



Padres Press Clips

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Andy Green, his green team ready for the next step

Kevin Acee

Andy Green is preparing for his third season as a big-league manager, and his [Padres](#) appear to be inching closer to being a competitive big-league club.

Padres pitchers and catchers report to [spring training](#) on Wednesday with the first full-squad workout set for Feb. 20.

“I couldn’t be more excited about the direction we’re headed,” Green said a few days ago.

From the prospects who could contribute in the majors this season to young players he expects to take big steps, Green expounded on why that is.

There’s a goal for this team to be a contender within a year or two. You have said you think you’re getting closer. How so?

I think the way we’re growing a culture within the clubhouse. That’s one of the things I look at. I think we’re getting significantly closer to having that kind of culture where every day everyone is trying to get one percent better, every day everyone is pushing themselves to compete in a championship-caliber way. You’re starting to see that prevalent through the clubhouse. Honestly, when I arrived that wasn’t the thing defining the culture. ... And all the talent we’ve been investing in, a lot of it is showing up in big league camp, and that’s really exciting. There is reason to believe those guys doing so well in the minor leagues that they’re going to be very impactful in the big leagues for a long time.

What do you think of the idea that 10 to 12 teams have basically forfeited the pennant, aren’t really competing for a title? How do you argue that the Padres are not one of those teams?

If you knew the level of effort and energy we put into winning every single day, no one would come close to making that claim — if you saw how hard our staff worked to find a competitive advantage, if you saw the players and how hard they work to improve, if you saw the passion in the clubhouse. ... (Tanking) has never been the marching orders from above me. It has always been, ‘Go win as many games as humanly possible.’ Our goal will always be that. ... Have we aligned with some of our financial resources to be brought to bear in a year or two or three? Yes, we have. We consider that to be prudent planning to bring San Diego something it hasn’t had before.

You’ve always been really good at focusing on the present while having an eye on the future. As the top prospects get closer to the majors, some probably even coming up at some point this year, how excited are you?

I have a borderline stalker-ish interest in our minor-league system. I’m cognizant of everything going on. It’s always been our goal from the beginning to build within. Gradually, we’re going to

supplement one guy at a time. Last year, it was Dinelson Lamet, Carlos Asuaje, Manny Margot. This year, it could be Cal Quantrill, Eric Lauer, Joey Lucchesi, Fernando Tatis, Trey Wingenter, the list goes on and on.

This will be your third season as a manager. In what ways do you feel established? In what ways do you feel not established?

Being established is not something I spend much time thinking about. It's what's the next right thing to do – and go out and do it. I'm learning constantly. A big thing is providing clarity from this seat for the staff. I admitted after year one that was a weakness. I've always been inclined to do things myself. I got better at that. It's still not my natural strength. ... Establishing a reputation in the game, I'm not worried about that. I'm concerned with if we're going to make everybody a better contributor.

You had two high-profile rookies in Manuel Margot and Hunter Renfroe plus Austin Hedges entering his first full season, all of them as starters last year. They got that first year under their belts, all of them growing in certain ways. What do you anticipate from that threesome this season?

Growth in every single area of the game. It's easy now for those guys to realize, 'Hey, they weren't kidding when they talked about how important plate discipline is.' You can murder the (Pacific Coast League), but a chase rate north of 40 percent is not a way to be successful in the major leagues. You can tell somebody that until you're blue in the face, but they don't have the belief and conviction until they've gone through it. What they realize now is 'Andy and the staff are incredibly serious about everything. Every small detail matters.'

Talk about your latest shortstop, Freddy Galvis. Besides being younger, how is he going to be different than the recent stopgaps at that position?

He's probably closer to the prime of his career than some of these other guys have been. Erick Aybar – Gold Glove, All-Star, awesome World Series competitor – I love the guy. He's wired right. But he wasn't toward the middle of his career; he was probably toward the end. Now he may end up proving me wrong. But now (in Galvis) we're looking at somebody from a pure statistical standpoint who has caught and thrown it as consistently as anyone in the National League last year. That's impressive. That's something we have not had.

Speaking of shortstop, Fernando Tatis doesn't seem too far away. When is the earliest we might see Tatis in San Diego and what sort of look will he get this spring in big-league camp?

He's going to play in camp. He's going to play quite a bit until we have to send him down – if we choose to send him down. I don't anticipate him making the club out of spring, but I'm not going to limit a kid who's very talented. But I just want to see him grow ... If he has that mentality, the sky is the limit. If we feel he's ready, I don't feel we're going to hold him back.

