strong instincts and excellent tagging skills. He's a plus baserunner despite only average at best speed out of the box, thanks again to his feel for the game. He's a big kid with the frame to end up growing out of the middle of the field, so there's some risk that he's an All-Star only at third base, but his continued progress at shortstop along with his performance with the bat as a teenager through Double-A mark him as a potential MVP candidate and the best prospect in baseball.

7. MacKenzie Gore, LHP, San Diego Padres

Age: 20 (2/24/1999)

Bats: L | Throws: L

6-foot-3 | 191 pounds

Top level: A-ball | 2018 rank: 14

Gore's year wasn't what the Padres hoped to see, as a blister that started bothering him in April ended up lingering for a good chunk of the year. Although his stuff was intact, the results didn't match. When Gore is on, however, he has the best arsenal of any lefty prospect in baseball, throwing with up to 96 mph velocity and the ability to work the fastball to both sides of the plate. He also has a huge action changeup clocked in the mid-80s, a power curveball that he commands and will use to right-handers, and a tight slider that he throws up to 89 mph for a second weapon against lefties.

He's an absurd athlete who repeats his contortionist's delivery, with its abrupt, high leg kick, and gets to the same point out front at release. The Padres were careful with him because he was just 19 and had the blister issue, so he made only 16 starts and threw 60 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings in 2018. The shackles on his workload should be looser this year, and assuming his blister issues are behind him, this should be a breakout campaign that gets him to at least Double-A. He has No. 1 starter upside thanks to his arsenal, command and athleticism.

29. Francisco Mejia, C, San Diego Padres

Age: 23 (10/27/1995)

Bats: S | Throws: R

5-foot-10 | 180 pounds

Top level: MLB | 2018 rank: 7

Mejia's bat would profile at any position, but the possibility of his being a catcher long-term is what makes him a potential star. He has more power than most people realize, seeing as he has never hit 20 homers in a season. His 2018 total of 17 between Triple-A and the majors is his career high, but he was also just 22. His hands are lightning-quick, and he's a true switch-hitter, better the past two years from the right side but more than capable from the left, with strong bat control on both sides.

Behind the plate, he's a work in progress but still more likely than not to end up a catcher. He has at least a grade-70 arm, and he's a good enough athlete to get to fringe-average, with a work ethic that Cleveland had long praised. His hands are fine, not great -- certainly not [Austin](#)

Hedges' hands -- but good enough that I think he'll get close to average as a receiver and somewhere just below that as a framer. Even if he's a 45-grade defender overall, with his potential to hit .300-plus with some walks and 25-30 homers a year, he'd be a superstar.

44. Chris Paddack, RHP, San Diego Padres

Age: 23 (1/8/96)

Bats: R | Throws: R

6-foot-4 | 195 pounds

Top level: Double-A | 2018 rank: Unranked

The Padres picked up Paddack in the [Fernando Rodney](#) deal in 2016, only to have him blow out his elbow in his third start after the trade and miss all of 2017 while he recovered. He came back in 2018 as good as ever, and had the Padres been contending in 2018, he almost certainly would have seen the majors in September. Paddack works with a 60-grade fastball and 70 changeup and has plus command of both pitches, truly exceptional for a 22-year-old without much pitching experience -- he has thrown just 177²/₃ pro innings in his career. He'll work both of those pitches to both sides of the plate and especially likes using the changeup in to right-handed hitters, a pitch those batters rarely see.

Paddack's limitation is his breaking ball, which he throws in the mid-70s, average if you like it, a grade 45 pitch if you don't. The argument that he'll barely need it with two other plus pitches seems valid to me, especially since his fastball plays up, thanks to huge extension out front in his delivery. He's an easy midrotation starter who could be a top-20 starter in the game if he holds up physically and that curveball ends up at least a solid-average weapon for him.

46. Adrian Morejon, LHP, San Diego Padres

Age: 20 (2/27/99)

Bats: L | Throws: L

6 feet | 175 pounds

Top level: High-A | 2018 rank: 72

The Padres gave Morejon an \$11 million signing bonus in 2016, part of their huge spending spree on the international market that year, and when he has taken the mound, he has more than justified their expenditure on him. Morejon's stuff made a huge jump across the board last year, as he averaged more than 94 mph and showed huge spin rates on his fastball and curveball, along with the plus changeup he'd already shown prior to 2018.

