



Padres Press Clips

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Padres spring training primer: Outfield

Dennis Lin

With pitchers and catchers set to report Feb. 14 to spring training in Peoria, Ariz., we're providing an overview of each area of the Padres' roster. Today, the outfield:

2017 recap

Rookie Manuel Margot made a case for team MVP, and might have secured the title had he avoided a calf injury. A likely fixture in center field for years to come, he showed dynamic ability in three facets. Fellow rookie Hunter Renfroe hit some baseballs very, very far, but 2018 will be about proving he isn't one-dimensional. Defense was sometimes an adventure, and the strong-armed right fielder received a late-season demotion to Triple-A. Left field yielded the main surprise, with Jose Pirela emerging as the club's most consistent performer on offense. Would-be competitor Alex Dickerson underwent back surgery and missed all of 2017.

Current picture

Margot returns as the only outfield lock. Renfroe, the favorite in right field, will have to make adjustments to stick as a regular. Despite Pirela's breakout, left field will feature significant competition. Dickerson, who would have batted in the middle of the order, should be ready for camp. After a brief major league experience — and a highly productive winter season — the speedy, powerful Franchy Cordero could challenge for either corner spot. Travis Jankowski and Matt Szczur are versatile candidates for reserve roles.

On the farm

Cordero, still technically a prospect, appears poised to make a big-league impact. Most of the organization's minor outfielders aren't quite as close. Many were signed on the international market, which offers no shortage of projectability. Names to watch include Jorge Ona, Jeisson Rosario, Tirso Ornelas and recent trade acquisition Edward Olivares.

Potential moves

The largest potential shakeup would arrive through a combination of external and internal forces: If the Padres sign free-agent first baseman Eric Hosmer, Wil Myers will shift to one of the corner-outfield positions. If the Padres don't sign Hosmer, they'll be content to continue auditioning young outfielders.

Padres' Allen Cordoba 'unharmmed' in car accident in Panama

Jeff Sanders

Padres infielder Allen Cordoba was “unharmmed” in a car accident Wednesday while en route to the Bocas del Toro Province in Panama, a team spokesperson confirmed for the Union-Tribune.

News of Cordoba’s accident spread after the 22-year-old Panama native posted a photo on his Instagram account of a white vehicle overturned away from any signs of a paved road. The accompanying words in a since-deleted post, translated to English, read: “Life can leave you at any moment. Thank you God, I’m alive, God is always on my side, he takes care of me.”



Deportes RPC@deportes_rpc

¡Gracias a Dios está bien! El pelotero panameño Allen Córdoba sufrió un accidente junto a su hermano llegando a Gualaca, Chiriquí, pero afortunadamente los daños solo fueron materiales. El jugador de los @Padres viajará este viernes de regreso a USA. #BeisRPC

The Padres did not have any other information on the accident.

A Rule-5 pick last year, Cordoba hit .208/.282/.297 with four homers and 15 RBIs in 100 games while making the impossible jump from rookie ball to the majors.

His usage over the last month two months of the season (just two starts) suggests Cordoba could be in store for more minor league seasoning in 2018, although his performance this spring could alter the organization’s plans.

Pitchers and catchers will report to the Padres’ spring training complex in Peoria, Ariz., on Feb. 14, while the full team will arrive by Feb. 19. The first full-team workout is scheduled for Feb. 20 and the Padres’ first Cactus League game is slated for Feb. 23 at Peoria Stadium.

Kevin Towers celebration planned for Feb. 25 at Petco Park

Jeff Sanders

On behalf of Kevin Towers' family, the Padres will celebrate their former general manager's life at 1 p.m. on Feb. 25 at Petco Park. The event will be free.

The architect of the Padres' 1998 World Series run, Towers died the morning of Jan. 30 after a 14-month battle with thyroid cancer. He was 56.

Towers served as San Diego's general manager from 1995 to 2009, winning the NL West four times. He was later the Diamondbacks general manager (2010-14) and worked in the Reds' front office.

Gates for the Feb. 25 service will open at noon.

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.

The Padres will also host a celebration of life for Dick Enberg at 10 a.m. on March 10 at Petco Park. That, too, will be open to the public, although the team has not yet released those details.

Friar talk: Padres headed for top-six draft pick, PECOTA says

Jeff Sanders

After moving from 68 wins to 71 in the first two years of Andy Green's tenure, Padres ownership in 2018 is hoping to close in on the franchise's first .500-or-better record in eight years.