How many guys are coming in with rotation spots locked down? Three? Four? Clayton Richard? Dinelson Lamet? Luis Perdomo? Bryan Mitchell?

The way we look at it, Clayton Richard and Bryan Mitchell are the two guys coming in with a spot locked down. Lamet and Perdomo have a leg up on the other guys.

This is a unique group battling with the mix of veterans on minor-league deals (Tyson Ross, Chris Young and Jordan Lyles), guys with promise whose expected ascension has been derailed by injuries (Robbie Erlin, Colin Rea and Matt Strahm) and even your up-and-coming top prospects (Cal Quantrill, Eric Lauer, Joey Lucchesi, Jacob Nix).

We're definitely increasing the quality of our depth. ... The depth piece is definitely different there. I don't think there is some huge difference in the guys competing from the fourth spot to the eighth spot.

What is the jump you're expecting from Lamet and Perdomo after the experience they got last season?

Huge jumps. We've had this talk as a staff countless time this offseason. Our job is to get good players better faster than anybody else in baseball does. Those guys fall into that category. It's really easy to hide behind (the fact) Lamet didn't get (signed) until he was 22 or 23 years old and Perdomo was a Rule 5 guy. Those things are true. But the reality is they're talented and they belong here. They have stuff that if they execute better and throw with conviction they can pitch in the middle of a rotation — and Lamet at the top of a rotation. We've got to make it happen faster.

The Padres have some of the brightest arms in the minor leagues. Could any of them — Quantrill, Lauer, Lucchesi, Nix — make the Opening Day roster?

It's possible. Probable, I wouldn't put it at that. If you're sitting in big league camp, until your shoulder is tapped, like mine was 15 or 16 times, you've got a chance. It's understanding where they are in their development. We've identified ways each one of those guys can profit from going to back to the minor leagues and work. ... In the past, necessity has forced the arrival of a number of guys prior to when they were ready to be here. We're not at that spot where we have to do that.

Who is your second baseman?

It's a great question. We go into this with two guys who are wired to flat out compete in (Cory) Spangenberg and (Carlos) Asuaje. Then breathing down their neck is a kid we're really excited about in Luis Urias. You don't sleep on a kid who led the Texas League in on-base percentage.

How confident are you in Alex Dickerson's health? And how much does that health figure into the competition in left field given the ascension of Jose Pirela?

I want to be so confident in it. But I am also going to be cautious with it in spring training. I sat down with Alex on (Tuesday). I said, 'I know how you're wired. I know you're going to bristle at this, but I'm going to limit your workload in the spring. I don't want to change you're wiring, so you're going to have to trust me about your workload.'

What would it take for Hunter Renfroe to not be the starting right fielder?

Nothing is guaranteed to Hunter Renfroe right now. ... I love the raw power. I love the guy. He's going to compete. He's going to take a hack. He's going to chuck a baseball. There is a

refinement that still needs to occur. Once that refinement occurs, I don't think anybody is going to stop him.

Padres spring training

Where: [Peoria Sports Complex](#), Peoria, Ariz.

When: Pitchers and catchers report Wednesday. Rest of roster reports Feb. 19 with first full-squad workout Feb. 20.

Cactus League: First game Feb. 23 vs. Seattle. [Padres then play every day](#) except March 14 & 19 through March 25.

Season opener: March 29, 1:10 p.m. vs. Milwaukee at Petco Park.

It's time to stop opining and tell the Padres story

Kevin Acee

I'm going to tell you a story.

I think it's going to be entertaining. That isn't entirely up to me, though I will do my best to make it so in any event.

I think it's going to be the biggest story in town sooner than later.

I'm going to tell the story of the Padres. Day after day, night after night.

Yes, the Union-Tribune has a new Padres beat writer.

Our staff lost a good one when Dennis Lin left this week for another gig.

His replacement is a 47-year-old who has gotten a little crusty but has never grown up and never stopped loving baseball and never stopped thinking a return to the beat of his youth wouldn't be about the coolest thing to happen in quite some time.

People have been surprised by this, me going from being a columnist to being a beat writer.

Those who know me best didn't even blink.

My wife declared lovingly in 1999, in the middle of my third season on the baseball beat, with its 140-plus nights a year on the road and two toddlers trying to burn down the house when I was away, that I had a choice to make.

It was baseball or family, she said.

How much do I love baseball? How much did I love the baseball beat? How dumb am I?

