



Padres Press Clips

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Friar talk: The variety in the Padres' bullpen

Jeff Sanders

The [Padres](#) officially begin to report for [spring training](#) next week. A busy few weeks in the San Diego sports landscape — from **Trevor Hoffman** Hall of Fame coverage to the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines to Super Bowl talk — finally allows us a moment to circle back to some FanFest tidbits to shake out of the notebook ahead of pitchers and catchers.

Most notably, a unique set of arms competing for bullpen spots this spring was a topic of discussion as Padres manager **Andy Green** and General Manager **A.J. Preller** spoke with reporters last month at FanFest. The variety, in particular, is especially unprecedented during Green's watch.

“The beauty of the bullpen the way it is right now,” Green said, “is you have a dominant lefty in **Brad Hand**. You have a guy in **Craig Stammen** that sinks the baseball, gets groundball after groundball. You have **Kazuhisa Makita** for a different look down here. You've got **Buddy Baumann** competing for a spot who throws the baseball from underneath the mound and it goes high the way he releases it. You have **Kyle McGrath** from up here. You have **Trey Winger** competing for a spot that throws 100.

“You literally have so much variety to choose from that if you're actually any good at managing, you can utilize those guys in the right situations they should flourish.

“For me, that's exciting. Because when I got here everyone was similar. There wasn't a lot of differences. Now you look at our bullpen and the way it sets up there's a lot of choices.”

A lot of eyes will be on Makita.

The 33-year-old Japanese import is a pure submariner whose velocity tops out in the mid-80s. He saved as many as 22 games in 2011, but there's some thought that his role as a set-up man could provide a boost to relievers who follow him into the game.

Makita is just so *different*. It's got to mess with hitters — at least a bit — even after he exits a game.

“You don't see guys like that in the big leagues from that low with that kind of control and that kind of stuff,” reliever **Kirby Yates** said. “For him to come in and then the guys coming after him, I have to believe it's going to mess with their eyes a little bit. I don't hit. I've never had an at-bat, so I can't say for sure, but you have to believe it's going to be different for hitters.”

The variety isn't by accident.

“We look at (Makita) from a bullpen standpoint of having different looks and giving Andy different options,” Preller said last month. “Guys with different arm slots, lefties, righties, guys who can go short, go long.

“I know **Kevin Towers** here a long time ago built some really good bullpens and one of the things he always talked about was just having a lot of different options with guys who can match-up and do different things.”

Backup shortstop?

Luis Urias played more shortstop in 2017 than he had his previous three years in the system as the organization looked to add even more utility to the 20-year-old infielder’s resume. His ability to play the position will be a focus this spring as the Padres look to find a backup to **Freddy Galvis**. Urias, **Allen Cordoba**, **Javier Guerra** and top prospect **Fernando Tatis Jr.** are the top options as of today, although Preller has said he was looking to add to that competition before spring training starts.

Urias addressed his comfortability at shortstop at FanFest.

“To be honest, I wasn’t comfortable at all in the beginning,” Urias said. “I signed as a shortstop, but I didn’t have the opportunity to play too much shortstop in my first years. The last year I had the opportunity to play. I played most of the games at shortstop and at second base. I started to feel very comfortable at shortstop. It will be great if I can play both.”

Around the water cooler

- On the **Eric Hosmer** front, Royals GM **Dayton Moore** updated his team’s talks with their free agent first baseman with **Soren Petro of 810 AM’s The Program**: “We’ve had a lot of discussion over the last week. I can’t say we’ve made much progress, but whenever you’re talking that’s not a bad thing.” The two sides have exchanged contract numbers, but “it doesn’t make sense for a team like us to set the market on a player like Hosmer.”
- Tatis (No. 5), Urias (28), **MacKenzie Gore** (28), **Michel Baez** (41) and **Anderson Espinoza** (62) all landed in **Fangraphs.com’s top-100 prospects list**, but two notables — **Cal Quantrill** and **Adrian Morejon** — did not. Quantrill and Morejon were listed among the game’s top-100 prospects by Baseball America, MLB.com and ESPN’s Keith Law, while Espinoza — who is recovering from Tommy John surgery — did not rate in all three of those rankings.
- If you’re into projections (at this time of year, who isn’t?), **Manuel Margot** (3.2 zWAR) and **Wil Myers** (3.2) will top the Padres’ offensive producers in 2018, **according to Dan Szymborski’s ZiPS model**. Galvis is a full win below that duo at 2.2, while **Chase Headley**, **Austin Hedges** and **Hunter Renfroe** are all projected for 1.9 zWAR. **Dinelson Lamet** (1.9), **Brad Hand** (1.6), **Bryan Mitchell** (1.2) and **Luis Perdomo** (1.0) are the only pitchers projected to contribute at least one win more than replacement-level pitchers.

