



Padres Press Clips

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Extremely young infield finishes Padres spring opener

Kevin Acee , SD Union Tribune, 2/24/18

Score: Mariners 3, Padres 2

Batters box: The Padres top-ranked prospect, Fernando Tatis Jr., homered in the eighth inning. ... Their No. 6 prospect, Luis Urias, hit a double off the wall. ... Travis Jankowski walked, stole second and scored on Carlos Asuaje's single in the first inning. ... The Padres had six total hits.

Balls and strikes: Brett Kennedy, who went 13-7 with a 3.70 ERA in Double-A last season, got a strikeout and grounder in succession to get out of the first inning allowing two runs after giving up two doubles, a single and hitting two batters. ... Kyle Lloyd threw two scoreless innings ... Buddy Baumann threw a scoreless fourth with help from Jankowski, who picked up Andrew Romine's double off the wall in left-center and threw out Romine at third. ... Adam Cimber, who had a 2.90 ERA between Single-A and Double-A last year, threw a hitless seventh. ... Miguel Diaz, who has shined in camp, gave up two line drive singles before a potential sacrifice fly that Padres center fielder Michael Gettys threw home to get the second out. A caught stealing ended the ninth. Diaz was the eighth Padres pitcher.

Extra bases: As expected, first baseman Eric Hosmer did not play in the opener. Hosmer likely will not play until Sunday. ... By game's end, the Padres infield was 20-year-old Josh Naylor, second baseman Urias (20), Tatis (19) at shortstop and third baseman Hudson Potts (19). All are ranked as top-20 prospects in the organization's minor-league system. ... Naylor went 1-for-2 with a single and made a nice tag on a throw up the line. Potts, who spent last year in low-Single-A, was brought up from minor league minicamp. He entered in the sixth and grounded out to second in his only at-bat. ... Jose Pirela played left field after taking grounders at second base in morning drills. ... Manager Andy Green had lamented the lack of preparation time leading up to the opener, as the first full-squad workout was Tuesday, leaving scant time for defensive work. Still, the Padres made a number of plays in the field, including two putouts at home.

On Deck: at Oakland A's, 12:05 PT at Hohokam Park in Mesa, Ariz. Tyson Ross, who was an All-Star with the Padres in 2014 and is in camp as a non-roster invitee, will start. Chris Young, an All-Star with the Padres in 2007 also in camp on a minor-league deal, will pitch as well.

Padres' top prospect Fernando Tatis hits homer in spring opener

Kevin Acee, SD Union Tribune, 2/23/18

The youngest player in any major league spring camp reached out and essentially flicked his bat at a ball that rocketed the other way about 380 feet, off the top of a wall at the back of the bullpen beyond right field and landing in Padres lore.

Fernando Tatis Jr.'s home run in Friday's spring opener likely carried to new levels the hype over the franchise's top prospect.

"He's good," manager Andy Green said. "We know it."

Clearly, having turned just 19 on Jan. 2 is no impediment for the player ranked as the No. 9 prospect in all of baseball by Baseball America.

"I've been working hard for this," Tatis said. "I'm here now trying to show off what I got. I think it's working. ... Just trying to prove to these guys I don't care what my age is. I'm just trying to make the team no matter what."

Tatis, who went from low-Single-A to Double-A in 2017, his first full pro season, is all but certain to begin the season in the minors. But the Padres have said they won't limit the ascension of any of their prospects.

Green was asked about being measured with Tatis and 20-year-old Luis Urias, who led the Double-A Texas league in on-base percentage last season and doubled Friday.

"They're going to push as hard as they can to be here as quick as they can," Green said. "We want them to do that. It's our job to tap the brakes and take our time with them if we think they need more time and more seasoning. They're clearly dynamic players."

Tatis, who last year played in one spring game, getting a walk in two plate appearances, entered as a defensive replacement at shortstop in the fifth inning Friday. He worked a full count and fouled off two pitches before striking out in his first at-bat.

In the eighth inning, he quickly went down 0-2, swinging big on two sliders from Shawn Armstrong, a right-hander who pitched 39 games in the majors over the past three seasons. Tatis then watched a ball inside before a relatively short swing on a fastball sent a no-doubter almost onto the grass berm beyond the bullpen.

“I changed the approach and got him back,” Tatis said.

“Nice two-strike approach the other way,” Green said. “Plus it was smart hitting. The wind was blowing out to right field, he lifted it up to right, so the mind works too. ... His demeanor has been outstanding early in camp. I don’t think he’s been fazed by anything. He looks at home on a baseball field.”

Chris Young back with Padres, making another comeback

Kevin Acee, SD Union Tribune, 2/23/18

Chris Young is back with the Padres, because he can be and wants to be and thinks it is the right thing to do.

