



Padres Press Clips

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Taking a look at pitching coach Darren Balsley's success by the numbers

By Dustin Palmateer Oct 30, 2018

Darren Balsley was hired as the Padres pitching coach way back in May of 2003. Since then, San Diego has cycled through a dozen different hitting coaches, three managers (plus Pat Murphy's interim stint), four general managers and three ownership groups. Hired the year before Petco Park opened, Balsley has somehow survived all the upheaval, providing one constant in a sea of change. He's almost as much a fixture of San Diego Padres baseball as the ballpark where the team plays.

What makes Balsley's run so impressive is the tenuous nature of his position. In sports, coaches are hired to be fired. They're often first in line to take the blame for subpar performance, getting pink-slipped as those in higher positions — and the players — are shielded from an initial purge. Sometimes, they're just lousy at their jobs. That Balsley has withstood entire regime changes with the same job points to an obvious conclusion: he's probably really good at what he does.

But just *how* good?

Over Balsley's tenure, Petco Park has played as one of the most pitcher-friendly locales in the majors, giving him a distinct advantage over the turnstile of counterparts on the hitting side. Further, some Padres general managers — like Kevin Towers and, more recently, A.J. Preller — have earned the reputation of experts at bargain-basement pitcher finds. How does credit (or blame) get split between the park, those finding the players and Balsley?

There's no easy answer, but that doesn't mean we can't search for one. In an attempt to get there, I looked at all pitchers to throw at least 50 innings in the majors before arriving in San Diego and a minimum of 50 innings after joining the Padres. This eliminates rookies from the fold, as they're notoriously hard to project. I then compared each pitcher's [PECOTA projection](#) in the year the Padres acquired them to their performance in their first three years under Balsley.

It's not a foolproof method, but it solves a couple of problems. For one, it accounts for Petco Park. Since PECOTA projections are tailored to whatever team the player is on, the numbers generated already consider Petco's offense-suppressing atmosphere (if a player was projected for a different team, I manually park-adjusted the numbers). It also attempts to account for the talent Balsley was given to work with. Whether he was handed Craig Kimbrel or Paul Clemens, this method considers the context and doesn't penalize (or reward) the pitching coach for the arms at his disposal.

We're left with 66 pitcher stints from 64 different pitchers (David Wells and Clayton Richard were acquired twice).

Without further ado, the results:

Statistic	PECOTA	Actual	Differential
ERA	4.06	3.86	-0.2
K/9	6.9	7.3	+0.4
BB/9	3.2	3	-0.2

HR/9	0.97	0.98	+0.01
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Turns out, there's a reason Balsley has kept his job for a decade and a half.

Under his tutelage, Padres hurlers have posted ERAs 20 points lower than expected based on their projections. The improvements in ERA have been accompanied by jumps on the peripheral side, too, as both K/9 and BB/9 have moved in the right direction. The numbers might not sound significant at first, but we're talking about more than 12,000 innings here. If we give all the credit to Balsley — admittedly, a stretch — his work has been worth 266 runs in total, or roughly 1.7 wins per season.

The Reliever Whisperer

If there's another anecdotal narrative surrounding Balsley, it's that he's great with relievers and hit-or-miss with starters.

Role	PECOTA ERA	Actual ERA	Differential
Starter	4.09	4.08	-0.01
Reliever	3.99	3.27	-0.72

Yup. Balsley hasn't had any tangible effect on the average starter, but he's mastered the art of turning run-of-the-mill relievers into late-inning relief aces. We don't have to go too far back [into the archives](#) to find examples: Balsley & Co. have jumpstarted the careers of once-downtrodden relievers like Brad Hand, Craig Stammen and Kirby Yates in the last few seasons alone.

In fact, here's a list of the top 10 reliever reclamations under Balsley, ranked by total runs saved:

Player	Year Acquired	PECOTA ERA	Actual ERA	Runs Saved*
Scott Linebrink	2003	4.58	2.23	57
Mike Adams	2008	4.21	1.81	45.1
Brad Hand	2016	4.07	2.66	33.4
Craig Stammen	2017	4.69	2.94	31
Heath Bell	2007	3.83	2.72	29.8
Kirby Yates	2017	4.78	2.88	25.1
Doug Brocail	2006	5.13	3.51	18.9
Matt Strahm	2017	4.58	2.05	17.2
Rudy Seanez	2005	4.49	2.69	12.1
Joaquin Benoit	2006	2.39	1.96	5.7

**The difference between actual earned runs allowed and projected earned runs allowed over player's first three years under Balsley*

While reliever performance in small samples can be heavily based on luck, nine out of the 10 pitchers on the list above had noteworthy gains in strikeout-to-walk ratio, with Scott Linebrink and Yates more than doubling their projected number.

The Waiver Wire Special

Balsley hasn't had much of an impact on incoming free agents, at least in the aggregate. The group has only improved their ERA by 0.03 points once joining the Padres. The Balsley Effect is more notable with traded players; those guys have seen a 15-point ERA improvement with San Diego.

Waiver acquisitions have been Balsley's bread and butter, though. The group consists of only six pitchers in total — Hand, Yates, Linebrink, Clemens, Eric Stults and Mike Matthews — but five out of those six transformed as soon as they got to San Diego. Overall, these players were expected to put up a 4.50 ERA with the Padres, not surprising given their place on the waiver wire. With the Padres, they've notched a stingy 3.25 ERA in more than 1,000 innings under Balsley's watch, with Yates potentially adding to the ledger if he isn't traded this offseason.

Losing the Touch?

