



# Padres Press Clips

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# Barajas among additions to Padres coaches

Washington promoted to hitting coach; Easley to guide Major League infielders

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

SAN DIEGO -- The Padres didn't need to look very far to fill the three vacancies on their 2019 coaching staff.

All three spots went to internal candidates, as the club announced its full coaching staff Wednesday. Rod Barajas, who spent the past three seasons as manager for Triple-A El Paso, is set to take over for Mark McGwire as bench coach. Assistant hitting coach Johnny Washington will move into the main hitting coach role in place of Matt Stairs. Former big league second baseman Damion Easley replaces Josh Johnson as the team's infielders coach.

None of the three hires qualifies as a surprise. Barajas was widely expected to take over as bench coach when [McGwire stepped down](#) earlier this month to spend more time with his family.

Barajas has spent five years in the organization, including the last three with El Paso. He led the Chihuahuas to three straight division titles and the 2016 Pacific Coast League championship. It's unclear who will fill that vacancy.

On a young -- and mostly homegrown -- Padres team, the club believes Barajas will fit right in, having already worked with many of the key contributors. Perhaps most importantly, Barajas -- a catcher for 14 years in the big leagues -- is expected to work closely with two young backstops in [Austin Hedges](#) and [Francisco Mejia](#).

As for Washington, he served under Stairs last season, after spending the 2017 campaign as first-base coach. He's a respected presence in the clubhouse, but the transition might not be so simple. A formidable challenge awaits. There are few jobs in baseball with a higher turnover rate than hitting coach in San Diego.

The Padres have cycled through nine in their 15 seasons at Petco Park, and Washington will be the sixth in the past seven years. [His first task](#) is turning around an offense that has finished last in the Majors in on-base percentage in each of the last five seasons.

Unlike McGwire, who left of his own volition, Stairs and Johnson [were let go by the Padres](#) after the season.

Easley steps into Johnson's role having spent the past seven seasons as an instructor at the team's complex in Peoria, Ariz. The Padres had been hopeful to land Easley on their big league staff in the past, but the Arizona resident hadn't been willing to leave home until now.

Easley played 17 seasons in the big leagues with six teams -- including the 2006 D-backs, where he shared an infield with manager Andy Green. In addition to his role as infielders coach, Easley will work with Padres hitters alongside Washington.

The remainder of the coaching staff remains intact. Darren Balsley and Glenn Hoffman return as the two longest-tenured coaches on staff, with Balsley entering his 17th year as pitching coach and Hoffman entering his 14th year as the third-base coach. Bullpen coach Doug Bochtler (fourth year) and first-base coach Skip Schumaker (second year) are set to return to Green's staff as well.

## Braves acquire veteran catcher Raffy Lopez from Padres

ATLANTA (AP) — The [Atlanta Braves](#) have acquired catcher [Raffy Lopez](#) from the [San Diego Padres](#) in exchange for cash considerations.

The 31-year-old Lopez hit .176 and hit three home runs in 37 games with the Padres in 2018. He also spent time with Triple-A El Paso.

Lopez provides depth at catcher with [Kurt Suzuki](#), who has split time with [Tyler Flowers](#) the past two seasons, headed toward free agency. Flowers signed a contract extension in August.

Lopez has hit .184 over parts of four seasons with the Cubs, Cincinnati, Toronto and San Diego.

The move made Wednesday night and announced by the Braves on Thursday, leaves 36 players on Atlanta's 40-man roster.

# Willie McCovey, Giants Hall of Famer, dies; added early star power to Padres

[Jay Posner](#)

Willie McCovey, the Hall of Famer who died Wednesday at age 80, will always be remembered first as a San Francisco Giant. They even named a body of water outside their ballpark after him.

But his legacy extended some 450 miles down the coast to San Diego.

The [Padres](#) had played five seasons when McCovey arrived in San Diego in 1974. They had some good players in those seasons, including Nate Colbert and a rookie named Dave Winfield.

But they had never had a superstar until “Stretch.”