His baseball career started when he was fresh out of Princeton and decided he no longer was going to play basketball. It seemed like it would end plenty of times and now might be on its last long leg. But it's not over yet.

Young has more money than he knows what do with and a family he talks about often. He has a World Series ring kept in a safe at his home. Friends told him this offseason he was done. Close friends, the kind that felt free to tell him he had no chance and ask what he was thinking.

"I laugh at that," Young said recently. "I'll be the one to decide when I'm done. I'm pretty excited about where I am. What they don't know (is) the competitiveness, the drive, the hunger for me. ... It's going to come to an end at some point. But hopefully that's a few years away."

So he's back, at 38, after 13 seasons in the majors, almost to where he started.

Young — you remember, the 6-foot-10 right-hander whose fastball somehow seems to get upon batters a lot faster than it actually does — signed a minor league deal this winter to try to make the Padres' starting rotation. He will make his spring debut Saturday against the Oakland A's.

He is the oldest player in a Padres clubhouse that is among the majors' youngest. His locker is a dozen down from that of 19-year-old Fernando Tatis Jr., the youngest player in any big-league camp.

"My wife says I have age dysmorphia, that I think I'm a lot younger than I am," Young said. "She keeps me in tune with how old I truly am. But when I'm in this group, there are certain limitations, but I don't feel much older than anyone else."

Young originally became a Padre in 2006, part of the trade that sent Adam Eaton and Akinora Otsuka to the Texas Rangers and brought Adrian Gonzalez home.

That was the third and final time Young was traded. He was an All-Star for the Padres in 2007 and left via free agency after the 2010 season. He's been released or granted free agency nine times since.

He has also since had two surgeries, including one to relieve thoracic outlet syndrome, which essentially gave him a new shoulder. He was named American League Comeback Player of the Year in 2014 and in '15 won the ring with the Royals.

Over the past two seasons, which included a 2016 core repair surgery, he was touched for a 6.52 ERA and 35 home runs in 118 2/3 innings, with a WHIP of 1.75. The Royals released him in June.

He knew he still wanted to play. The question was when.

"I thought immediately, 'OK, I'm going to go somewhere else; the change of scenery will be great,' " recalled Young, who did get calls from interested teams at the time. "As I sat and thought and looked in the mirror I thought, 'This is deeper than a change of scenery. The last year-and-a-half, I have not pitched well.' ... The results weren't good. Mechanically, I had gotten into some bad habits. From a strength standpoint, after the core repair surgery (in October 2016) I wasn't where I needed to be. I felt I needed to commit to getting physically strong and ironing out some mechanical issues."

All offseason, pretty much every week, he would travel from his family's Texas home to San Diego and then Seattle and back again. It was in San Diego almost a decade ago that he began working with personal trainer Todd Durkin and physical therapist Kahl Goldfarb, and he felt they helped make him his best. So he would fly into San Diego, spend a few days working with them and then head to the Driveline Baseball pitching institute outside Seattle.

"You can't do this forever," Young said in explaining the investment. "It's worth it."

Said Padres manager Andy Green: "Clearly, he has some competitive fire inside him and strongly believes he has a lot left in him. He spent the offseason working incredibly hard to find that deception that made him so good. He's always been a guy hitters haven't seen very well. ... He doesn't have to find that (velocity). He just has to find that deception."

Young speaks with the confidence of a man who has put in an immense amount of work.

“It wasn’t long ago I was pitching well in the World Series,” he said. “Physically, I feel as good or better than I did then. Those are the expectations I have of myself.”

He’s real about where he’s been. If his results reflect how he feels now, he could win another Comeback Player of the Year.

“In my mind, I’m competing, auditioning for 30 teams,” Young said. “While I’d love to be a San Diego Padre, there are a lot of teams out there that need pitching. ... I hope it’s here. That’s why I signed here. But if not, there are 29 other teams.”

He’ll do it for as long as he can but only for so long and only as long as he’s effective.

“I don’t see going to Triple-A and chasing it,” he said. “In my mind, If I’m healthy, I’m a big leaguer. And if I’m not getting the results, there comes a time for everybody.”

The Padres most likely have one spot — possibly two — available in the rotation. Young is one of maybe a half-dozen pitchers with a legitimate shot. However you put it, he’s a non-roster invitee in the position of having to prove himself.

Not a big deal. Basically, his whole career has been a comeback.

“It’s not the way you’d script it by any means,” Young said. “But I wouldn’t change it. I’ve learned so much about myself — about perseverance, about commitment and dedication — things that ultimately I want my kids to understand. And that’s a big aspect of why I’m doing this.