Breaking Balsley's tenure into four different four-year stretches does reveal some recent scuffles, at least compared to his past:

Period	PECOTA ERA	Actual ERA	Differential
2003-2006	4.18	3.95	-0.23
2007-2010	4.08	3.87	-0.21
2011-2014	3.89	3.58	-0.31
2015-2018	4.03	4.05	+0.02

Since 2015, new acquisitions have actually recorded higher ERAs than expected — by a measly 0.02 runs. The disappointments have been a mix of established veterans, journeymen and wild cards. Both James Shields and Craig Kimbrel were a part of the team's disappointing 2015 season and were underwhelming as Padres. Balsley's also swung and missed with lesser arms like Clayton Richard, Edwin Jackson and — thus far — Bryan Mitchell, proving that his touch isn't an elixir for everyone.

It's at least worth noting that Petco Park has changed in recent years. The fences in right field were moved in before the 2013 season and a gigantic video board was added in 2015, perhaps altering the ball's flight.

As a result, Petco has played more neutral in recent years, with a one-year park factor of 99 in both 2016 and 2018, according to Baseball Reference. While the change in the park's environment should be reflected in the projections and statistics used in this article, it's possible that Balsley and the Padres have found it harder to consistently make something out of nothing. While pitchers can still excel in Petco with under-the-hood improvements, it's tougher to succeed solely with smoke and mirrors.

On the plus side — and beyond considerations about the park — Balsley's whiffs have been offset by the surprising performances of the relievers mentioned earlier plus starters like Drew Pomeranz and Trevor Cahill. Given the strength of Balsley's body of work, this most recent stretch looks like a blip more than anything, but it's worth watching going forward.

When Darren Balsley was hired in 2003, both of this year's World Series managers, Alex Cora and Dave Roberts, had yet to win their titles as *players*. Padres manager Andy Green hadn't even debuted in the big leagues yet. José Castillo, the youngest pitcher to appear on the 2018 Padres, was just seven years old. It was a long time ago.

Balsley took over the gig in May of that year for the ousted Greg Booker, who himself had lasted for just a year and change on the job. Prior to Balsley, no Padres pitching coach had remained in the role for more than four consecutive seasons.

Despite the attempt here, it's impossible to entirely isolate the performance of the pitching coach. We still haven't figured out Balsley's effect on rookies or how to dole out credit between management and coaching. But we've hopefully gotten a little bit closer.

In the end, the numbers back up Balsley's never-ending run, showing that he's stuck around for more than just familiarity's sake. As the Padres search for a new hitting coach, bench coach and infield coach this offseason, Balsley's getting ready for his 17th year at the helm. Let's see what he has in store for 2019.

What we know about the Padres' offseason coaching moves so far

By Dennis Lin Oct 30, 2018

In a play for continuity amid turnover, the Padres are expected to dip into their minor-league system and preexisting major-league staff to fill all three of their coaching vacancies.

Triple-A El Paso manager Rod Barajas is the favorite to be named Andy Green's bench coach after the resignation of Mark McGwire, according to two sources. Meanwhile, assistant hitting coach Johnny Washington likely will receive a promotion to lead hitting instructor. San Diego does not intend to hire a secondary hitting coach, but Damion Easley, who has been the organization's rehab hitting coordinator, could assist in that area while ascending to the position of infield coach.

Washington would replace Matt Stairs, who was fired after the 2018 season as the ninth hitting coach in Petco Park history. Barajas and Easley would assume their first big-league coaching roles. Stairs and Josh Johnson, the Padres' 2018 infield coach, spent only one season with the club.

The Padres have yet to confirm the hires; teams are discouraged from making news during the World Series, which ended Sunday night. But officials had indicated San Diego would focus its coaching search on internal candidates. Formal announcements could come this week.

Barajas, 43, recently concluded his fifth season in the organization and third as El Paso's manager. During his time with the affiliate, the Chihuahuas appeared in back-to-back Pacific Coast League championship series and won three consecutive division titles. After El Paso's season ended, Barajas, who caught for 14 seasons in the major leagues, spent part of September with the Padres and served as a familiar voice. Austin Hedges, Manuel Margot, Hunter Renfroe, Luis Urías, Trey Wingenter and several of the team's other young talents played under Barajas. A number of prospects expected to debut in 2019 reached El Paso this year.

Barajas has been an obvious candidate to step in for McGwire, the bench coach in each of Green's three seasons managing the Padres. McGwire, who commuted to Petco Park from his Irvine home, had recently communicated a desire to spend more time with his family, especially with sons Max and Mason early in their high school baseball careers. It did not come as a surprise when McGwire informed the Padres of his decision earlier this month.

Washington, 34, is seemingly on the verge of becoming one of the youngest primary hitting coaches in the majors, though he already possesses significant knowledge of the roster. Washington spent 2016 as Double-A San Antonio's hitting coach, 2017 as the Padres' first base coach and 2018 working alongside Stairs, whom the Padres fired after finishing last in the majors in on-base percentage for the fifth consecutive season.

Stairs expressed surprise at his dismissal in a [recent podcast interview](#), citing his willingness to do what was asked of him and individual progress from some young players. He received a two-year contract last offseason, according to a source.

"You ask them where I messed up, and they said 'nowhere' and maybe if we had better players it'd be different circumstances," Stairs said. "It is what it is. You get hired to get fired. I wasn't mad. Just more confused."

Team officials, meanwhile, have suggested they came to believe a better long-term fit existed within the organization, and Washington apparently fits that description. The former minor-league infielder would be Green's third hitting coach in four seasons; the manager once voiced confidence in Stairs and, before him, Alan Zinter. Unlike those predecessors, however, Washington could bring internal experience to the job. He previously coached seven seasons in the Dodgers organization, receiving praise for his work with such players as Joc Pederson and Corey Seager.

"If you find the guys that worked with him in the Dodgers organization, they all rave about him. They rave about how he connects," Green said before the 2017 season. "He's a guy that taught himself Spanish, he's very intelligent, he's articulate, he speaks with conviction, he's not afraid to state his beliefs. ... I think he's got the potential to be a star as a coach."