Padres spring training primer: Catchers

Dennis Lin

With pitchers and catchers set to report Feb. 14, we're providing an overview of each area of the [Padres'](#) roster. Today, the catchers:

2017 recap

In his first season as the Padres' primary catcher, Austin Hedges was elite on defense and subpar at the plate. The young backstop drew praise for his receiving, blocking and work with the pitching staff. He was third on the team with 18 home runs, but a .262 on-base percentage counteracted his power. The Padres carried three catchers for most of the year, with [Hector Sanchez](#) and Luis Torrens also on the roster. Sanchez, who largely served as a bat off the bench, and Hedges each missed time due to concussions. Torrens, a Rule 5 draftee, showed some defensive aptitude but predictably experienced a steep learning curve.

Current picture

Hedges, 25, remains entrenched in his role for the foreseeable future. While he already rates as one of the game's finest defenders, his main challenges will continue to come on offense. Even marginal improvement in that area could be enough to vault him into All-Star contention. The main candidates to back up Hedges are Rocky Gale, a solid defender, and Raffy Lopez, a journeyman signed to a minor league deal. Torrens is not expected to return to the majors in the near future.

On the farm

Austin Allen hit 22 home runs last season at high Single-A, offering rare power potential, but it remains to be seen if he'll stick at the position. The Padres spent a pair of last year's draft picks on Luis Campusano and Blake Hunt. Campusano was considered the top amateur catcher available.

Potential moves

General Manager A.J. Preller has said he would like to add another backup option to compete with Gale and Lopez. Any such addition seems likely to come on a minor league deal.

Moves tracker: Tom Wilhelmsen, Padres agree to minor league deal

Jeff Sanders

Right-handed reliever **Tom Wilhelmsen** and the **Padres** have agreed to a minor league deal that includes an invitation to big league camp, a team source confirmed for the Union-Tribune. The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal first reported the agreement.

The 34-year-old Wilhelmsen posted a 4.44 ERA, 17 strikeouts and a 1.41 WHIP in 26 1/3 innings out of the **Diamondbacks** bullpen in 2017. He saved 29 games as a rookie with the **Mariners** in 2012 and 24 games in 2013 but has worked predominantly in set-up roles since.

He owns a 3.53 ERA, 339 strikeouts and a 1.27 WHIP in 385 innings in the majors with Seattle, Texas and Arizona. His fastball and sinker both sit in the mid-90s. Wilhelmsen also throws a slider, a curve and a seldom-used change-up.

Other recent minor league additions include right-hander **Yimmi Brasoban** and outfielder **Edwin Moreno** returning to the organization as minor league free agents.

The 23-year-old Brasoban, who signed in May 2011 out of the Dominican Republic, was 0-1 with a 4.71 ERA, 20 strikeouts and a 1.88 WHIP in 28 2/3 innings in Double-A San Antonio's bullpen.

Moreno, 24, spent a second straight full season at high Single-A Lake Elsinore, where he paired a .267/.309/.447 batting line with 11 homers and 52 RBIs. Moreno originally signed with the organization in October 2010.

NEW SIGNEES

- **RHPs:** Yimmi Brasoban, Jose Geraldo, Michael Mariot, **Tyson Ross**, Robert Stock, Tom Wilhelmsen, **Chris Young**
- **C:** Raffy Lopez, Arturo Nieto
- **1B:** **Allen Craig**
- **SS:** Dusty Coleman, Juan Garcia
- **OF:** Forrestt Allday, Edwin Moreno

OUTGOING MINOR LEAGUE FREE AGENTS

(New homes in parentheses)

- **RHP:** Christian Bethancourt ([Brewers](#)), Yimmi Brasoban (Padres), Jake Esch, Chasen Ford, Erik Johnson, Michael Kelly (Orioles), Matt Magill ([Twins](#)), Tim Melville (Orioles), Andre Rienzo, Bryan Rodriguez (Japan), Jake Smith, Cesar Vargas
- **C:** [Tony Cruz](#)
- **2B:** Casey McElroy, Noah Perio
- **3B:** Diego Goris (White Sox)
- **SS:** Dusty Coleman (Padres)
- **OF:** Chris Bono, Nick Buss (Twins), Edwin Moreno (Padres), Rafael Ortega (Marlins), Jose Urena

Talent development is Padres' focus in 2018

Top-rated farm system helping club build solid foundation

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

Feb. 5th, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- It was a (mostly) quiet offseason in San Diego this year. The Padres have already put their long-term vision into place, and they weren't about to deviate.

The fruits of general manager A.J. Preller's labor have paid off in arguably baseball's top farm system. And the current Major League squad will enter the season with one of the youngest rosters in baseball.

In short: The pieces are in place for the future. And they aren't going anywhere.

Preller signed a three-year contract extension in December that will keep him on board through 2022. Padres manager Andy Green is under contract through '21. And among the team's core of catcher [Austin Hedges](#), first baseman [Wil Myers](#), center fielder [Manuel Margot](#), right fielder [Hunter Renfroe](#) and right-hander [Dinelson Lamet](#) -- all are under control until after the '22 season.