“The game has changed. I realize guys have gotten a lot younger in the last four or five years. But physically I feel better now than I did in my late 20s and early 30s, when I was fighting shoulder injuries. Now that my shoulder feels good I feel like it would be premature to walk away and call it a career. I feel like I’m constantly fighting to prove myself and go out and earn a spot. I think that’s the best way. Nothing is given in life. Nothing is given in the game of baseball. It’s a performance-based game. It owes you nothing.

“I still have the hunger to do it.”

Hosmer sitting now but not later; Padres sport 'hot talent lava' T-shirts

Kevin Acee, SD Union Tribune, 2/23/18

There are some familiar names in the Padres lineup for Friday's spring training opener against the Seattle Mariners.

Twitter Ads info and privacy

For the most part, though, with position players having participated in the first official workout just three days ago, this will be an opportunity for young players to show what they can do.

It was expected that new first baseman Eric Hosmer would not play, as manager Andy Green told him almost immediately he would give him until at least Sunday to get his legs before playing in a Cactus League game.

"I just want to kind of ease into it," Hosmer said.

He arrived in Peoria on Monday, got on the field Tuesday and acknowledged he is "off track as far as working out and keeping my body in shape."

There is time.

"I played 162 games last year," Hosmer said. "I know what it takes to get ready for the season. I really appreciate Andy communicating with me, so we can figure out what's best for me."

Hosmer was one of just five MLB players to play every game last season. It was his first time doing it, though he averaged 152 games the previous five seasons. The last Padres player to go 162 in a season was Adrian Gonzalez in 2008. Chase Headley twice played in 161.

"It's big," Hosmer said. "I think it's one of the things we have somewhat control of. Obviously, there's freak injuries in this game you can't do anything about. Other than that, it says a lot about coming in every day and being ready to go."

Embracing the lava

Many Padres were wearing new grey T-shirts with blue lettering on the front and back that Hosmer commissioned in honor of a pronouncement made by his agent, Scott Boras, at Hosmer's introductory press conference.

On the front was #HotTalentLava. On the back: #MajorLeagueRock.

“It’s a funny thing we can put on some shirts and joke around about,” Hosmer said. “But when you really think into it, it makes some sense. That’s what we’re trying to do, mold these guys into young champions.”

What Boras said was, “I think the organization is a volcano of hot talent lava. To turn that lava into major league rock, that’s a hard thing to do. It’s a very, very difficult thing to do. ... What Eric Hosmer brings is he went through all that in Kansas City. He along with many people were all prospects. They were, too, that major league lava, and they turned into championship rocks. When you can have a young veteran champion, I think your chances of guiding lava into rocks are pretty good, and I think that’s the destiny and the plan.”

While Hosmer said Boras representing some of the Padres’ top minor-leaguers helped him gain familiarity with the Padres’ highly regarded farm system, he had never heard Boras use that phrase. “That’s why I couldn’t keep the stone face,” Hosmer said.

Hoffman explains number choice

When third base coach Glenn Hoffman is seen wearing No.26 during Friday’s game, it is because he “reached way back in the archives” after ceding No.30 to Hosmer.

“It was my high school number,” Hoffman said of 26.

He was happy to give Hosmer the number he’d worn since 2010, when Ryan Ludwick was acquired via trade and asked for Hoffman’s old number, 47.

Hoffman had been in Hosmer’s situation. Before arriving in San Diego, he had worn No. 35, which wasn’t available with the Padres due to it being retired in honor of Randy Jones.

Honoring Stoneman Douglas

The Padres’ hats will, as usual, have an “SD” on them in Friday’s game.

But they hats are black, and the interlocking letters are red. It is the hat of Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, site of last week’s mass shooting that left 17 dead.

“We’re honored to wear them,” Padres manager Andy Green said. “I don’t think we look like we’re doing very much, but our hearts break, and we want to honor people who are going through such tragedy ... I know there are a lot of people hurting right now. Us wearing hats puts them in the boat with the, hurting alongside them.

Sunday's Kevin Towers celebration to draw more than 100 MLB executives

Jeff Sanders, SD Union Tribune, 2/23/18

Put together by Kevin Towers, the Padres' 1998 World Series run paved the way for Petco Park's construction. On Sunday, more than 100 executives from across Major League Baseball will descend upon San Diego's downtown ballpark for a celebration of life held on behalf of the former Padres general manager's family.

The event — which is free and open to the public — starts at 1 p.m.

Cubs President Theo Epstein, Yankees General Manager Brian Cashman and Larry Lucchino, a former front office executive with the Padres and Red Sox, are among the scheduled speakers who befriended Towers in his more than three decades in pro baseball. All three managers that Towers employed in his two stops as a general manager — Bruce Bochy and Bud Black with the Padres and Kirk Gibson with the Diamondbacks — are also scheduled to speak, as is Hall of Fame-bound closer Trevor Hoffman.