Well, I had to think about her ultimatum.

My eyes hurt and start to fill every time I recall my stupidity in almost making a horrible mistake for my own selfishness.

But as I texted this week to my oldest, now 22 and married, in telling him of my new adventure, the baseball beat "wasn't great for a young family. We're an old family now."

This won't be easy.

Good thing I'm in shape and love airports and hotels and think one of life's great pleasures is sitting in an empty ballpark trying to beat deadline while the grounds crew manicures the

diamond and sprinklers wet the outfield grass and birds pick at the discarded popcorn, peanuts and Cracker Jacks.

I don't do a beat cautiously. Some say I don't do it healthily.

It's a fine line. I have learned some balance. Some.

While my quarter-century in this business has admittedly created a slightly cynical edge, it has not dampened my enthusiasm for telling stories and learning. And baseball.

I will do my best for Padres fans.

When I started covering football in 2003, it was as someone who had never played the sport. Worried I wouldn't be expert enough to do the job I felt necessary, I asked all the questions I could and coerced numerous players and coaches into watching film with me and explaining what was happening.

The incomparable Hank Bauer was my main professor. For more than a few seasons, he spent hours of every Monday breaking down film and quizzing me on what I saw. Before that, Tom Craft and Thom Kaumeyer at San Diego State had allowed me to sit in on tutorials. I count Philip Rivers and Eric Weddle not only as friends but football mentors.

My re-immersion into the world of daily baseball, with the charge of being an expert on a team and sport, will not come with that sort of stark education. But the game has changed a bit. There are metrics commonplace now that only a handful of people were talking about last time I was on the beat.

I have some work to do.

To be sure, this is an odd move to make. To most in my business, this would be considered going backward.

I have received quizzical — even incredulous — looks from the few colleagues I have told.

They see my smile and offer a tentative, "Congratulations?"

Attaining a column is considered the pinnacle for a sportswriter, at least for most and certainly for almost all who reach that level.

I've appreciated the opportunity. I've enjoyed it. I've been humbled by it.

But I didn't ask for it. Truth be told, I never really wanted it. My only desire has been to be a beat writer.

I just want to tell people the story of a team.

Padres spring training primer: Bullpen

Dennis Lin

With pitchers and catchers set to report to [spring training](#) Feb. 14 in Peoria, Ariz., we're providing an overview of each area of the [Padres'](#) roster. Today, in the final installment, the bullpen:

2017 recap

Left-hander [Brad Hand](#) did nothing to diminish his trade value, making his first All-Star Game, posting a 2.16 ERA and saving 21 games. The Padres opted to retain him during the summer, then rewarded him with a three-year contract extension. Kirby Yates followed a path similar to Hand's, beginning his San Diego stint as a waiver claim and ending the season as one of the team's top relievers. [Craig Stammen](#), a minor league signee, soaked up valuable innings. Late-inning arms Brandon Maurer and Ryan Buchter were traded alongside [Trevor Cahill](#), leaving increased roles for less experienced relievers such as Phil Maton, Jose Torres, Buddy Baumann and Kyle McGrath. The Padres had hoped [Carter Capps](#) would be a boon for the bullpen coming off Tommy John surgery, but he had a rocky return to the majors interrupted by a blood clot. Capps later underwent surgery to address thoracic outlet syndrome.

Current picture

Manager Andy Green will have more options, and more variety, at his disposal. Hand will begin the season as the closer. Yates and Maton could be the primary setup men, but the team also resigned Stammen and imported submariner Kazuhisa Makita from Japan. Capps was expected to be ready for spring training, but the extent of his health remains to be seen. The upcoming season will bring more opportunities for young arms, with vertically gifted prospects Brad Wieck and Trey Wingenter approaching their major league debuts. The Padres signed career minor leaguer Colten Brewer to a major league deal. A formerly effective veteran, Trey Wilhelmsen, joined the organization on a minor league pact.

On the farm

Beyond Wieck and Wingenter, the farm system is littered with hard-throwing relief prospects. Arguably the most tantalizing arm belongs to right-hander Andres Munoz, who wowed the Arizona Fall League with a triple-digit fastball and a biting slider. Though only 19, Munoz could move quickly. Other names to watch include Jose Castillo and David Bednar.

Potential moves

Given their history of producing inexpensive but effective bullpen arms, you won't see the Padres making splashy acquisitions in this area.