Easley, 48, has been a coaching target for Green since the latter's arrival in San Diego. The duo played together for Arizona in 2006, as Easley was nearing the end of a 17-year career as an infielder. Easley's entrance into the organization predates Green's; he joined the Padres as a rookie-level hitting coach in 2012, and had since served as a hitting instructor and coordinator for players rehabbing in Peoria, Ariz. He recently spent time working with top prospect Fernando Tatis Jr., who underwent thumb surgery in July.

Easley's older son, Nate, is an outfielder in the Padres organization. His younger son, Jayce, was drafted by Texas in June.

The rest of Green's coaching staff is expected to remain intact: Darren Balsley as pitching coach, Doug Bochtler as bullpen coach, Glenn Hoffman as third base coach, Skip Schumaker as first base coach and Keith Werman as development coordinator (among other duties, Werman assists with infield instruction). The training staff, meanwhile, will receive an overhaul; the Padres did not retain longtime staff members Paul Navarro and Will Sinon, and head athletic trainer Mark Rogow, who was installed in 2016, is expected to bring in hires of his own.

Under A.J. Preller, Padres likely to remain active in hot-stove season

Jeff Sanders

Not so long ago, when their general manager presided over a payroll hamstrung by an owner's divorce and ultimately a change up top, the [Padres](#) largely, *routinely*, sat on the sidelines when the calendar flipped to winter.

[Seth Smith](#) was the missing piece.

[Josh Johnson](#) was due for a rebound.

When it came to free agency, the hot stove's flames in the East Village idled quietly as baseball's offseason bustled.

So it went in San Diego, year after year, until the Fowler/Seidler-led ownership group replaced Josh Byrnes with A.J. Preller, who seemingly looks to one-up himself each offseason.

The \$298 million committed to [James Shields](#) (\$75 million contract), [Wil Myers](#) (\$83 million extension) and [Eric Hosmer](#) (\$144 million contract) each of the last three winters equaled the five opening day payrolls assembled by Jed Hoyer (2010-2011) and Byrnes (2012-14), proof that the Padres have at least shed some of their identity as penny-pinchers.

That said, the latest dip into the coffers likely takes the Padres out of the running for the biggest names when free agency opens Saturday, although we've come to expect the unexpected under Preller's watch.

The fourth-year general manager, after all, cemented that reputation when he signed Shields and traded for [Craig Kimbrel](#) to close his first busy offseason. Like he was with Shields, Preller was lying in wait when Hosmer's market shrunk to only two serious suitors last year and the Padres will certainly discuss how this year's premier free agents — [Bryce Harper](#), Manny Machado and [Clayton Kershaw](#), should he opt out of his contract — might fit onto a roster if any fall into their cross-hairs.

All three, too, have presumably seen their values drop, at least a little.

Harper's .214 batting average before the all-star break and 11 homers after has raised eyebrows. Kershaw struggled in the [World Series](#) (7.36 ERA) after throwing fewer than 180 innings for the third straight year. Machado turned in a career year at the plate, but questions about his desire and hustle dominated story lines in L.A. as the Dodgers bowed quickly out of the Fall Classic.

Would you really pay \$300 plus million for any of them?

The Padres, in the midst of a rebuilding project that's collected top prospects all over the diamond — shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr., left-hander MacKenzie Gore, catcher Francisco Mejia and second baseman Luis Urias, to name four — most likely would not.

Instead, they'll monitor the market while exploring using their deep farm system to trade for an upgrade to a rotation that ranked last in the NL in 2018 (5.09 ERA).

Although Nathan Eovaldi's star turn in the World Series could line up a number of suitors for the sort of bidding wars that the Padres avoid in free agency, buy-low options — not unlike the additions of Jhoulys Chacin and [Trevor Cahill](#) in 2017 and [Tyson Ross](#) this year — include a number of intriguing options, from [Gio Gonzalez](#) and Lance Lynn to potential reunions with Cahill and Ross.

Because the Padres at least boast plenty of internal candidate to compete for rotation jobs (think Jacob Nix, Cal Quantrill, Logan Allen, Michel Baez), the more immediate need this winter is finding a stop-gap until Tatis is ready to take over at shortstop.

With [Freddy Galvis](#) set on exploring options for a long-term job, the free-agent field for up-the-middle options includes Machado, [Asdrubal Cabrera](#), [Marwin Gonzalez](#), [Jose Iglesias](#) and [Jordy Mercer](#).

All things being equal, the Padres might prefer Galvis — a known commodity, even if his on-base skills didn't come close to approaching contributions in the field — to return on a short-term deal as a player who transitions into a utility role as their top prospects come of age, a possibility that could linger into spring if the free-agent market mirrors last year's crawl.

Buckle up?

No, but keep your ears perked up this offseason. There will still be plenty to talk about.

Here's the complete list of SD retired numbers

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com [@AJCassavell](#)

8:03 AM PDT

SAN DIEGO -- Historically, the Padres are best known for a couple of their widely revered superstars.

Tony Gwynn ranks among the best pure hitters in baseball history. Trevor Hoffman is on the short list of the best closers of all-time.

Gwynn and Hoffman, of course, are among the Friars who have their number retired at Petco Park. Here's the full list of players to receive that honor in San Diego.

Steve Garvey, 1B: No. 6

Number retired: April 16, 1988

The most (and only) controversial inclusion on this list, Garvey is best known for his contributions with the Dodgers. He only spent five seasons with San Diego, from 1983-87, and he posted a .275/.309/.409 slash line with 61 homers -- solid, but certainly not franchise-altering. Then again, it was Garvey who authored the most dramatic moment in club history. With the Padres facing elimination in Game 4 of the '84 National League Championship Series, Garvey launched the franchise's only postseason walk-off homer. The Padres would beat the Cubs in five games, earning their first trip to the Fall Classic.