The Padres' general manager from 1995 to 2009, Towers died the morning of Jan. 30 after a 14-month battle with a rare cancer of the thyroid. He was 56.

Towers was most recently employed by the Reds as a special assistant. The Diamondbacks won one NL West title during his watch as general manager in Arizona (2010-2014), while the Padres won four division titles during his GM tenure in San Diego, including the team's run to the 1998 World Series.

Cashman's Yankees swept the Padres in four games that fall.

The city still buzzing from the trip to baseball's biggest stage, Proposition C passed shortly after to clear the construction of a downtown home for the Padres.

Petco Park opened six years later.

Gates will open at noon Sunday. Fans can enter through the home plate gate on Park Boulevard. Free parking will be available at the Tailgate park on Imperial Avenue and the Padres Parkade garage on 10th and J Street.

Makita beguiles, entertains Padres in live batting practice session

Kevin Acee , SD Union Tribune, 2/23/18

Kazuhisa Makita was smiling for a good portion of the live batting practice he threw Friday morning.

Those standing in the batters box against him were chuckling. Every few minutes, coaches and other players around the batting cage would erupt in laughter.

Manuel Margot went into a full twist a couple times. No one got real good contact on a fair ball. They mostly watched his pitches, which isn't all that unusual for a BP this early in camp.

"Oh man," Eric Hosmer said later. "... I saw a few pitches I've never seen before in my life."

The first pitch Hosmer saw from the Japanese submariner was a slider down in the zone. The second pitch rose quickly as it crossed the plate.

"I'd never seen a rise ball before," Hosmer said.

He joked with Makita afterward about that very thing. The hitters who faced the right-hander, signed in January to a two-year, \$4 million contract, marveled at the varying speeds and locations of his pitches.

"It was unlike anything I've ever seen," Chase Headley said. "... He doesn't pitch like a guy from down there. Usually, those guys (submarine-style pitchers) are trying to get ground balls. He changes everything up."

With a smile, Makita said through an interpreter, he had fun.

"Camp just started," he said. "So I'm sure the performance of the batters is going to start coming around."

Headley, though, said he felt Makita will give hitters trouble for a while.

"Guys that have that type of stuff, they know what makes that stuff effective," Headley said.

"That's why he throws the one up and in to speed you up. Then he throws the real slow one. Then

you're thinking, 'Is he going to throw another real slow one or is he going to throw another one up and in?' I have a feeling he knows what he's trying to do with that stuff."

Makita, who posted a 2.83 ERA over seven seasons (921 1/3 innings) as a starter and reliever in Japan, said "80 percent is by looking at the hitter and keeping him off-balance."

Said Hosmer: "The control he has, it's going to be fun. I'm glad he's on my team."

Hosmer starting spring slowly

AJ Cassavell, MLB.com , 2/23/18

PEORIA, Ariz. -- It's been an unusually busy week for Eric Hosmer. The newly signed Padres first baseman agreed to his eight-year deal on Saturday night. He flew to Arizona on Monday night. And he was introduced in a news conference on Tuesday.

Perhaps understandably, the Padres are now taking things slowly with Hosmer on the diamond. The club kicked off its Cactus League slate on Friday against Seattle. But Hosmer likely won't take the field in a Padres uniform until sometime early next week, possibly Monday or Tuesday according to manager Andy Green.

"I just want to ease into it," Hosmer said. "Just this last week alone has gotten me a little off track in terms of working out, keeping my body in shape and all that. I've been traveling all around, doing a bunch of different physicals and stuff.

"That's the thing Andy respects about me, and I respect about him. We're communicating about it. I played 162 games last year. I know what it takes to get ready for the season."

That number is a point of pride for Hosmer, perhaps as much as his batting average or his home run count. Not only did Hosmer play every game for Kansas City last year, but he actually got better as the year went on. His second-half slash line of .319/.397/.504 was better than his first half marks, and he finished the season by batting .320 in September.

"It says a lot about coming in every day and being ready to play, ready to go," Hosmer said. "In my career, there was one time in Kansas City where we missed the division by one game. You don't know when that time is going to come, whether it's April or late in the season."

Hosmer is still getting himself acclimated to Padres camp. He's particularly enthused about working with some talented youngsters. On Friday, he shared a batting practice group with MLB Pipeline's No. 8 and 36 overall prospects, Fernando Tatis Jr. and Luis Urias.

"It's a lot different, man," he said. "But it's exciting for me at the same time. Guys like Tatis and Luis, I'd heard about all these guys. But now to get out on the field, work with them, see the talent they have, it's a lot of fun."