Padres minor leaguer Alex Cunningham suspended

Jeff Sanders

Padres minor league pitcher Alex Cunningham has received a 50-game suspension after testing positive for amphetamine, a stimulant banned under the Minor League Drug Prevention and Treatment Program.

The Office of the Commissioner announced Cunningham's suspension Saturday alongside bans for Phillies minor league pitcher Steven Geltz (100 games), **Rays** minor league catcher Nicholas Ciuffo (50 games) and **Pirates** minor league second baseman Mitchell Tolman (50 games).

All four suspensions will begin at the start of the 2018 season.

The 23-year-old Cunningham, a right-hander, is currently on short-season Tri-City's roster. The Padres drafted him in the ninth round in 2017 out of Coastal Carolina.

Cunningham allowed four runs in two innings in his pro debut at high Single-A Lake Elsinore before pitching out of the bullpen the rest of the year – first in the rookie-level Arizona League (4 1/3 IP, 0 ER) and then at Tri-City (4 2/3 IP, 3 ER).

For the season, Cunningham struck out 16, walked five and allowed a .279 opponent average over 11 innings (5.73 ERA).

Several roster battles for Padres this spring

An early projection of San Diego's 25-man Opening Day roster

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

Feb. 9th, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- Sixty-six players will enter Padres Spring Training camp next week hoping to earn an Opening Day roster spot.

In reality, however, only about two-thirds of those players have a serious chance of making the club. And less than half will be in San Diego on March 29 for Opening Day against Milwaukee.

There's plenty of time for a shakeup or two before the Padres break camp in late March. But with pitchers and catchers set to report to Peoria, Ariz., on Wednesday, here's an early look at how the team's roster battles might play out.

Catcher (2): [Austin Hedges](#), [Raffy Lopez](#)

A year ago, the Padres entered the season with four catchers on their Opening Day roster. (They had good reason for it: Rule 5 pick [Luis Torrens](#) had never played a game above Class A and [Christian Bethancourt](#) was being transitioned to a bullpen role.) This year, things look more conventional. Hedges has the starting job locked up. Meanwhile, Torrens is due for some seasoning in the Minors. That leaves [Raffy Lopez](#) and [Rocky Gale](#) fighting for the backup job, though there's still a possibility for a late addition.

• Around the Horn: Catcher

First base (1): [Wil Myers](#)

There was plenty of talk this offseason about a move to the outfield for Myers. That's still possible, should the club make a late splash by signing free-agent first baseman [Eric Hosmer](#). But as the roster currently stands, Myers is unquestionably the Padres' first baseman. And he's probably going to be their first baseman for the next five or six years. Myers has some obvious improvements to make at first base, after he took a step back defensively in 2017.

Meanwhile, [Allen Craig](#), who signed a Minor League deal last month, will compete for a job on the bench.

• Around the Horn: First base

Second base (2): [Carlos Asuaje](#), [Cory Spangenberg](#)

The first real roster crunch comes at second base -- or, more specifically, between second and third. Spangenberg, Asuaje, [Chase Headley](#) and [Christian Villanueva](#) would all be roster favorites, except that none can play shortstop. The Padres need a backup at short, and it's unlikely they carry seven infielders. That leaves three roster spots open. Asuaje's strong rookie campaign makes him a favorite. And the Padres could use Spangenberg's versatility, as he figures to see time at second, third and left.

• Around the Horn: Second base

Third base (1): [Headley](#)

There's a possibility the Padres move [Headley](#) before Opening Day. But otherwise, he has the starting job at third base locked up. (He could also serve as [Myers](#)' backup at first.) That probably leaves [Villanueva](#) on the outside looking in. [Spangenberg](#) and [Dusty Coleman](#) (should he win the backup shortstop job) are options to serve behind [Headley](#) at third. [Villanueva](#) must set himself apart with his bat this spring if he wants to win a roster spot.

- [Around the Horn: Third base](#)

Shortstop (2): [Freddy Galvis](#), [Coleman](#)

The Padres solved their shortstop conundrum with a December trade for [Galvis](#) from Philadelphia. The 28-year-old standout defender has one year remaining on his contract, meaning he could be the club's fourth stopgap shortstop in four years. (This time, however, top prospect [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) is waiting in the wings.) The question marks arise behind [Galvis](#). [Allen Cordoba](#), a Rule 5 pick last year, could use more time in the Minors, as could [Javier Guerra](#). And [Jose Rondon](#) was recently dealt to the White Sox. That leaves [Coleman](#) as the likeliest option behind [Galvis](#) at short.