He has had trouble staying healthy, with just 27 starts and 128¹/₃ innings in two years, including two DL stints in 2018 with a triceps injury ending his season in mid-August. He has looked impressive whenever he has pitched, and there's still some upside remaining, but the key for him in 2019 will be making 20-plus starts and showing that he can hold up without more arm trouble under a starter's workload.

50. Luis Patino, RHP, San Diego Padres

Age: 19 (10/26/99)

Bats: R | Throws: R

6 feet | 192 pounds

Top level: A-ball | 2018 rank: Unranked

Patino has some of the most electric stuff of any prospect in the minors, and that's not just my word -- every time I asked any scout or exec about him, "electric" showed up in the descriptions. Patino is a 6-foot right-hander with a huge stride and exceptional extension out front, so he's bumping the high 90s with life up in the zone, dominating hitters with that pitch. He'll show two breaking balls that blend together, but he's probably going to settle on one, his high-spin-rate slider, and he still needs to develop a workable changeup because left-handed hitters ate him alive last year (.345/.421/.457, compared with .140/.197/.173 against right-handed batters).

He's small but athletic and repeats his delivery well. If you're going on pure upside, he's in the top 25 or so with the Hunter Greenes and Sixto Sanchezes of the prospect world, but there's real reliever risk here -- one scout who liked Patino said the whole package "screams reliever" -- between the size and need for a third pitch, which keeps him toward the middle of the rankings.

Padres to meet with Bryce Harper

Kevin Acee

The Padres have jumped into the tepid free agent market with both feet.

A source has confirmed representatives of the team, including general partner Peter Seidler, are scheduled to visit with superstar outfielder [Bryce Harper](#) in Las Vegas on Thursday.

This is seen as something of extended due diligence, and it is not thought that the team's pursuit of Harper is as earnest as its continued efforts to land [Manny Machado](#).

Where Machado can play third base, the Padres' greatest positional need, Harper plays right field, the position at which the Padres are deepest.

[Ken Rosenthal](#) first reported the Padres' plans to meet with Harper.

The 26-year-old six-time All-Star is expected to command around \$30 million a year.

The Padres last year signed [Eric Hosmer](#) the day before [spring training](#). Hosmer and Harper are both represented by agent Scott Boras.

The players at the top of the free agent market are for a second straight year not finding the lucrative action that was expected, and that lured the Padres into the pursuit.

Friars' hot corner still up for grabs

San Diego actively searching trade market, free agency for solution

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

Jan. 30th, 2019

SAN DIEGO -- The Padres' 2019 third baseman remains a mystery -- and we're already a month into 2019.

With less than two weeks until pitchers and catchers report to Spring Training, general manager A.J. Preller remains actively in search of a starter at third base. The Padres have been linked with some of the sport's biggest names through trade and free agency. They've also indicated they'd be willing to stand pat if nothing comes to fruition.

At this point, it's anyone's guess as to who opens the season at the hot corner in San Diego. But San Diego's options can be clearly broken down into five tiers:

1. Manny Machado

The upside: Machado is a game-changer. He's an elite defensive third baseman with an excellent bat, and he would've led the Padres in **wins above replacement** in every full season he's played in the Major Leagues. Plus, he's only 26 years old, so Machado **could easily fit into the long-term strategy** of the club. Right now, third base is the biggest hole in the team's future lineup plans, and San Diego would make a major statement by signing one of the game's best third basemen to fill it. Machado might not make the Padres instant contenders, but he'd certainly put them on the right path.

The cost: Hard to say. It's going to take nine figures, and it's going to take a contract that would break **Eric Hosmer's** franchise record. But the interest level in Machado is lower than many figured it would have been at the start of the offseason. Still, San Diego would need to commit at least \$200 million -- and probably more -- to Machado for most of the next decade.