Tony Gwynn, OF: No. 19

Number retired: Sept. 4, 2004

There might not be a single player as beloved by a fan base as Gwynn is in San Diego. "Mr. Padre" spent 20 seasons with the club, racking up a .338 batting average and 3,141 hits. Put simply, he's one of the greatest hitters of all time, and his hardworking, humble demeanor resonated with the fans. Gwynn won eight batting titles, and he was a 15-time All-Star before his 2007 Hall of Fame induction. He made a point to remain with the Padres rather than test the free-agent waters, and he was rewarded with a thrilling trip to the World Series in 1998, where his Game 1 homer at Yankee Stadium stands as one of the lasting images in franchise history. Gwynn is more than a franchise icon -- he's a San Diego legend and one of the all-time great ambassadors for the sport of baseball.

Dave Winfield, OF: No. 31

Number retired: April 14, 2001

The first Padre inducted into the Hall of Fame, Winfield spent his first eight big league seasons with San Diego, where he launched 154 of his 465 career homers and batted .284/.357/.464. He led the team in home runs in each of his final five seasons with the Padres before joining the Yankees ahead of the 1981 season. Winfield was enshrined in Cooperstown in 2001, and he was honored with his number retirement ceremony in San Diego a few months prior.

Randy Jones, P: No. 35

Number retired: May 9, 1997

A truly legendary Padre, Jones became the first NL Cy Young Award winner in franchise history when he took home the 1976 honor. He pitched 25 complete games in '76 and recorded a 2.74

ERA. His '75 campaign might have been even better, when he won the NL ERA title with a 2.24 mark while amassing 18 complete games and six shutouts. Known for his quick pace and his sneaky sinker, Jones' outings became something of a local holiday. He remains a revered figure in San Diego.

Trevor Hoffman, P: No. 51

Number retired: Aug. 21, 2011

Hoffman arrived in San Diego in 1993 as a little-known reliever in the deal that sent Gary Sheffield to Florida. He developed into one of the greatest closers in the sport's history. Hoffman retired with a record 601 saves, and during his 16 seasons in San Diego he posted a 2.76 ERA while limiting opposing hitters to a .211 batting average. He entered home games to AC/DC's "Hells Bells," which regularly whipped home fans into a frenzy. Hoffman was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2018, and his plaque begins with the line, "Master of a mystifying changeup." Indeed, it ranks among the best changeups ever thrown.

Note: On April 15, 1997, the Padres joined every team in MLB in retiring No. 42 in honor of Jackie Robinson.

Allen belts pair of home runs in Fall League

MLB.com

Oct. 30th, 2018

Here's a team-by-team breakdown of how all 30 teams' prospects fared in Arizona Fall League action on Tuesday:

• **Gameday: Glendale 3, Scottsdale 0 | Peoria 12, Surprise 7 | Salt River 14, Mesa 4**

AL East

Blue Jays (Surprise)

No. 1 overall prospect Vladimir Guerrero Jr. went hitless in four at-bats, but he drew a walk and scored a run. Blue Jays **No. 9 prospect** Cavan Biggio entered as a pinch-runner and later doubled, while second baseman **Santiago Espinal** (No. 22) added a double and an RBI. Jackson McClelland gave up four runs in one inning of relief.

Orioles (Glendale)

Tanner Chleborad turned in his third straight scoreless outing with a 1-2-3 sixth inning, striking out one Scottsdale hitter.

Rays (Peoria)

Right-hander Miguel Sanchez was the first man out of the bullpen for Peoria. He gave up two unearned runs on one hit and one walk. Southpaw Dalton Moats hurled 1 1/3 perfect frames and struck out two batters.

Red Sox (Mesa)

Esteban Quiroz went 1-for-2 with a solo home run, his second homer of the Fall League campaign, as he went deep to the opposite field in the ninth.

Yankees (Glendale)

Shortstop **Thairo Estrada**, the Yankees' **No. 16 prospect**, stretched his hitting streak to seven games with a 2-for-5 afternoon, raising his AFL average to .269. Matt Wivinis threw a perfect seventh inning with a pair of strikeouts.

AL Central

Indians (Glendale)

Indians No. 6 prospect Yu Chang clubbed his second homer of the AFL season, an opposite-field, two-run shot that extended Glendale's lead to 3-0 in the third inning. He's hitting .364 after extending his hitting streak to nine games, with multiple hits in six of those contests. Starting pitcher Justin Garza was spectacular, allowing one hit and one walk in five scoreless innings while striking out five to earn his first win of the fall. Connor Marabell was 0-for-3 with a walk.

Royals (Surprise)

Catcher **Meibrys Viloria** drew three walks and scored two runs, and right fielder Nick Heath went 1-for-4 with a single and a run. Reliever Grant Gavin allowed one run on two hits and struck out a batter in a one-inning relief appearance.

Tigers (Mesa)

Daniel Woodrow went 1-for-4 with an RBI and a run scored, and he is now hitting .282 in the Fall League.

Twins (Salt River)

Twins **No. 18 prospect** Travis Blankenhorn broke out of his slump with a 3-for-4 day. The former third-round pick also collected four RBIs, which matched his season high from the Minor League season. [More »](#)

White Sox (Glendale)

White Sox **No. 4 prospect** Luis Robert continued his fall tear, hitting safely in his ninth straight game with a 2-for-3 performance, including a first-inning RBI single. Zach Thompson allowed a hit in the ninth, but he struck out the side to earn his second save of the fall. No. 9 prospect **Luis Alexander Basabe** walked but struck out four times.

AL West

A's (Mesa)

Luis Barrera went 2-for-4 with two RBIs, including a two-run opposite-field double. Eli White, the A's **No. 18 prospect**, picked up two hits, and Skye Bolt (No. 30) went 0-for-4. **Jake Bray** came on in relief and gave up one run on two hits in two innings.