McCovey had been the [National League’s Rookie of the Year](#) in 1959. He had been MVP in 1969. He had led the league in home runs three times while totaling more than 400 homers in 15 seasons in San Francisco.

“He came to San Diego and there was a lot of excitement,” recalled Bob Chandler, a Padres broadcaster then. “That was Ray Kroc’s first year as owner and it was a bad team. I mean, a bad team. They won 60 games and lost 102. But for the first time the team drew over 1 million fans, and there were two reasons for that: Ray Kroc — the fans really related to him — and Willie McCovey.

“I think people came out to see Willie McCovey hit home runs. ... And he had a pretty decent year here.”

The Padres hit just 99 home runs that season, and McCovey hit 22, including 10 at their massive Mission Valley park. He wound up hitting 52 in 2 1/2 seasons as a Padre

— 10 percent of his career total of 521, which ranked in the all-time top 10 when he retired in 1980 and is still tied for 20th.

McCovey was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility in 1986.

The [Giants](#) announced McCovey's death, saying the fearsome hitter passed "peacefully" in the afternoon "after losing his battle with ongoing health issues."

A first baseman who also played some left field, McCovey was a career .270 hitter with 1,555 RBIs in 22 major league seasons, 19 of them with the Giants. He also played briefly for the Athletics.

McCovey made his major league debut at age 21 on July 30, 1959, after dominating the Pacific Coast League that year. He played alongside the other Willie — Hall of Famer Willie Mays — into the 1972 season before Mays was traded to the New York Mets that May.

In his debut, McCovey went 4-for-4 with two triples, two RBIs and three runs scored in a 7-2 win against Philadelphia — and that began a stretch of the Giants winning 10 out of 12 games.

McCovey batted .354 with 13 homers, 38 RBIs, five triples and nine doubles on the way to winning NL Rookie of the Year.

"You knew right away he wasn't an ordinary ballplayer," Hall of Famer Hank Aaron said, courtesy of the Hall of Fame. "He was so strong, and he had the gift of knowing the strike zone. There's no telling how many home runs he would have hit if those knees weren't bothering him all the time and if he played in a park other than Candlestick."

McCovey had been getting around in a wheelchair in recent years because he could no longer rely on his once-dependable legs, yet was still regularly seen at the ballpark in his private suite. He was seen at AT&T Park as recently as the final game of this past season.

“For more than six decades, he gave his heart and soul to the Giants,” Giants President and CEO Larry Baer said. “As one of the greatest players of all time, as a quiet leader in the clubhouse, as a mentor to the Giants who followed in his footsteps, as an inspiration to our Junior Giants, and as a fan cheering on the team from his booth.”

While the Giants captured their third [World Series](#) of the decade in 2014, McCovey returned to watch them play while still recovering from an infection that hospitalized him in September of that year for about a month.

“It was touch and go for a while,” McCovey said at the time. “They pulled me through, and I’ve come a long way.”

Even four-plus decades later, it still stung for the left-handed slugging McCovey that he never won a World Series after coming so close. He lined out to end the Giants’ 1962 World Series loss to the [Yankees](#).

““The Giants had two on and Orlando Cepeda on deck and the Yankees pitched to McCovey with first base open,” Chandler said. “McCovey hit a sizzling liner and he used to tell me he knew it was a base hit to drive in two to win the game and the World Series for the Giants. But the Yankees had Bobby Richardson playing in the perfect spot and he caught the ball.

“Willie always told me ‘that damn Richardson was out of position!’”

McCovey was born Jan. 10, 1938, in Mobile, Ala. He had spent the last 18 years in a senior advisory role for the Giants.

“Every moment he will be terribly missed,” said McCovey’s wife, Estella. “He was my best friend and husband. Living life without him will never be the same.”

McCovey had a daughter, Allison, and three grandchildren, Raven, Philip and Marissa. McCovey also is survived by sister Frances and brothers Clauzell and Cleon.

McCovey presented the “Willie Mac Award” each season — except in 2014 while dealing with complications from the infection — an honor voted on by the players,

coaches and training staff to recognize the team's player most exhibiting McCovey's inspirational example both on the field and in the clubhouse. He was there this year as reliever [Will Smith](#) was honored.