The chances: The Padres' interest in Machado is very real. But Machado is the type of player who could prompt a significant bidding war, and that's something the San Diego brass has indicated they'd like to avoid. It still seems unlikely the Friars land Machado, though far more likely than it did at the beginning of the offseason.

2. Mike Moustakas or Marwin Gonzalez

The upside: At various points during the offseason, the Padres have been linked with both. If they can't sign Machado, Moustakas and Gonzalez represent the next tier. Either could anchor third base over the next couple seasons, while infield prospects like Hudson Potts, Gabriel Arias and Xavier Edwards develop. As those youngsters inch closer to the big leagues, San Diego will have some time to reassess its long-term need at third.

The cost: They're obviously different players at different points in their careers. But it seems unlikely that either player will get much more than \$10 million per year. Gonzalez is a year younger, and his versatility makes him more valuable. (Thus, he's perhaps a better fit for a

longer deal in San Diego.) But he's still in the three-to-four year range. Moustakas, meanwhile, could warrant a two-year contract, but seemingly no more than that.

The chances: Few teams need a third baseman as urgently as the Padres, but Machado might end up out of their price range. That makes a deal with Gonzalez or Moustakas at least somewhat likely.

3. Trade candidates

The upside: Looking for a long-term third-base solution without spending a ton of money? There's nowhere better to find one than on the trade market. Already this offseason, the Padres have been linked with the Yankees' **Miguel Andujar** and the Reds' **Nick Senzel**. They've been rumored to be involved in three-way trade discussions with the Indians as well, in order to land one of them. Clearly, either player would be a boon to an organization looking for a young third baseman. But neither of those deals is currently on the front burner.

The cost: Probably not much -- in terms of dollars, that is. But to acquire one of the game's best young third basemen, San Diego would have to part with some serious prospect capital. With the deepest farm system in baseball, the Padres clearly got the pieces. But Preller values those pieces pretty highly. It remains to be seen which prospects he'd be willing to part with.

The chances: Down the road, it's still possible the Padres use a trade to land their third baseman of the future. But it's looking less and less likely that trade happens this offseason.

4. Stopgaps

The upside: A one-year utility third baseman like **Yangervis Solarte** or **Adeiny Hechavarria** would come cheap. It's not the ideal solution, given that it isn't solving San Diego's long-term hole. But next year's free-agent class is pretty strong at the hot corner. If, ultimately, the Padres push their third-base question off by one year, they'd be best served to add to their current mix. Plus, it'd be useful if that addition could play multiple spots.

The cost: It'd be a one-year commitment, almost certainly at a minimal cost.

The chances: All offseason, this route seemed like the most realistic possibility. Now, with the bigger names still available, it seems less likely than it once did. But it's still very possible.

5. In-house options

The upside: There's not a whole lot of upside with the current bunch in San Diego. **Ty France**, the projected starter, could be a useful right-handed bat. But he's yet to play a big league game, and he's not a Top 30 prospect. **Esteban Quiroz** and **Jason Vosler**, meanwhile, aren't on the 40-man roster, and **Ian Kinsler** has played all of two innings at third in his career. The Padres insist there's potential in that group (and they aren't wrong). But there's no guarantee that anyone currently headed to big league camp will develop into a Major League-caliber third baseman.

The cost: San Diego wouldn't be spending anything more than what it has already committed to the current group (though the Padres would almost certainly have to promote Quiroz and pay him the league minimum).

The chances: Members of the Padres' front office have indicated it's possible they stand pat. It still seems unlikely.

San Diego Padres to meet with free agent Bryce Harper

ESPN

The [San Diego Padres](#) are scheduled to meet with free-agent outfielder [Bryce Harper](#) on Thursday in Las Vegas, sources confirmed to ESPN.

The Athletic first reported the news.

It is unknown if the Padres are just doing their due diligence or if they are serious about bidding to sign Harper.

The [Washington Nationals](#), [Philadelphia Phillies](#) and [Chicago White Sox](#) are the only other teams known to have shown serious interest in Harper.

Harper, the 2012 National League Rookie of the Year and 2015 MVP, led the Nationals with 34 homers, 100 RBIs and 130 walks last season. He also tied for the team lead with 103 runs and made the All-Star team for the sixth time in seven seasons.