Angels (Mesa)

Angels **No. 4 prospect** Jahmai Jones had a tough day as he went 0-for-5, but he is still hitting .327 in the AFL. David MacKinnon went 1-for-2 and walked twice. Roberto Baldoquin's rough AFL continued with an 0-for-4 performance. A trio of Angels pitching prospects took the mound, but none of them had much success as Daniel Procopio, Ryan Clark and Brett Hanewich combined to give up 10 runs on nine hits in four innings.

Astros (Scottsdale)

Trent Thornton, the Astros' **No. 24 prospect**, allowed a two-run homer in two innings of relief while striking out three. Center fielder Ronnie Dawson walked but struck out three times.

Mariners (Peoria)

Mariners **No. 2 prospect** Ian Miller had two hits, a run and a walk, but he was also caught stealing in the second inning. Second baseman Chris Mariscal had an RBI ground-rule double.

Rangers (Surprise)

Rangers **No. 2 prospect** Julio Pablo Martinez started in left field and went 1-for-3 with a strikeout. First baseman Charles Leblanc had two hits, including a triple, and two runs scored. Yanio Perez went 0-for-3 with a walk and an RBI groundout. Right-hander Tai Tiedemann started and pitched 3 2/3 innings, allowing one run on five hits and striking out five.

NL East

Braves (Peoria)

First baseman Braxton Davidson starred for Peoria with a multi-homer game. He drove in three runs and also added a double. Braves **No. 6 prospect** Cristian Pache went 2-for-5 with a run and an RBI, and shortstop Ray-Patrick Didder (2-for-5) scored three runs, drew a walk and stole

a base. Right-hander Matt Walker earned the win in relief, allowing one unearned run in 1 2/3 innings. Righty Jeremy Walker started and was tagged for four runs on five hits, including a home run, and three walks in four innings. [More »](#)

Marlins (Salt River)

Marlins No. 2 prospect **Monte Harrison** missed hitting a grand slam by only a few feet, but had a pretty big day regardless. Harrison went 2-for-3 with three RBIs, stole two bases and picked up an outfield assist. **Bryson Brigman** went 1-for-5 and scored a run.

Mets (Scottsdale)

The Mets' top two prospects were both in action, with **No. 1 prospect** Andres Jimenez going 1-for-4 with a strikeout and No. 2 Peter Alonso going 0-for-4 with three strikeouts. Joe Zanghi walked a batter in a scoreless sixth inning.

Nationals (Salt River)

Nationals **No. 7 prospect** Daniel Johnson and Tres Barrera (No. 15) each picked up a hit. Johnson went 1-for-5 with an RBI, while Barrera went 1-for-2 with a run scored. Jake Noll went 0-for-3 but collected a pair of RBIs. Three Nationals pitching prospects turned in strong performances on the mound as Jordan Mills, Taylor Guilbeau and Ben Braymer each put together a scoreless outing. The three combined to throw 3 1/3 innings, while striking out five and yielding only one hit.

Phillies (Scottsdale)

Third baseman Luke Williams was 1-for-4 with a triple, his first extra-base hit of the fall. The other three Phillies prospects in the lineup -- Austin Listi, Darick Hall and **No. 11 prospect** Arquimedes Gamboa -- were all hitless. **Seth McGarry** started for Scottsdale and allowed one run in two innings, despite running into jams in both of the frames.

NL Central

Brewers (Peoria)

Brewers **No. 19 prospect** Trent Grisham had a single and a walk in five plate appearances. **Aaron Wilkerson** threw a perfect inning of relief. Designated hitter Keston Hiura (No. 1) stuffed the box score, going 2-for-5 with two runs scored, two RBIs, a double and a stolen base.

Cardinals (Surprise)

Lane Thomas clubbed his first home run of the fall with a three-run blast in the second inning, and he also plated a run on a sacrifice fly. Connor Jones allowed two runs in 1 1/3 innings on a hit and two walks.

Cubs (Mesa)

Justin Steele, the Cubs' **No. 8 prospect**, got the start for the Solar Sox, but he struggled and pitched only two innings. He gave up three runs on four hits, while walking two and striking out two. Jhonny Pereda singled and went 1-for-3.

Pirates (Surprise)

Pirates **No. 5 prospect** Cole Tucker had a forgettable day at the plate, going hitless in five at-bats with two strikeouts. Matt Eckelman took the loss for Surprise after allowing four runs in one

inning of relief. Geoff Hartlieb allowed a hit and a walk and struck out one batter in a scoreless frame.

Reds (Scottsdale)

Catcher Mark Kolozsvary was 1-for-3 in his second straight game with a hit, while shortstop Alfredo Rodriguez, the Reds' **No. 23 prospect**, was hitless in three at-bats with a strikeout.

NL West

D-backs (Salt River)

D-backs **No. 1 prospect** Jon Duplantier was up-and-down in his start for the Rafter. The right-hander struggled with consistency as he gave up three runs on six hits over 4 2/3 innings. Duplantier recorded five strikeouts, but he also issued four walks. Daulton Varsho (No. 5) is hitting .389 after his 2-for-4 day at the plate.

Dodgers (Glendale)

The Dodgers had a number of prospects in action. **No. 2 prospect** Keibert Ruiz draw a walk, but he went 0-for-3 with a strikeout. First baseman Jared Walker added a single and a walk. Second baseman Errol Robinson (No. 20) went 0-for-3 with a walk and two strikeouts, and left fielder Cody Thomas was 0-for-4. Right-hander Jordan Sheffield (No. 26) pitched a scoreless inning.

Giants (Scottsdale)

Three Giants prospects pitched in relief for Scottsdale, with **Chase Johnson, No. 19 prospect** Melvin Adon and Sam Wolff combining for four scoreless frames. Johnson was shaky but survived a bases-loaded jam, while Adon and Wolff combined for six strikeouts in three innings.