Baseball Prospectus' PECOTA projection isn't nearly as optimistic.

The site's Player Empirical Comparison and Optimization Test Algorithm (yeah, that's why we go with PECOTA on first reference) has the Padres pegged for 73 wins, a finish that would reward San Diego with the sixth pick in the 2019 draft. (The Padres would lose a tiebreaker with the White Sox because Chicago had a worse record in 2017. The same would be true for Miami over Kansas City.)

- 66 | Miami Marlins
- 66 | Kansas City Royals
- 68 | Detroit Tigers
- 69 | Baltimore Orioles
- 73 | Chicago White Sox
- 73 | Padres

Yes, you're doing cartwheels if you love the idea of the "tank."

If you're holding out for a better regular season, you're quick to remind us that these PECOTA preseason projections whiffed in assessing A.J. Preller's 2015 Frankenstein roster as a playoff team, overshot the 2016 product by eight wins and underestimated the 2017 squad by a handful.

They don't mean a thing, you say.

You're right.

Except there won't be a whole lot of arms in the air from the Friarhood over PECOTA pegging catcher Austin Hedges — with game-changing skills behind the plate and near-20-homer pop with the bat — as the Padres' most valuable position player in 2018.

The 25-year-old catcher is projected for 3.0 Wins Above Replacement Player (WARP at Baseball Prospectus), followed by Manuel Margot in center field (1.9 WARP), Jose Pirela in left (1.8 WARP), Hunter Renfroe in right (1.4 WARP) and Wil Myers at first (1.3). On the mound, only reliever Brad Hand (1.4 WARP) and Clayton Richard (1.2) project for at least a full win over a replacement player.

As we've suspected for a while, PECOTA's projections seem to confirm that San Diego's pitching staff — and the rotation in particular (MLB.com highlights those questions here) — is the chief reason the Padres could own a top-six pick for the second time in three years.

AROUND THE WATER COOLER

- While you're at Baseball Prospectus, take a look at their top-101 prospects list, which is lower on infielder Luis Urias (74) than rival lists compiled by Baseball America, MLB.com, ESPN and Fangraphs.com. The other Padres in their top-101 are shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. (9), left-hander MacKenzie Gore (29), right-hander Cal Quantrill (48), left-hander Adrian Morejon (50) and right-hander Michel Baez (52).
- Speaking of Fangraphs, the folks there are projecting right-hander Chris Paddack, third baseman Hudson Potts, shortstop Gabriel Arias and right-hander Pedro Avila to rise into the their top-100 in 2019. Paddack missed all of 2017 while recovering from Tommy John surgery. Meantime, Potts was one of the system's better producers over the second half last year, Arias was a jewel from the 2016-17 international class and Avila finished 2017 as one of minor league baseball's best strikeout artists. Stay tuned.
- The Union-Tribune's spring training primer series continued with a look at the infielders. [Click here](#) for a look at the catching situation and [here](#) for an introduction to another arm invited to camp. Also, the Padres and El Paso Chihuahuas extended their player development contract through 2020.

Hand leads bullpen with options aplenty

Stammen, newcomer Makita to fill primary setup roles

By A.J. Cassavell MLB.com

With Spring Training on the horizon, MLB.com is taking an in-depth look at the 2018 Padres, breaking the team down position-by-position. We conclude our series by previewing San Diego's bullpen.

SAN DIEGO -- Brad Hand is still a San Diego Padre. So, too, is Craig Stammen.

Four months ago, the Padres seemed destined for a major bullpen shake-up, with two of their top arms potentially on the move. Instead, pitchers and catchers are slated to report to Spring Training next week, and San Diego's bullpen saw only a minor restructuring.

Stammen re-upped with the Padres for two years and \$4.5 million in January. Hand, who has been the subject of trade speculation for a year and a half, later inked a three-year extension, keeping him on board through 2020.

Hand is coming off a career year, in which he made his first All-Star Game and posted a 2.16 ERA. He's proven extremely durable, as well. Since his arrival in San Diego two years ago, only Addison Reed has pitched in more games across the Majors.

"I haven't been around a pitcher that takes the ball as willingly and as often," said Padres manager Andy Green in reference to Hand. "He needs to be on the mound. He wants to be on the mound every single day. That's the guy you want impacting ... the young guys you have coming through the system. I'd love to see Brad be a part of championship-winning clubs here in San Diego."