According to multiple reports, Harper turned down a 10-year, \$300 million offer from the Nationals before becoming a free agent.

#PadresOnDeck: Juan Fernandez, Kelvin Melean and Angel Solarte on Long List of Padres Prospects from Venezuela

FriarWire

Jan 30

By Bill Center

We have been taking a look at 93 top prospects in the Padres' farm system over the past three months.

Fifty-three of those prospects were signed from the international market. And 18 of those are from Venezuela.

Today we take a look at three more of the Padres youngest prospects from Venezuela — catcher **Juan Fernandez**, shortstop **Kelvin Melean** and outfielder **Angel Solarte**. Each played younger than the average ages for their respective leagues in 2018.

— Juan Fernandez, a native of Valencia, Venezuela, signed with the Padres as part of the deep 2016 international signing class. The 5-foot-11, 200-pound catcher doesn't turn 20 until next March 7.

Fernandez was 19 when he spent his entire 2018 season with full-season, Single-A Fort Wayne. Fernandez hit .224 with a .296 on-base percentage and a .306 slugging percentage for a .602 OPS in 66 games. The right-handed hitter had 13 doubles and two home runs for 23 RBIs in 66 games. He drew 20 walks against 49 strikeouts in 232 at-bats.

— Kelvin Melean, who turned 20 last Sept. 5, split the 2018 season between Fort Wayne and Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore before playing winter ball with Canberra of the Australian Baseball League. The 6-foot, 165-pound, right-handed hitter is a native of Guatire and signed with the Padres in 2015.

Melean opened the 2018 season with Lake Elsinore, where he hit .263 in 45 games with a .305 on-base percentage and a .326 slugging percentage for a .631 OPS. He had nine doubles and a triple with 13 RBIs in 48 games.

When injuries hit the infield hard at Fort Wayne, Melean accepted going back to the TinCaps, where he played 45 games with nine doubles, four homers and 18 RBIs with a slash line of .241/.315/.373/.688. Overall, Melean hit .252 in 333 at-bats between Fort Wayne and Lake Elsinore with 18 doubles, a triple, four homers, 31 RBIs with a slash line of .252/.310/.348/.648.

— Angel Solarte came to the United States from Caja Seca last summer to make his professional debut in the Arizona Rookie League as a 17-year-old. The 5-foot-11, 155-pound, right-handed hitter doesn't turn 18 until next March 29.

Solarte finished his first professional season going 3-for-15 in five games with Short-Season Single-A Tri-City.

Solarte had debuted with 39 games in the Arizona Rookie League, hitting .219 (33-for-151) with eight doubles, two triples, a home run, five stolen bases, nine RBIs and 23 runs scored. He finished with a .219 batting average, a .286 on-base percentage and a .318 slugging percentage for a .604 OPS.

#PadresOnDeck: ESPN's Law Crowns Tatis Jr. as Baseball's Top Prospect

Law ranks 6 Padres prospects among his top 50

[FriarWire](#)

Jan 30

By Justin Lafferty

Could the best farm system in baseball also contain the best prospect in baseball? ESPN Senior Writer **Keith Law** is convinced.

20-year-old shortstop **Fernando Tatis Jr.** is the N^o1 prospect in the game, Law revealed recently in his rankings.

While many other publications have Tatis Jr. second to fellow second-generation prospect **Vladimir Guerrero Jr.**, Law placed the future Padre at the top of his list.

“He’s a big kid with the frame to end up growing out of the middle of the field, so there’s some risk that he’s an All-Star only at third base,” Law wrote, “but his continued progress at shortstop along with his performance with the bat as a teenager through Double-A mark him as a potential MVP candidate and the best prospect in baseball.”

Overall, Law had 8 Padres prospects in his top 100—6 in the top 50, showing the farm system’s pedigree.

Here’s how [Law ranked the future Friars](#), with some of his analysis:

1. Tatis Jr., SS

7. **MacKenzie Gore**, LHP

“The shackles on his workload should be looser this year, and assuming his blister issues are behind him, this should be a breakout campaign that gets him to at least Double-A. He has N^o1 starter upside thanks to his arsenal, command and athleticism.”