"Something I will cherish forever," Smith wrote on Twitter on Wednesday. "May he Rest In Peace."

When San Francisco opened its new waterfront ballpark in 2000, the cove beyond the right-field fence was named "McCovey Cove" in appreciation of all he did for the organization.

The Giants said a public celebration of McCovey's life would be held at a later date.



# Bench Mob, Padres Fill 2019 Coaching Staff

By [Todd Strain](#)

With the recent departure of San Diego Padres bench coach Mark McGwire and hitting coach Matt Stairs, there's been lots of speculation about which coaches will fill those rolls on Manager Andy Green's staff.

Today, the Padres ended the speculation by announcing the members of **Green's** coaching staff for the 2019 campaign.

As expected the Padres are promoting from within to fill most of their coaching spots.

Johnny Washington, the Padres assistant hitting coach last season, will serve as the hitting coach in 2019.

Rod Barajas will be the bench coach, replacing McGwire. Obviously, taking over for the legendary slugger will be a challenge, but Barajas is uniquely suited to meet that challenge. Barajas has spent the last 5 seasons in the Padres minor leagues, the last 3 as manager for the Triple-A El Paso Chihuahuas. There Barajas led the Chihuahuas to three straight Pacific Coast League division titles, before that he spent time in Single -A Lake Elsinore and Double-A San Antonio. All that time in the minors, allowed Barajas to establish relationships and become very familiar with many of the Padres prospects who are working their way to the big leagues or are already there.

Also, joining the Padres staff will be **Damion Easley**, who will primarily work with infielders and serve as assistant hitting coach. Easley enters his eighth season with the Padres organization and his first at the major league level. As a player, Easley made an All-Star team and played 17 MLB seasons.

Returning to the staff will be pitching coach **Darren Balsley**, bullpen coach **Doug Bochtler**, third base coach **Glenn Hoffman** and first base coach **Skip Schumaker**.

## Padres announce 2019 MLB coaching staff

### FSSD

SAN DIEGO – The [San Diego Padres](#) today announced the members of Manager Andy Green’s coaching staff for the 2019 campaign. Joining the Major League club will be Rod Barajas as bench coach and Damion Easley, who will primarily work with infielders and serve as assistant hitting coach. Johnny Washington, the Padres’ assistant hitting coach last season, will serve as hitting coach in 2019. Returning to the staff will be pitching coach Darren Balsley, bullpen coach Doug Bochtler, third base coach Glenn Hoffman and first base coach Skip Schumaker.

Barajas, 43, enters his sixth season in the Padres organization and his first as bench coach for the Major League club. The 2018 season marked his third as manager of Triple-A El Paso, and he led the Chihuahuas to their third consecutive Pacific Coast League division title (fourth straight overall) and a franchise-best 82-57 record. Prior to taking the helm of El Paso, Barajas spent the 2015 season as hitting coach for Single-A Lake Elsinore before taking over as manager of Double-A San Antonio that June. He began the 2014 campaign as manager of the organization’s Rookie-Level affiliate in Peoria, Ariz. and finished the season with Lake Elsinore as hitting coach. Barajas joined the Padres organization after a 17-year playing career, including parts of 14 Major League seasons with the [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) (1999-2003), [Texas Rangers](#) (2004-06), [Philadelphia Phillies](#) (2007), [Toronto Blue Jays](#) (2008-09), [New York Mets](#) (2010), [Los Angeles Dodgers](#) (2010-11) and [Pittsburgh Pirates](#) (2012). The former catcher hit .235 (812-for-3460) with 187 doubles, one triple, 136 HR, 480 RBI and 396 runs scored in 1,114 career games. Originally signed by Arizona as a minor league free agent in 1996, he made his big league debut for the Diamondbacks in 1999 and was a member of the 2001 World Series Championship team. A native of Ontario, Calif., Barajas played for Team Mexico in the 2009 World Baseball Classic, and while with Toronto, was honored as the Blue Jays’ nominee for the 2009 Heart and Hustle Award.