Hand is expected to slot into the Padres' closer role, as he did during the second half of the 2017 season. Stammen, meanwhile, will fill a role similar to last year's, where he served as something of a late-inning escape artist.

Joining Hand and Stammen at the back end of San Diego's bullpen are Phil Maton, Kazuhisa Makita and Kirby Yates. Makita is the most interesting name of the bunch. Signed for two years from the Seibu Lions of Japan's Nippon Professional Baseball, Makita notched a 1.91

ERA over the past two seasons. His extreme sidearm delivery will be a challenge for right-handed hitters.

"[Makita] is a guy that probably brings up dirt when he throws," Green said. "It's from way underneath. The beauty of the way the bullpen is right now is: You've got a dominant lefty in Brad Hand, you've got a guy in Craig Stammen who sinks the baseball, throws a slider off that, gets ground ball after ground ball. You've got Makita for a different look. ... You have so much variety to choose from that if you're actually any good at managing, you can utilize those guys in situations they should flourish. That's definitely exciting for me."an. 8th, 2018

Hand, Stammen, Makita, Yates and Maton are all favorites for the Opening Day roster. After them, things get murkier. Don't be surprised if the Padres pull from their starting mix to find a long man -- someone in the mold of Jordan Lyles or Matt Strahm. That leaves a handful of effective relievers fighting for two spots, at most.

That group consists of: Buddy Baumann, Carter Capps, Jose Torres, Kyle McGrath, Miguel Diaz, Colten Brewer, Tom Wilhelmsen and Brad Wieck.

San Diego is optimistic that Capps is ready to bounce back from his recent struggles. This year marked his first offseason having fully recovered from his Tommy John surgery in 2016. He's used it to hone his quirky mechanics.

But if Hand is the only other lefty in the Padres' bullpen, it's possible that the club might lean toward Baumann, Torres or McGrath for the final relief job. With an excess of options, don't be surprised if the bullpen battle comes down to the final day of camp.

Projected closer: Hand

Projected setup men: Makita, Stammen, Maton, Yates

On the bubble: Baumann, Capps, Torres, McGrath, Diaz, Brewer, Brad Wieck, Lyles, Strahm

Tatis, Urias to show off skills at big league camp

Prospect duo could give Padres fans glimpse of future middle-infield combo

AJ Cassavell MLB.com

SAN DIEGO -- Padres pitchers and catchers report to Spring Training next week, and there's clearly plenty to watch for at the team's complex in Peoria, Ariz.

There's a wide-open rotation race yet to unfold. There's a logjam in the infield, sure to feature a fierce battle for playing time. And there's a new shortstop in Freddy Galvis who is looking to acclimate himself.

But for all the storylines at Padres camp this spring, the most exciting might not pertain to the Opening Day roster at all. (The Opening Day roster in 2018, that is.)

When the club released its list of non-roster invitees last month, it was the youngest players whose names jumped out, particularly shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. and second baseman Luis Urias. They're baseball's No. 8- and No. 36-rated prospects, respectively, according to MLB Pipeline. And they comprise the most exciting double-play duo in all of Minor League baseball, each ranked as the No. 2 prospect at his position.

Neither has a realistic chance at a big league job this spring. In fact, Tatis, who turned 19 in January, will probably be back in Minor League camp by early March.

That said, Tatis and Urias will be sporting Padres jerseys and manning the middle of the infield together for the first time. Even if they're only playing late innings of Cactus League games, that's still a notion that thrills Padres fans.

"Seeing those guys get back on the field together, that'll be a lot of fun," Padres general manager A.J. Preller said last month. "Hopefully we're giving everybody a glimpse of what could potentially be a nice combo in the future."

Urias, 20, is slightly ahead of Tatis in his progression. This year marks Urias' second invite to Major League Spring Training. It's possible he sticks around for the duration of camp, and should the Padres find a trade partner for Chase Headley, as has been rumored, Urias could even be a long-shot infield candidate.n. 27th, 2018

In 118 games for Double-A San Antonio last season, Urias batted .296/.398/.380. He split time between second base and shortstop -- versatility which could prove useful. But Urias clearly projects as a second baseman in the long term. And Tatis' presence only solidifies that notion.

If he continues to hit -- and perhaps adds a bit of power to his game -- Urias could earn himself a midseason callup. Tatis, meanwhile, probably won't make an impact until 2019. But many believe he's destined for stardom.