Makita faces hitters

Submariner Kazuhisa Makita put on a show when he faced hitters for the first time this spring during a live batting practice session Friday morning.

The 33-year-old right-hander showcased his entire six-pitch arsenal, including the Eephus-esque curveball that garnered so much acclaim during his seven seasons in Japan. The group of Padres hitters came away particularly impressed.

"I've faced some submarine guys, but he's different," said Chase Headley. "He doesn't really pitch like a guy that pitches from down there."

Headley made the best contact of any hitter against Makita, smacking a line drive into the right-center-field gap. In particular, Makita kept the righty hitters off balance.

The rest of the Padres got a kick out of one particularly slow curveball, estimated at around 60 mph. An overeager Manuel Margot was miles in front, swinging through as the ball dropped to the dirt.

"Don't swing at that, Manny," a coach said.

Margot broke into a sheepish grin and gestured toward Makita, as if to point out just how unique the delivery was.

"The camp just started," Makita said through an interpreter, downplaying his early effectiveness. "The performance of the batters is going to come around. I'm looking forward to seeing that."

Lopez eyes roster spot

A.J. Ellis is the favorite for the backup catcher job, but don't count out lefty-hitting Raffy Lopez. The Padres are impressed with his framing techniques, particularly on pitches at the bottom of the zone.

Lopez has raked against right-handed pitching in the past, and Green noted the potential for a platoon with the right-handed-hitting Austin Hedges. After making some swing adjustments before last season, Lopez batted .288 with 16 home runs between two levels in the Blue Jays' system. He tacked on four big league dingers as well, in 54 at-bats.

Up next

It's a throwback Saturday of sorts for the Padres, as they head to Mesa to face Oakland at 12:05 p.m. PT. During the offseason, they signed right-handers Tyson Ross and Chris Young to a pair of Minor League deals. Both were All-Stars at one point in San Diego, and both are looking to rejuvenate their careers with the Padres once again.

"Those guys are great examples to the young guys in camp," Green said. "And they have legitimate opportunities to be in our rotation. We'll watch that play out."

Teen phenom Tatis goes deep in ST opener

AJ Cassavell, MLB.com, 2/23/18

PEORIA, Ariz. -- Fernando Tatis Jr. is the youngest player in any big league camp this spring. During Friday's Cactus League opener, he wasted no time proving he belongs.

Ranked by MLB Pipeline as the game's No. 8 overall prospect, Tatis mashed an opposite-field home run in his second at-bat of Spring Training. He fell behind against Mariners right-hander Shawn Armstrong, before swatting a 1-2 fastball over the fence in the bottom of the eighth.

The swing was smooth and easy, yet the ball jumped off his bat and carried over the right-field bullpen. Said one member of the team's front office: "That's just what he does."

The Padres didn't threaten offensively after that, and they would lose the opener, 3-2. But it was Tatis who stole the show with the team's first homer of spring.

"I'm just trying to show off what we've got," Tatis said. "I'm trying prove to these guys that I don't care about my age, I'm just trying to make the team."

Tatis, who turned 19 in January, is destined to start the year in the Minors, though it's possible he could earn a late-season callup. Last year, he set a franchise record with 21 homers for Class A Fort Wayne before finishing the year with Double-A San Antonio.

Many in the Padres' organization view Tatis as their shortstop of the future. The job will be open next offseason, when Freddy Galvis hits free agency. If Tatis continues his rapid ascent, it could be his position to lose.

"His demeanor's been outstanding early in camp," said Padres manager Andy Green. "I don't think he's been fazed by anything. He looks comfortable on a baseball field. ... The power is real. All you have to do is watch batting practice to know that."

It's no coincidence that Tatis has been paired with veteran hitters during BP. On Tuesday, he and fellow top prospect Luis Urias were part of a group that also featured Eric Hosmer and Chase Headley -- 18 years of experience between them.

"Guys like that, you just ask questions a lot," Tatis said. "You try to learn what focus they have and their approach."

It's an immense source of pride for Tatis that he uses the whole field to hit for both power and average. Between two levels last season, Tatis batted .278/.379/.498.

"I don't just want to be a pull hitter or something like that," Tatis said. "I want to hit the ball to every part of the field -- that way I can get more hits and hit more for average."

Tatis came to San Diego in the 2016 trade that sent James Shields to the White Sox. Quickly, he began to prove himself in the Padres' system, doing so as one of the youngest players everywhere he played.

Tatis has drawn early comparisons to Manny Machado, and it shows in his body type. The Padres have pumped the brakes on that comparison, however. Expectations are already lofty enough.

There are questions regarding whether Tatis will stick at shortstop. (In his five innings there Friday, the Mariners hit no balls his way.) Almost no one questions his bat.