Easley, 48, enters his eighth season with the Padres organization and his first as a coach at the Major League level. He spent his previous seven seasons with the Padres in Peoria, Ariz., holding the title of rehab hitting coach since 2015. The former All-Star infielder hit .253 (1386-for-5484) over parts of 17 Major League seasons, compiling 287 doubles, 27 triples, 163 home runs, 684 RBI, 735 runs scored and 88 stolen bases in 402 career games between the California [Angels](#) (1992-96), [Detroit Tigers](#) (1996-2002), [Tampa Bay Devil Rays](#) (2003), Florida [Marlins](#) (2004-05), Arizona Diamondbacks (2006) and New York Mets (2007-08). Easley was originally selected in the 30th round by the Angels in the 1988 First-Year Player Draft. Born in New York, NY, he graduated from Lakewood (CA) High School in 1987 and played

baseball at Long Beach (CA) City College from 1987-88. Easley was named to the All-South Coast Community College Conference and All-Southern California first teams, and he was also his club's Most Valuable Player and a second-team All-State selection.

Washington, 34, enters his fourth season with the Padres organization, third on the Major League coaching staff and first as hitting coach, serving as first base coach in 2017 and assistant hitting coach in 2018. He originally joined the organization in 2016 as hitting coach for Double-A San Antonio. Prior to his time in San Diego, Washington spent the previous eight seasons in the Los Angeles Dodgers organization, the last seven in a coaching capacity. Originally selected by the Texas Rangers in the 27th round of the 2003 First-Year Player Draft out of Mount San Jacinto (CA) Junior College, Washington enjoyed a seven-year professional career as an infielder in the Texas Rangers (2003-06) and Dodgers (2008-09) organizations, in addition to three seasons of independent league baseball. He retired as a player during the 2009 season and immediately joined the coaching ranks as hitting coach for Rookie-Level Ogden. After serving three seasons (2009-11) as hitting coach with Ogden, Washington went on to coach at Camelback Ranch in 2012 and was hitting coach for Single-A Rancho Cucamonga in 2013. In 2014, he served as hitting coach for Single-A Great Lakes and held the same position in 2015 for Triple-A Oklahoma City.

Balsley, 54, returns for his 17th season as the Padres pitching coach. Balsley is the longest tenured pitching coach in the National League and is tied with Don Cooper of the [Chicago White Sox](#) among all MLB pitching coaches. A native of Newport Beach, Calif., Balsley graduated from Mt. Carmel High School in San Diego and attended Palomar College.

Bochtler, 48, returns for his fourth season as bullpen coach after rejoining the Padres organization in 2016. He spent the previous five seasons coaching in the Arizona Diamondbacks organization, serving as the pitching coach for the Single-A Kane County Cougars in 2015 after serving in the same capacity for South Bend (2014), Missoula (2013) and Yakima (2011-12). Originally selected by the Montreal Expos in the ninth round of the 1989 First-Year Player Draft, Bochtler made his Major League debut for the Padres in 1995 and pitched parts of three seasons (1995-97) for San Diego.

Hoffman, 60, returns for his 14th season as the Padres third base coach and his 21st as a coach at the Major League level. The 2019 season will be his 44th year overall in professional baseball.

Schumaker, 38, returns for his second season on the Major League coaching staff as first base coach, and he enters his fourth year with the Padres organization. He previously served as an assistant to baseball operations and player development

after joining San Diego's front office in 2016. The former outfielder and second baseman played 11 Major League seasons with the St. Louis [Cardinals](#) (2005-12), Los Angeles Dodgers (2013) and [Cincinnati Reds](#) (2014-15). A two-time World Series Champion with the Cardinals (2006, 2011), Schumaker hit a combined .278 (905-for-3252) with 169 doubles, 13 triples, 28 home runs, 284 RBI and 416 runs scored in 1,149 career games.

Additionally, Griffin Benedict, 31, will return for his ninth season as bullpen catcher and coaching assistant, and Keith Werman, 29, returns for his second season as development coordinator.