For about a decade, the Padres have searched for their shortstop of the future. In Tatis, they may have found him. The former White Sox prospect -- Tatis was dealt to San Diego in the James Shields deal in 2016 -- set a franchise record with 21 homers for Class A Fort Wayne last season. At 18, he made a significant jump to San Antonio, where he held his own.

Said Padres farm director Sam Geaney: "I have no doubt he's someone who's up to the task of a big league camp."

If only for a few weeks this spring, the Padres' potential double-play tandem of the future will become their double-play tandem of the present.

Padres to host Towers memorial service

AJ Cassavell

SAN DIEGO -- Petco Park will host a celebration of life for former Padres general manager Kevin Towers on Sunday, Feb. 25. The memorial service will be free and open to the public, with gates opening at noon PT.

Towers, who spent 27 seasons in the Padres' organization, passed away last month after battling a rare form of thyroid cancer. He was 56.

Towers served as Padres general manager from 1995-2009 after spending eight seasons as a Minor League pitcher in the organization from 1982-89. He went on to become a scout and scouting director for San Diego.

Towers led the Padres to four National League West titles, including the 1998 NL pennant. After departing San Diego, Towers spent four seasons as D-backs GM, along with brief stints in the Yankees' and Reds' front offices.

Padres to Hold Celebration of Life for Kevin Towers

Service to remember late general manager planned at Petco Park

By Derek Togerson

The Padres have planned a free, public memorial service to honor former General Manager Kevin Towers, who passed away recently after a battle with thyroid cancer.

K.T., the architect of four Padres division championships, will be honored with a Celebration of Life on Sunday, Feb. 25, at Petco Park. Fans can enter the Home Plate Gate starting at noon. The service begins at 1 p.m.

Free parking will be available at Tailgate Park and the Padres Parkade.

Towers was the GM of the Padres from 1995 through 2009 and put together the teams that made 80 percent of the franchise's post-season appearances, including a spot in the 1998 World Series.

Sources: MLBPA preparing to conduct spring training camps for free agents

Tim Brown

The baseball players' union is scouting sites and making preliminary arrangements to conduct its own spring training. (Getty Images)

The baseball players' union is scouting sites and making preliminary arrangements to conduct its own spring training for as many as 100 unsigned free agents, sources said Wednesday.

With 30 camps set to open early next week and an unusual number of players still without contracts – some among the top free agents on the market – the union is investigating sites in Florida and Arizona in case it determines a 31st camp is necessary. The IMG baseball academy in Bradenton, Florida, was believed to be among at least three options. The union also is identifying coaches and other personnel to staff the facility.

Should it come to fruition, the arrangement is likely to draw comparisons to a spring camp held in Homestead, Florida, 22 years ago during the last work stoppage in Major League Baseball history. Dozens of unsigned players waited out the strike by preparing at the sports complex, dubbed "Camp Collusion." Many signed contracts when the strike ended in the spring of 1995. Some did not. They all became known as the Homestead Homies.

This time, the game is healthy and wealthy and being played under a Collective Bargaining Agreement that won't expire until 2021. A series of factors – those debated, sometimes heatedly, by MLB and MLBPA officials, along with players in recent weeks – has dampened the winter market. On Tuesday, union chief Tony Clark issued a statement critical of the number of teams "engaged in a race to the bottom" that, he said, "threatens the very integrity of our game." MLB commissioner Rob Manfred laid the blame on the players and their agents, and characterized the union's assertions as "unfair, unwarranted and inflammatory."

Players, agents and MLB officials followed with their own assessments.

So, spring's new harbinger is grown men shrieking at each other through reporters on Twitter. Which, as spring harbingers go, falls somewhere between a fresh set of abdominal muscles and dome-headed mascots pretending to load semi-trucks.

It is fine theater, the men charged with running the game and herding the players and providing the talent (for a small percentage), all mad or suspicious or adamant and defending their jobs, occasionally at the cost of decorum. Perhaps, one day, at the cost of labor peace. So, yeah, real baseball games. Because that \$10 billion ain't gonna divvy up itself.

Meanwhile, pitchers and catchers report for two teams on Feb. 12 and for 19 more the following day. The first position players start reporting Feb. 18. And the first spring training games between big-league clubs are Feb. 23. The regular season opens March 29.

The union will prepare, then, for more of the same quiet, and seek to provide training options for its unsigned players. And hope, presumably, that a 31st site becomes unnecessary.