"He's good," Green said. "And we know it.", 2017

On Friday, Tatis paired with Urias in the middle of the Padres' infield. Urias got in on the fun, launching a double off the right-center-field wall. It might not be long before the duo anchors the middle infield at Petco Park.

"They're going to push as hard as they can to be here as quick as they can," Green said. "We want them to do that. I think it's our job to tap the brakes and take our time with them if we think they need more time and seasoning. They're clearly dynamic baseball players, and we're excited to have them."

Padres' Tatis homers in his second spring at-bat

Bernie Wilson, AP, 2/24/18

PEORIA, Ariz. (AP) — Fernando Tatis Jr. wasted no time in showing the San Diego Padres how much talent he has.

One of baseball's top prospects and the son of a former major leaguer, Tatis hit a monster opposite-field home run in his second at-bat in the Padres' spring opener against the Seattle Mariners on Friday.

Tatis swung and missed at two sliders from right-hander Shawn Armstrong in the eighth inning of the 3-2 loss. After taking a ball and fouling off a pitch, Tatis drove a 1-2 outside fastball off the top of the wall in the back of the Padres' bullpen beyond the right-field fence at Peoria Stadium.

"It feels awesome, man," said Tatis, who turned 19 last month. "I've been working hard for this, being here now and trying to show off what I've got, and just working."

After falling behind, "I made the approach and kind of got him back," Tatis said.

Tatis was acquired on June 4, 2016, when the Padres sent James Shields to the Chicago White Sox. The Padres' win-now effort with highly paid veterans had failed, and they decided to go for a rebuild based around young players.

After an impressive 2017 season in Class A and AA, he earned his first spring training invitation with the big league club.

"I'm trying to show off what I've got and trying to prove to these guys that I don't care about my age. I'm just trying to make the team no matter what," he said.

"He's good," manager Andy Green said. "We know it. He had a nice two-strike approach the other way. The power's real. All you have to do is watch batting practice. It's also smart hitting. The wind was blowing out to right field and he lifted it up to right field. His mind works, too."

Tatis said he emphasizes hitting the other way.

"I don't want to be a pull hitter or something like that when I'm hitting the ball. That way I can get more hits and hit for average."

Green said he likes what he sees from Tatis after just a few days in camp.

“I think his demeanor has been outstanding early in camp. I don’t think he’s been fazed by anything. He looks comfortable on a baseball field. He looks at home on a baseball field.”

The Padres’ projected starting shortstop is Freddy Galvis, who was obtained in a trade with Philadelphia in December and has one year left on his contract.

Meanwhile, newly acquired first baseman Eric Hosmer probably won’t make his spring debut until early next week.

“It’s one of those things where I just want to kind of ease into it,” said Hosmer, who signed a \$144 million, eight-year deal on Monday. “Just this last week alone has gotten me off track as far as working out and keeping my body in shape and all that. I’ve been traveling around, doing a bunch of physicals and stuff. That’s the thing that Andy respects about me and I respect about him is we’re working together, communicating about it.

“I played 162 games last year and I know what it takes to get ready for the season. I really appreciate Andy communicating with me so we can kind of figure out what’s best for me.”

Could Eric Hosmer or Freddy Galvis earn ironman status for Padres in 2018?

Dennis Lin , The Athletic, 2/23/18

PEORIA, Ariz. — The number does not, by itself, signify stardom.

As an example, Alcides Escobar stamped it on his résumé in three of the last four years, and the Royals shortstop has reached a career stage where other numbers say he is a replacement-level contributor.

But contribute he has, virtually every game. That is no small feat. Since 2014, only six other big-leaguers have managed what Escobar has achieved multiple times: the maximum 162 appearances in a regular season.

“Alcides kind of set the standard for everybody,” said Eric Hosmer, a former teammate and member of the aforementioned six. “There’s no guy I’ve seen that takes more bumps and bruises, besides the catcher, than Alcides does.”

In the majors, a “162” in the games-played column amounts to a badge of pride. A Padre has not worn such a distinction for close to a decade. San Diego has not played a 163rd game in any of those years.

The team’s rebuild seems to be entering a more advanced phase. This week, Hosmer signed a franchise-record contract worth \$144 million. The Padres’ new first baseman joined a roster with a new shortstop, Freddy Galvis.

A potential sign of progress: Both players went wire to wire last season, starting nearly every game, substituting into the few games they didn’t.

“It’s big,” Hosmer said. “It’s one of the things we have somewhat control of. . . . There’s a couple times in my career or one time in Kansas City where we missed the division by one game, so you don’t know when that game might come.”

“You love this game and you like to be on the field seven days a week — that’s what I do,” Galvis said. “I really like to play shortstop every single day.”