29. **Francisco Mejía, C**

“Mejía’s bat would profile at any position, but the possibility of his being a catcher long-term is what makes him a potential star.”

44. **Chris Paddack, RHP**

“He’s an easy midrotation starter who could be a top-20 starter in the game if he holds up physically and that curveball ends up at least a solid-average weapon for him.”

46. **Adrian Morejon, LHP**

“Morejon’s stuff made a huge jump across the board last year, as he averaged more than 94 mph and showed huge spin rates on his fastball and curveball, along with the plus changeup he’d already shown prior to 2018.”

50. **Luis Patiño, RHP**

“Patino has some of the most electric stuff of any prospect in the minors, and that’s not just my word—every time I asked any scout or exec about him, “electric” showed up in the descriptions.”

56. **Luis Urías, 2B**

“If his [bat plays as expected](#), with high averages and OBPs, he’ll be a regular at second base with above-average or even plus defense.”

80. **Logan Allen, LHP**

“The Padres have so many famous prospects at this point that Allen often ends up a forgotten man in discussions of their system. But he is quite close to major-league-ready and has a higher floor than many better-known Padres kids because he’s a left-handed pitcher with control and an assortment of weapons.”

Law was also a fan of 2018 1st round draft pick **Ryan Weathers**, noting that he [just missed the top 100 list](#). He puts Weathers (another second-generation prospect) at N^o103. Law wrote that he has the ability to work his way onto the list after his first full season in the minor leagues.

“Weathers was a tough omission because I liked him in the draft and ranked him highly,” Law wrote, “but I couldn’t fit everyone I wanted to include in the top 100.”

50 Moments — The San Diego Chicken was “Re-hatched” on June 29, 1979 Before a Padres Game

FriarWire

Jan 30

By Bill Center

When **Ted Giannoulas** first put on his famed chicken costume in 1974, he didn't appear at Padres games.

The San Diego State student was the KGB Chicken at the beginning of his amazing run and he appeared only at events promoting the station.

But as The Chicken's reputation grew and his antics drew national attention, there grew a legal battle between Giannoulas and the radio station as to who owned the rights to the persona. Giannoulas won after a lengthy court battle.

Giannoulas then looked for the perfect venue to re-launch his act.

The Padres provided it.

On June 29, 1979, The San Diego Chicken was “re-hatched” before the Padres-Astros game at San Diego Stadium. It was a major event. National television crews were on hand to record the event. The start of the game was pushed back a half-hour for the “re-hatching ceremony.”

Even the umpires and the California Highway Patrol joined in on the fun.

The “San Diego Chicken” entered the stadium's playing field inside a giant Styrofoam egg that was perched atop an armored car. Highway Patrol officers provided a motorcycle escort. The motorcade then stopped in left field as Padres players approached.

A group of players lifted the egg off the roof and placed it on the ground. On cue, The San Diego Chicken emerged from the egg — staggering around for a moment as a newborn chicken might upon taking its first steps to the theme from 2001: A Space Odyssey.

The crowd went crazy. The San Diego Chicken drew a standing ovation. And the night of antics had only begun. Giannoulas had considerably expanded his stunts during his hiatus. He put on a grand show.

And it was a show that almost immediately went national. The San Diego Chicken started appearing at sports events throughout the country. His act even went international. Giannoulas became the blueprint for the thousands of other mascots that now dot the sports landscape.

During the 1980s, The San Diego Chicken even had a television show with Hall of Fame catcher **Johnny Bench** as a co-host.

The “re-hatching” allowed Giannoulas to jump-start his career and expand The Chicken into the most recognizable mascot in sports. He started spending up to 250 days a year on the road, appearing at more than 6,000 events from private parties to being the Grand Marshall at major parades.