Padres (Peoria)

Padres **No. 25 prospect** Austin Allen helped fuel Peoria's 12-run outburst with two home runs and five RBIs. Third baseman Hudson Potts (No. 23) went 1-for-4 with a run scored and a walk, and Dauris Valdez struck out two in a perfect ninth.

Rockies (Salt River)

Justin Lawrence, the Rockies' **No. 17 prospect**, gave up a solo homer, but he struck out the side in his one inning on the mound. Tyler Nevin (No. 11) continued his torrid AFL campaign with a 1-for-2, two-RBI performance. Nevin, who was named the **Player of the Week** earlier in the day, is hitting .469. Sam Hilliard (No. 9) and Josh Fuentes each picked up two hits and scored three runs. Fuentes also hit his second homer of the AFL season in the fifth inning.

This is each club's biggest offseason need

By Mark Feinsand MLB.com [@feinsand](#)

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Now that the World Series has concluded, the Hot Stove will be ignited when more than 100 players hit the free-agent market. The biggest headlines will center around **Manny Machado** and **Bryce Harper**, but only two teams (or maybe one if all this "The Phillies can actually get both of them!" talk is for real) will be fitting those superstars for uniforms.

But the coming weeks and months will be an opportunity for all 30 teams to make themselves better for the 2019 season, whether they're swimming in the deep end of the free-agent pool or wading in the shallow end. The beauty of free agency is that there are all types of players available depending on what a team's needs are.

With that in mind, here's a look at each team's biggest need as they embark on another interesting offseason.

American League East

Blue Jays: Starting pitching

Toronto starters ranked 28th in the Majors with a 5.14 ERA, and although prospects **Thomas Pannone** and **Sean Reid-Foley** could get a look in the No. 5 spot, the Blue Jays figure to add at least one starter from outside the organization this offseason.

Potential FA targets: Wade Miley, Derek Holland, Jeremy Hellickson

Orioles: Starting pitching

Baltimore starters posted a 5.48 ERA last season, the worst in MLB. Although the Orioles figure to be in the beginning stages of a rebuilding process, they will still need to send a starter to the mound every five days. **Dylan Bundy**, **Alex Cobb** and **Andrew Cashner** will occupy the first three spots, leaving two holes in the rotation. And that's assuming none of them are traded, which is a bold assumption.

Potential FA targets: Hellickson, Holland, Jaime Garcia

Rays: Versatile arms

Given Tampa Bay's frequent use of an "opener" rather than a traditional starter, what would be surprising this offseason would be for the Rays to go out and spend money on traditional starters, especially with prospects **Brent Honeywell**, **Jose De Leon** and **Anthony Banda** all slated to return from elbow surgery by the second half of the 2019 season.

Potential FA targets: Bud Norris, David Phelps, Adam Warren

Red Sox: Closer

Craig Kimbrel is a free agent, though his asking price might be higher than president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski is willing to pay given the arbitration raises due to **Mookie Betts**, **Xander Bogaerts** and **Jackie Bradley Jr.**, among others.

Potential FA targets: Kimbrel, Zach Britton, David Robertson

Yankees: Starting pitching

New York is believed to be enamored with **Patrick Corbin**, who ranks as the No. 1 free-agent starter on the market (unless **Clayton Kershaw** opts out, of course). The Yankees could bring back free agents **J.A. Happ** and/or **CC Sabathia**. A trade for a controllable starter also remains in play.

Potential FA targets: Corbin, Happ, **Dallas Keuchel**

AL Central

Indians: Outfield

The bullpen could be a priority given the free-agent status of both **Andrew Miller** and **Cody Allen**, but with **Michael Brantley** also headed for the open market, Cleveland will be on the lookout for his potential replacement.

Potential FA targets: **Andrew McCutchen**, **Adam Jones**, **Brett Gardner**

Royals: Relief pitching

Kansas City's 5.04 bullpen ERA ranked 29th in MLB, ahead of only the Marlins. Considering that the Royals' 2014-15 World Series teams were built largely on the strength of strong bullpens, it would make sense for general manager Dayton Moore to bolster his relief corps, rather than spending on starters.

Potential FA targets: **Cody Allen**, **Joe Kelly**, **Justin Wilson**

Tigers: Starting pitching

Detroit needs a new shortstop and possibly another outfielder, but adding a starting pitcher or two would appear to be its most glaring need. Just as they did last offseason with **Mike Fiers** and **Francisco Liriano**, the Tigers could target rebound candidates.

Potential FA targets: **Clay Buchholz**, **Lance Lynn**, **Marco Estrada**

Twins: Relief pitching

Say this much for the Twins: Their pitching staff was consistent in 2018. Minnesota's rotation ranked 22nd in the Majors with a 4.54 ERA, while its bullpen ranked 22nd with a 4.45 ERA. After trading **Ryan Pressly** and **Fernando Rodney**, the bullpen needs a makeover, so expect the Twins to be active on that front.

Potential FA targets: Allen, **Jeurys Familia**, **Kelvin Herrera**

White Sox: Pitching

Chicago could be a year away from really making a splash on the free-agent market, though it's possible GM Rick Hahn takes a run at a big-ticket item such as Machado. Still, adding one or two starters, one or two relievers -- or all of the above -- are believed to be the priority.

Potential FA targets: Keuchel, **Anibal Sanchez**, **Gio Gonzalez**

AL West

Angels: Pitching

Although the Halos will be in the market for both a first baseman and a catcher, the most pressing need is clearly pitching. With no true No. 1 starter as **Shohei Ohtani** recovers from Tommy John surgery, the Angels could take a run at either Corbin or Keuchel. Corbin was drafted by the Halos in the second round in 2009 before being traded the following year in a

deal for Dan Haren.