The last Padres player to reach the 162-game threshold was Adrian Gonzalez, in 2008. Before that, it was Joe Carter, in 1990, and Steve Garvey, in 1985.

Those three comprise an exclusive group. No other Padre has made more than 161 cameos in a season. Third baseman Chase Headley twice finished a game short, in 2010 and 2012.

“Anybody that gets close to (162 games), you’re doing something that’s pretty special,” Headley said.

In 2017, only Wil Myers compiled more than 129 game logs for the Padres. The then-first baseman racked up 155, a year after he collected 157.

He now finds himself in a different place — after Hosmer’s signing, the outfield — if not a different mindset.

“There are not many guys that have actually done that,” Myers said, “and to be on a team with two guys that did it last season is pretty cool. . . . That is definitely my goal. You get paid to go out and play every day. That’s something I want to take pride in, go out there and play regardless of how you’re feeling.”

Modern wisdom often stands in the way. Given rising salaries and grueling schedules, teams are more cautious than ever with their investments. Headley recalls spending a sweltering day in St. Louis, at the request of manager Bud Black, on the bench. That year, the brief respite would prevent him from notching a 162nd appearance.

“It was really hot,” Headley said. “I remember being a little banged up, and Buddy was, like, I really want to give you a day today.”

“In hindsight, would I wish I did it one time? Sure, because it’s probably not on the horizon anymore.”

Headley — 33 years old and, entering the final season of his contract, an obvious trade asset — will be the Padres’ primary third baseman for however long he remains with them. But the switch-hitter will not make another run at the 162-game grail. The Padres are intrigued by fellow third baseman Christian Villanueva, and the 26-year-old should receive a fair amount of playing time if he breaks camp with San Diego.

Meanwhile, Hosmer, Galvis and Myers are the leading candidates for an everyday workload. Galvis’ durability, in particular, could provide a welcome change. Hoping to address their perennial issues at shortstop, the Padres surrendered pitching prospect Enyel De Los Santos to acquire the sure-handed veteran from Philadelphia.

“It gives us the possibility of not carrying a traditional backup shortstop . . . and in that case it gives us some more roster flexibility,” manager Andy Green said. “I don’t know that we’ll go that way, but we could potentially go that way.”

Galvis and Hosmer are expected to anchor an infield that should represent a significant improvement from last season’s unit. They also arrive as role models for an organization that has staked its future on youth.

“I think it gives a little bit of a warrior mentality that you want to instill in some of these younger guys coming up, that they want to do those things,” Green said. “It’s up to me to recognize when they need rest and give them rest, but I like having guys wired to want to go 162.”

At least one relatively accomplished player will be watching — and hoping to join rare company.

“Just being around (Hosmer and Galvis), seeing what they do, seeing how they go about their business to get to play in 162, I think it’s going to be pretty cool,” Myers said. “I know I can learn something from that.”

Notes

At Hosmer’s introductory press conference, agent Scott Boras supplied a quote that went viral: “I think the (Padres) organization is a volcano of hot talent lava. To turn that lava into major league rock, that’s a hard thing to do.”

A video clip of Boras’ comment was broadcast in the Padres’ clubhouse. Repeat viewings ensued.

On Friday, more than a few players wore grey T-shirts with #HotTalentLava on the front and “=MajorLeagueRock” on the back.

“It’s a funny little thing that we can put on some shirts and we joke around about, but . . . it kind of makes some sense with all the young guys coming up,” said Hosmer, who masterminded the T-shirt idea. “That’s basically what we’re trying to do, is mold these guys into young champions.”

– Friday afternoon in the Padres’ Cactus League opener against the Mariners, top shortstop prospect Fernando Tatis Jr. launched an opposite-field home run in his second at-bat. The solo shot came on a 1-2 count.

“I’m trying prove to these guys that I don’t care about my age,” Tatis, 19, said after the Padres’ 3-2 loss. “I’m just trying to make the team, no matter what.”

Second baseman Luis Urias, 20, nearly homered himself, settling for an opposite-field double off the wall.

“They’re going to push as hard as they can to be here as quick as they can,” Green said. “We want them to do that. I think it’s our job to tap the brakes and take our time with them if we think they need more time and seasoning. They’re clearly dynamic baseball players.”

– Japanese submariner Kazuhisa Makita threw his first session of live batting practice, inducing some awkward swings from batters and laughter from onlookers.

“I saw a few pitches I’ve never seen before in my life,” Hosmer said. “I can honestly say I’ve never seen a ‘rise’ ball before.”

“It’s a different look than anything that you really see,” Headley said. “He’s got a remote-control ball out there.”

Through an interpreter, Makita, who tops out in the low 80s and can throw a curveball roughly half that speed, said his approach relies on “looking at the batter and keeping him off balance. Anything I can do to get the out.”