Top 50 Padres Moments (in chronological order):

1. National League votes to expand into Montreal and San Diego (May 27, 1968)
2. Padres stocked with players in National League expansion draft (Oct. 14, 1968)
3. Padres win their Major League debut (April 8, 1969)
4. Clay Kirby removed from a no-hitter (July 21, 1970)
5. Nate Colbert’s five-homer, 13-RBI doubleheader in Atlanta (Aug. 1, 1972)
6. 1973, the year San Diego nearly lost the Padres
7. Ray Kroc buys the Padres (Jan. 25, 1974)
8. Ray Kroc grabs the microphone during his first home game as the Padres owner (April 9, 1974)
9. Randy Jones National League Cy Young Award (1976)
10. Shortstop Ozzie Smith’s greatest defensive play in Padres’ history (April 20, 1978)
11. Padres host 1978 All-Star Game (July 11, 1978)
12. Gaylord Perry wins 1978 National League Cy Young Award
13. The “re-hatching” of the San Diego Chicken (June 29, 1979)

Top 50 Individual Seasons

41. Phil Nevin had love-hate relationship with spacious Petco Park in 2004

[FriarWire](#)

Jan 30

By Bill Center

Phil Nevin wasn't a fan of Petco Park when the then-spacious Padres' downtown home opened for the 2004 season.

At the time, the dimensions of Petco Park created polarizing views. Pitchers loved the ballpark. Many hitters hated it. Some referred to it as Petco National Park.

It was 412 feet to the power alley in right center and 402 feet to the power alley in left center. Coupled with moist, sea-level atmosphere and wind patterns, Petco Park punished power hitters. A Major League-low 56 homers were hit at Petco Park in 2004.

The fences at Petco Park have all been moved in up to 11 feet for all points of the park except for the two foul lines and straight away center. The fences have also been lowered in some points.

But in 2004, the fences were far away for even the best of power hitters. **Barry Bonds** labeled Petco Park "baseball proof."

Nevin made his thoughts on Petco Park known several times. He even got into a shouting match with General Manager **Kevin Towers** before being traded to the Texas Rangers in 1985.

But Nevin had a solid all-around season in 2004. Given the circumstances, I rank it No. 41 on my list of the 50 top individual seasons in Padres history.

The then 33-year-old first baseman hit .289 in 147 games in 2004. He had a .368 on-base percentage and a .492 slugging percentage for a .859 OPS. His 3.1 WAR was the fourth-highest of his career.

Nevin had 31 doubles, a triple and 26 home runs for 105 RBIs. He drew 66 walks in 623 plate appearances while striking out 121 times. He finished 30th in the National League Most Valuable Player voting.

Nevin's home-and-away splits that season give more detail to Nevin's season. He did lead the Padres with 12 homers at Petco Park with 14 more coming on the road.

But he hit .310 on the road in 2004 compared to .265 at home. He had 65 RBIs on the road with a .516 slugging percentage and a .887 OPS. Those numbers at Petco Park that season were 40 RBIs in the same number of games with a .465 slugging percentage and a .829 OPS.

Had his home numbers just matched his road numbers—which is usually the case—Nevin would have finished second in RBIs in the National League.

The Golden Spikes winner as the Collegiate Player of the Year in 1992 while with Cal State-Fullerton, Nevin was the first overall pick by the Houston Astros that June. But his Major League career was floundering when the Padres acquired Nevin from the California Angels for infielder Andy Sheets on March 29, 1999.

In seven seasons with the Padres, Nevin hit .288 with a .359 on-base percentage and a .503 slugging percentage for a .862 OPS. He had 156 homers, 158 doubles, 573 RBIs and 428 runs scored in 806 games.

Nevin ranks third all-time among Padres home run leaders. He also ranks third in RBIs, fourth in slugging percentage, fifth in OPS, eighth in batting average and hits (842), tied for eighth in doubles and ninth in runs scored.

Top 50 Individual Seasons:

41. 1B Phil Nevin (2004)
42. RF Tony Gwynn (1995)
43. RF Dave Winfield (1978)
44. 2B Alan Wiggins (1984)
45. RHP Andy Hawkins (1985)
46. INF-OF Bip Roberts (1990)
47. RHP Heath Bell (2010)

48. RHP Trevor Hoffman (1999)

49. RF Brian Giles (2005)

50. 2B Mark Loretta (2003)

Are the Developing Padres Serious Players for Manny Machado or Bryce Harper?