"Hopefully that leads to success," Preller said this offseason. "You need to get people and players that have ability, first, and then you've got to get stability. ... It's what successful franchises do. We're in a good spot for the next few years."

They're in this spot largely because of Preller's work during the 2016 and '17 seasons, in which he deftly used the three avenues available for acquiring prospects.

The Padres placed seven youngsters on MLB Pipeline's [Top 100 Prospects](#) list last week. Preller acquired two via the Draft ([MacKenzie Gore](#) and [Cal Quantrill](#)), two via trades ([Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) and [Anderson Espinoza](#)) and two via international signings ([Michel Baez](#) and [Adrian Morejon](#)) -- all during a 12-month span.

Two years ago, the Padres were an aging ballclub with burdensome contracts and a middling farm system. By no means was their direction clear. It is now.

Of course, there's the not-so-small matter of winning Major League ballgames. The Padres haven't made the postseason since 2006 and haven't made a serious push since '10. With one of the sport's youngest rosters, this season could be another meant for growth, not unlike last year.

"In order to build a franchise, it doesn't happen overnight," Preller said last month. "You need a period of time to go through Drafts and international signings and trades and give your group a chance to have some stability. That's what we've been in the process of building, and now we're taking some steps toward winning baseball at the big league level."

Preller has established a core of talented youngsters at the Major League level. Soon, they'll be complemented by the next group, one that includes shortstop [Tatis](#), right-hander [Quantrill](#) and

second baseman [Luis Urias](#), among others. Ideally, that team will be approaching contention when the next group arrives -- featuring the lefty Gore and right-handers Morejon, Baez and Espinoza.

If the Padres can complement their talented youngsters with savvy free-agent signings in the coming offseasons, they hope to be contenders annually in the National League West by 2020 at the latest.

The vision is simple. The hope of the Padres' front office is that the on-field results will soon be just as clear.

Padres Place 6 on Baseball Prospectus' Top Prospect List

Tatis Jr., Gore lead #PadresOnDeck representation

By Justin Lafferty

Baseball Prospectus has [released its list](#) of the top 101 prospects—6 of whom are in the San Diego system.

Shortstop **Fernando Tatis Jr.** has been a consensus top-10 prospect by numerous publications, and that remains consistent here. *Baseball Prospectus* has rated the 19-year-old as the 9th-best prospect in baseball.

Here's how future Friars ranked in BP's list, released Monday morning:

9. Tatis Jr., SS

29. **MacKenzie Gore**, LHP

48. **Cal Quantrill**, RHP

50. **Adrian Morejon**, LHP

52. **Michel Baez**, RHP

74. **Luis Urías**, 2B

While Tatis Jr. is the headliner among Padres prospects, the list shows just how deep the pitching is in the system.

Baseball Prospectus lead prospect writer **Jeffrey Paternostro** is a fan of Gore, last year's No. 3 overall draft pick from Whiteville High School in North Carolina. Paternostro [answered questions Monday in a chat](#), saying that Gore is among those on the top 101 list with the highest probability of No. 1 starter potential, also pointing to Baez as someone who could impress that well, too.

Urias has gained acclaim as one of the best pure hitters in the minor leagues, and it's a skill Paternostro highlighted in the chat. Paternostro said that the infielder from Sonora, Mexico is "a plus hitter with a good approach," and has "probably the best hit tool outside the top 50."

He also addressed the sheer volume of talented middle infield prospects in the Padres' system. A reader asked about **Gabriel Arias**, a 17-year-old shortstop who finished last season at Class-A Fort Wayne and impressed this winter in the Australian Baseball League.

"He's buzzy," Paternostro replied, "tough to stand out as a young middle infielder in the Padres system."

Padres To Sign Tom Wilhelmsen

By **Jeff Todd** | February 6, 2018 at 7:55am CDT

The Padres have inked righty **Tom Wilhelmsen** to a minors deal, according to Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic ([via Twitter](#)). He'll receive an invitation to participate in MLB camp.

Once an anchor of the Mariners bullpen, Wilhelmsen hit a rough patch upon moving to the Rangers in 2016. While he rebounded somewhat in the second half of that campaign when he returned to Seattle, the veteran settled for a minor-league deal with the Diamondbacks this time last year.

Wilhelmsen, now 34, earned a job in Spring Training and opened the 2017 season as a part of the D-Backs' relief corps. Things didn't go quite as hoped, though, as he struggled to a 4.44 ERA with 5.8 K/9 and 4.1 BB/9 over 26 1/3 innings. While he maintained a mid-nineties heater and induced grounders on about half of the balls put in play against him, Wilhelmsen carried a 6.2% swinging-strike rate that fell well shy of his 10.6% career average.

Ultimately, the Diamondbacks cut ties with Wilhelmsen in the middle of the year. He caught on with the Brewers but was unable to earn his way back to the majors. Now, Wilhelmsen will try to crack the Friars' pen in camp. It looks like that will represent an uphill battle, as he'll need to beat out a veteran pitcher such as **Jordan Lyles** and also hold off some of the organization's younger options.