– Hosmer likely won’t make his Cactus League debut until Monday or Tuesday, Green said. The first baseman said he appreciated the additional time for preparation.

“I kind of want to ease into it,” Hosmer said. “Obviously, this last week alone has just kind of gotten me off track as far as working out.”

– Catcher Rocky Gale was released, and Webster Rivas arrived in major league camp as a non-roster invitee and depth addition. Gale, who spent eight seasons in the Padres organization, had been designated for assignment to clear a roster spot for Hosmer.

#HotTalentLava Erupts in Padres Clubhouse

Derek Togerson, NBC7, 2/23/18

During a press conference on Tuesday at Padres Spring Training in Peoria, AZ, well-known sports agent Scott Boras (who represents new Padres 1st baseman Eric Hosmer) was talking about the strength of the San Diego farm system when he gave us a line for the ages:

"It's a volcano of hot talent lava."

Predictably, that statement immediately went viral.

Padres Twitter started asking if the team should build a volcano at Petco Park (DO IT!) and volcano GIFs started popping up all over the place as the fan base went wild.

But it's not just the Friar Faithful who are embracing the volcano analogy. Hosmer somehow kept a straight face whilst sitting right next to Boras and he got the idea of slapping the #HotTalentLava on a T-shirt.

So, just two days after the statement was made, every locker in the clubhouse had a brand new gray shirt waiting in it. Most of the players immediately donned the shirts for workouts because they see and embrace the talent level in this camp. Plus, who turns down a free T-shirt?

Alas, the shirts are not available yet for public purchase but don't be surprised to see them in the Padres Team Store at some point.

Padres spring training position preview: first base

John Horvath, FSSD, 2/23/18

From now until Spring Training concludes, Fox Sports San Diego will preview each player at each position that is in big league camp.

Previous position previews:

Catchers

Pitchers

Today we will take a look at first base, a position in which the Padres organization expects stability for the next several years:

Lock to start: Eric Hosmer

Breaking news here.

The Padres' signing of Eric Hosmer allows Andy Green to pencil him into the lineup on an everyday basis from now until at least 2022. Last year, Hosmer had the best season of his career. He hit .318 with 25 home runs for the Kansas City Royals en route to a career-high 4.1 fWAR. Those numbers might have been even better if not for a poor opening month of the season. From May 1 on, the 28-year-old hit .335/.402/.533 with a 149 wRC+.

San Diego is hoping that is just the beginning.

Hosmer was also brought on for his veteran leadership and intangibles... Or, as Scott Boras called it many times this offseason, "prestige value." The Padres are banking on Hosmer to be a guiding force for the young players currently on the big league roster as well as the players who will break into the big leagues in the upcoming years.

So far, Hosmer has embraced the role. He has even given everyone #HotTalentLava shirts:

Backup options

- Wil Myers
- Chase Headley
- Allen Craig

Eric Hosmer played in all 162 games last season, which is no small task. He probably wants to do it again, too. But if he cannot, the Padres have a couple of backup options in camp.

With the signing of Hosmer, Wil Myers will move to the outfield full-time in 2018. Whether it is in right or left, that has not yet been determined. Despite the transition, his experience at first (157 games played in 2016, 155 in '17) makes him a viable candidate to spell Hosmer a day here and there. Last season, Myers hit a career-high 30 home runs and stole 20 bags. However, he did strike out at a career high clip (27.7%), hit only .243, and his 1B defense fell off from what it was in 2016.

A.J. Preller has not been shy in telling Chase Headley that he may be traded prior to Opening Day. But if he stays with the organization, he provides versatility and an ability to get on base. Headley played 328 innings at first base for the Yankees in 2017, and has the experience to play the position if needed. Playing for a Yankees team that finished a win away from a World Series appearance, Headley hit .273/.352/.406 with 12 home runs and 61 RBI.

Allen Craig is a bit of a wild card. He signed a minor-league contract with an invitation to Spring Training in January. The 33-year-old has not played in Major League Baseball since 2015, but he does bring championship pedigree. In 2011, he helped the St. Louis Cardinals win a World Series title. In 2013, he hit .315/.373/.457 en route to an appearance in the All Star Game.

On the farm

Josh Naylor came out of the gates strong for the Lake Elsinore Storm in 2017, hitting .297 with a 119 wRC+ in the first half. His performance earned him a spot in the California League All Star Game as well as a spot in the 2017 MLB Futures Game. In the second half, Naylor was called up to AA San Antonio; where hit .250 with two home runs in 175 at bats. With the arrival of Eric Hosmer, Naylor is seemingly blocked at first base for the foreseeable future. The 20-year-old has been taking some defensive reps in left field this spring, however.