By **JACK DICKEY**
January 30, 2019

No 66–96 team in baseball history has been in as enviable yet precarious a position as the one in which the San Diego Padres presently find themselves.

The farm system is as flush as any in recent memory; just days ago, MLB.com ranked 10 Padres prospects among the game's top 100, with five of them, including No. 2 overall prospect Fernando Tatis, Jr., expected to contribute as major leaguers in 2019. Meanwhile, the big league roster (with two crucial exceptions) is essentially a blank canvas ready for general manager A.J. Preller's paint. According to Spotrac data, only five teams have smaller total payrolls than the Padres' \$74 million, and that number factors in the \$25-plus million the Padres owe in dead money. Only the Rays have less pledged to their 25-man roster than San Diego's \$49 million.

Preller has made a couple of token dabs on that canvas—reaching two-year deals in December with injured Angel starter Garrett Richards, who will likely miss 2019, and 36-year-old second baseman Ian Kinsler, whose charmed career entered its decline phase two years ago—but has not yet made any sort of splash. Will he? Should he?

The questions are worth asking in light of recent reports that the Padres have made a delayed play for Manny Machado and are even sniffing around Bryce Harper. (The two lead a class of still-unsigned players that also includes Dallas Keuchel, Craig Kimbrel, and Marwin Gonzalez.) The reports, on their own, don't mean much. Presumably, every team could find a home for one or both players, and every team that isn't owned by cheapskates or already financially overextended would gladly add one or the other at advantageous terms. But because of the unusual composition of its roster and payroll, San Diego presents an uncommonly captivating set of hypotheticals.

As with an NFL club lucky enough to have a star quarterback on a team-friendly contract, San Diego's meager commitments to the likely future cornerstones of its roster allow it to pay market prices for a star or two or three—and win—without reaching the payroll heights the Dodgers, Angels and Giants do. (Though San Diego is not exactly a small market, ranking as the 17th most populous metropolitan area in the country, the Padres have been in the bottom half of the NL, attendance-wise 17 of the last 20 years.)

Then again, if the Padres were to sign Machado or Harper, and the prospects fizzled, San Diego could be stuck with three players earning more than \$20 million annually on a middling team. For all of Preller's hard work in following the dizzying rebuild of his first offseason with something more sustainable and affordable, he has nevertheless stuck himself with a pair of bad contracts. The first is the six-year, \$83 million extension signed by Wil Myers after the 2016 season, which bought out Myers' arbitration years and what would have been his first three free-agent years. The Padres got a bargain on the early years—factoring in his signing bonus, Myers will make just

\$5.5 million this year, the deal's third—but Myers will be paid a \$20 million base salary in each of the three seasons thereafter. \$20+ million is too rich, in the current climate, for an offense-only player with power but a low walk rate. San Diego has reportedly been trying its best to move Myers, but it has found no takers.

Worse than Myers' deal is the eight-year one Eric Hosmer signed last offseason to bump Myers from first. Hosmer is a slap-hitting first baseman, which is bizarre enough on its own—but of the 332 hitters last year with enough batted balls to qualify, he was the only one with a negative launch angle; that is to say, his mean batted ball was pounded into the ground. The Padres will be paying him \$21 million annually for each of the next four years, and then \$13 million annually for the three years thereafter, if he doesn't opt out.

The team signed Hosmer not only to hit all those grounders. Supposedly he possesses the ideal character traits for developing and motivating this crucial class of prospects. Whether he actually does possess those traits, and whether he can marshal them despite his offensive struggles, remains to be seen; Padres fans must know, deep down, that the team would have less trepidation about splurging on Machado or Harper had they not gone big for Hosmer.

I suppose the prudent thing for San Diego to do would be to pass on Harper and Machado and see how the youngsters fare in 2019; if the team wins 75 games on the strength of their contributions, that'll be progress, and maybe Preller will find a midseason taker for Myers, clearing room to sign Nolan Arenado and Gerrit Cole.

But San Diego must know, too, that Harper and Machado are ripe for the picking in a way that Arenado, Cole, Anthony Rendon, Chris Sale and all the rest may not be next winter. Prudence is a fine thing, but there is something to be said for seizing an opportunity when it's there.