Potential FA targets: Corbin, Keuchel, Happ

Astros: Catcher

The Astros are one of the few teams that won't be desperately looking to add pitching. Who will be behind the plate to catch those pitchers, on the other hand, is an unanswered question. **Martin Maldonado** is a free agent, while **Brian McCann's** \$15 million option figures to be declined by Houston. The Astros could try to pry **J.T. Realmuto** away from the Marlins in a trade, or pursue one of the available free agents.

Potential FA targets: **Yasmani Grandal, Wilson Ramos, Kurt Suzuki**

Athletics: Starting pitching

Oakland boasted the third-best bullpen ERA in the game last season at 3.37, though midseason acquisitions Rodney, Familia and **Shawn Kelley** may all leave via free agency. The A's rotation will be without ace **Sean Manaea** following Tommy John surgery, while **Trevor Cahill, Edwin Jackson** and **Brett Anderson** are all free agents.

Potential FA targets: Sabathia, Gonzalez, Holland

Mariners: Center fielder

Wait, didn't the Mariners acquire **Dee Gordon** last offseason to play center field? Yes, though things changed when **Robinson Cano** was suspended last season, prompting the club to move Gordon to second base, where he looked far more comfortable. Cano is back, but Seattle could move him to first base or DH, depending on whether **Nelson Cruz** returns with a new contract. The Mariners liked what they saw from **Denard Span** during his 94 games with the team in 2018, making him a possibility to return.

Potential FA targets: Span, Gardner, Jones

Rangers: Starting pitching

The rotation is the top priority for Texas, which has **Mike Minor** slotted into one spot and questions concerning the other four. GM Jon Daniels could look to both the trade and free-agent market to fill those holes, though the Rangers seem unlikely to spend big money for another year, as their new ballpark is slated to open for the 2020 season.

Potential FA targets: **Nathan Eovaldi, Gonzalez, Hyun-Jin Ryu**

National League East

Braves: Catcher

Atlanta has made no secret of its desire to add a starting catcher, namely Realmuto, whom it tried to acquire both last offseason and again in July. The Braves have money to spend, with both Harper and Kimbrel lining up as potential targets. But Realmuto remains the apple of Atlanta's eye, while other free-agent catchers could serve as consolation prizes.

Potential FA targets: Ramos, Grandal, McCann

Marlins: First baseman

Last summer's trade of **Justin Bour** left Miami with no firm plan at first base for the short- or long-term, with **Peter O'Brien** and **Garrett Cooper** representing the current options. None of MLB Pipeline's **Top 30 Marlins prospects** are first basemen, so Miami figures to target a

stopgap at the position until it can either develop one or find one in a trade.

Potential FA targets: [Lucas Duda](#), [Logan Morrison](#), [Mark Reynolds](#)

Mets: Relief pitching

When the Mets dealt Familia to the A's last summer, it left a big hole at the back end of the bullpen. With several top-tier relievers available on the free-agent market, New York could make a splash with a new ninth-inning specialist. [Seth Lugo](#), [Robert Gsellman](#) and [Anthony Swarzak](#) represent for the only certainties in the bullpen, so it's likely the Mets will target more than one established relief arm this offseason.

Potential FA targets: Kimbrel, Britton, Miller, Familia

Nationals: Starting pitching

The Nationals' entire offseason plan likely hinges on what happens with Harper. If Washington signs him, it may be tough to spend a lot elsewhere. If Harper leaves town, the Nats should be able to pursue one or two other free agents, namely starting pitchers to insert behind [Max Scherzer](#), [Stephen Strasburg](#) and [Tanner Roark](#).

Potential FA targets: Corbin, Happ, Keuchel

Phillies: Impact bat

Philadelphia is expected to be one of the most active teams in this offseason's free-agent market as it looks to upgrade both its lineup and defense. The Phillies will be swimming in the deep end of the free-agent pool, so expect to hear plenty of talk about the two biggest names out there: Machado and Harper.

Potential FA targets: Harper, Machado, [A.J. Pollock](#)

NL Central

Brewers: Relief pitching

Milwaukee's bullpen was certainly a strength despite falling short of the World Series, and while it might make more sense to pursue a top-notch starter such as Corbin, the Brewers might be better served by adding another relief arm or two to the relatively low-cost trio of [Josh Hader](#), [Corey Knebel](#) and [Jeremy Jeffress](#).

Potential FA targets: Kimbrel, Familia, [Joakim Soria](#)

Cardinals: Impact bat

St. Louis needs a big bat in the middle of the lineup, ideally at third base or in right field. Of course, the two most prolific players on the market are Machado (a shortstop who has played most of his career at third base) and Harper, a right fielder. Harper is a better fit given his left-handed bat, though it remains to be seen whether the Cardinals will be willing to shell out the kind of money it will take to land either superstar. Then again, the Cards were willing to take on [Giancarlo Stanton](#)'s contract a year ago via trade, so anything is possible.

Potential FA targets: Harper, Machado, [Josh Donaldson](#)

Cubs: Starting pitching

This might seem strange after the Cubs spent \$164 million on [Yu Darvish](#) and [Tyler Chatwood](#) last offseason, but Chicago was forced to make a midseason trade for [Cole](#)

Hamels to bolster their rotation for the second half of the season. Hamels has a \$20 million option, which would lock him up for one year, but one way or another, the Cubs will target a starter.

Potential FA targets: Hamels, Eovaldi, Miley

Pirates: Shortstop

Infield prospect **Kevin Newman** didn't appear ready for primetime during his six-week stint in the Majors (.478 OPS), so Pittsburgh will surely look for a veteran stopgap to help ease the transition for the 25-year-old. Longtime shortstop **Jordy Mercer** is a free agent, but he could be re-signed to fill that role.

Potential FA targets: Mercer, **Adeiny Hechavarria**, **Jose Iglesias**

Reds: Starting pitching

Cincinnati appears primed to spend some money on the rotation this offseason as it seeks the club's first winning season since 2013. With a number of mid-rotation options available in free agency, the Reds should be able to upgrade without breaking the bank.

Potential FA targets: **Matt Harvey**, Sanchez, Lynn

NL West

D-backs: Starting pitching

Most expect Corbin to move on from Arizona, leaving a huge void atop the D-backs' rotation. Unless they can somehow move a huge portion of **Zack Greinke's** contract -- he's still owed \$104.5 million -- it seems far-fetched that Arizona would shell out big bucks for a pitcher, especially if it opts to let Corbin walk.

Potential FA targets: Happ, Miley, **James Shields**

Dodgers: Relief pitching

The Dodgers didn't do much to replace **Brandon Morrow** and **Tony Watson** after they left last season via free agency, but Los Angeles is likely to address its bullpen this offseason. Having reset their luxury tax by keeping the payroll beneath the **Competitive Balance Tax threshold**, the Dodgers will have plenty of money to spend if they so choose. Note: Should Kershaw exercise his opt-out clause, he'll immediately become the team's top priority.

Potential FA targets: Miller, **Adam Ottavino**, Britton

Giants: Impact bat

The Giants have been mentioned as often as any team this side of D.C. any time Harper's name has come up, making San Francisco a popular pick for the former NL MVP Award winner's eventual landing spot. The Giants need to add an impact bat, and few are as impactful as Harper. The one snag? They have more than \$150 million committed to nine players.

Potential FA targets: Harper, Pollock, Donaldson

Padres: Starting pitching

All five spots in the rotation are pretty much up for grabs, so Padres GM A.J. Preller has his work cut out for him this offseason. With 10 players on **MLB Pipeline's Top 100 Prospects list**, San Diego could try to make a big splash on the trade market -- **Noah Syndergaard**, perhaps? - - though the Padres figure to look for a mid-level free-agent arm or two, as well.

Potential FA targets: Hellickson, Holland, Gonzalez

Rockies: Impact bat

Ian Desmond's versatility means Colorado can look for a bat in the outfield or at first base, though **Ryan McMahon** is hoping to get his shot at the latter. **DJ LeMahieu** is also a free agent, meaning second base could be in play, as well.

Potential FA targets: Brantley, **Marwin Gonzalez**, **Daniel Murphy**

#PadresOnDeck: Reed, Diaz Head to AFL Fall Stars Game; Others just Starring

By Bill Center

Outfielder **Buddy Reed** and right-handed pitcher **Miguel Diaz** will play on the West team Saturday in the [Arizona Fall League Fall Stars Game](#).

But Reed and Diaz are but two of the of the Padres prospects performing well in off-season leagues.

Take for example right-handed pitcher **Pedro Avila**, the [Padres' No29 prospect](#). The 21-year-old is unscored upon over 10 innings in two starts for Margarita in his native Venezuela. He has allowed five hits and a walk with 10 strikeouts for a 0.00 earned run average and a 0.60 WHIP.

Avila is one of three Padres prospects playing regularly in Venezuela.

Shortstop **Gabriel Arias**, 18, the [Padres' No20 prospect](#), is hitting .273 (9-for-33) with a .333 on-base percentage in 10 starts for La Guaira. And outfielder **Edward Olivares**, 22, the [Padres' No28 prospect](#), is hitting .263 (10-for-38) with a .349 on-base percentage and a .421 slugging percentage for a .770 OPS for Aragua. Olivares has two home runs, seven runs scored, seven RBIs, four walks and three stolen bases. Infielder **Reinaldo Ibarra** is 4-for-10 in part-time duty for Aragua.

Right-handed relief pitchers **Gerardo Reyes** and **Eric Yardley** are off to strong starts in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, respectively.

Reyes, 25, has a 0.00 ERA and 0.53 WHIP in six outings for Obregon, allowing two hits and a walk with six strikeouts over 5 2/3 innings.

Also in Mexico, right-hander **Chris Huffman** is 0-2 with a 4.32 ERA and a 1.26WHIP in three starts for Mochis. He has allowed eight runs on 14 hits and seven walks with eight strikeouts in 16 and 2/3 innings. And right-hander **Adrian Martinez**, 21, is 0-1 with a 5.40 ERA and a 1.65 WHIP in three relief appearances for his native Mexicali. He has given up four runs on nine hits and two walks with five strikeouts in 6 2/3 innings.

Yardley, 28, has allowed one run on seven hits and three walks with four strikeouts in 5 2/3 innings for Cibao. He has a 1.59 ERA and a 1.76 WHIP. Infielder **Esteury Ruiz**, 19, the Padres' [No. 17 prospect](#), is 3-for-7 with two stolen bases in his first week with Este in the Dominican Republic.

Returning to the Arizona Fall League, Reed, 22, ranks eighth in the league with a .366 batting average. He is 15-for-41 with a .409 on-base percentage and a .488 slugging percentage for a .897 OPS. He has four steals, nine runs scored and three RBIs.

Catcher **Austin Allen** is hitting .258 (8-for-31) with three doubles, five runs scored and four RBIs. He has a .333 on-base percentage and a .355 slugging percentage for a .688 OPS. Third baseman **Hudson Potts** is hitting .229 with three doubles, two homers, eight runs scored and 10 RBIs. He has a .327 on-base percentage and a .417 slugging percentage for a .744 OPS.

Diaz, 23, is 2–0 with a 3.86 ERA in four starts with a 1.29 WHIP. He has allowed six runs on 13 hits and five walks with 11 strikeouts in 14 innings.

Right-handed reliever **Travis Radke** has a 3.00 ERA and a 1.78 WHIP in four appearances with the division-leading Peoria Javelinas. He has allowed four runs (three earned) on 10 hits and six walks with 12 strikeouts in nine innings. **Dauris Valdez** has a 3.00 ERA and 1.50 WHIP in six innings over six appearances. He has allowed two runs on five hits and four walks with seven strikeouts in six innings.