- [Around the Horn: Shortstop](#)

Outfield (4): [Manuel Margot](#), [Hunter Renfroe](#), [Jose Pirela](#), [Matt Szczur](#)

Barring injuries, [Margot](#), [Renfroe](#) and [Pirela](#) will comprise the starting outfield. The club is cautiously optimistic that [Alex Dickerson](#) has fully recovered from back surgery. But the prudent decision might be to take things slowly. There's probably one more outfield spot available for a backup center fielder, and three players -- [Szczur](#), [Travis](#)

[Jankowski](#) and [Franchy Cordero](#) -- will compete for it. [Szczur](#), the most experienced of the bunch, is out of options and probably the early favorite.

- [Around the Horn: LF](#) | [Around the Horn: CF](#) | [Around the Horn: RF](#)

Rotation (5): [Clayton Richard](#), [Bryan Mitchell](#), [Luis Perdomo](#), [Dinelson Lamet](#), [Robbie Erlin](#)

The Padres enter camp with 10 arms set to compete for five rotation spots. [Richard](#) and [Mitchell](#) are prohibitive favorites. After that, young right-handers [Perdomo](#) and [Lamet](#) should be given a chance to build on their early successes. That would leave six arms for one spot (with one or two probably better suited for the bullpen). [Tyson Ross](#), [Chris Young](#) and [Jordan Lyles](#) will need to make a serious impression this spring to earn a rotation spot. Meanwhile, [Colin Rea](#), [Matt Strahm](#) and [Erlin](#) are poised to return from injury. We'll give [Erlin](#), the most experienced of the three, a very slight edge.

- [Around the Horn: Starting rotation](#)

Bullpen (8): [Brad Hand](#), [Kirby Yates](#), [Phil Maton](#), [Craig Stammen](#), [Kazuhisa Makita](#), [Buddy Baumann](#), [Strahm](#), [Lyles](#)

[Hand](#), [Yates](#), [Stammen](#) and [Makita](#) are all destined for high-leverage innings this season. [Maton](#), a candidate to be a future closer, is probably in, too. [Lyles](#) could theoretically factor into the mix as a long man who can also serve as a spot starter in a pinch. That leaves [Baumann](#), [Strahm](#), [Carter Capps](#), [Jose Torres](#), [Colten Brewer](#) and [Kyle McGrath](#) fighting for two spots.

Strahm's upside might be too great to pass up, and Baumann's late-season success last year probably gives him the early advantage.

- [Around the Horn: Bullpen](#)

Dennis Lin: The Padres are on the verge of breaking through, and I'll be there to chronicle it for you

By Dennis Lin

Scott Boras began to describe a baseball team. Then, as only he can, the super-agent meandered into topography.

Sitting beside top draft pick MacKenzie Gore in late June, Boras was in a celebratory mood. Gore, his client, was the new recipient of a \$6.7 million signing bonus.

“The idea, I think, with this organization is kind of like when you fly over an island and you see a big mountain and you think it’s a mountain,” Boras said. “But I think San Diego is going to be a volcano, because there’s a lot underneath that’s coming.”

Boras, if you haven’t heard, has his share of detractors, but his point was, and continues to be, salient.

For better or worse, the Padres appear to be on the verge of something noteworthy. Relatively soon, their farm system could fuel the rise of the franchise's first sustainable playoff contender. Or, their plans could go awry once again, only in more spectacular fashion than usual.

Considering the resources poured into young talent, the investments in the front office and scouting, the search for relevance in a city with no other major sports teams, the stakes are high. The privilege of chronicling these efforts is one I’ve had for the last four seasons.

I’m thrilled to say that, beginning today, I’ll continue reporting on the Padres for the newly opened San Diego branch of *The Athletic*. I’ll also assist in our coverage of the Angels, who beat out the Padres and several other finalists in the Shohei Ohtani sweepstakes.

My focus, to be clear, will remain on the Padres. But my work will no longer be dictated by the pressure of nightly deadlines. At *The Athletic*, I’m fortunate to be joining a wonderful, growing team of journalists who are afforded unusual freedom to serve their readers.

A glance at *The Athletic*’s website should tell you about our priorities. There are no ads or auto-play video. Instead, a subscription will grant you access to thoughtful analysis, in-depth features and other comprehensive coverage from knowledgeable writers around the country in a reader-friendly environment.

In addition, this will all evolve based on your tastes. I plan to make this an interactive community for Padres content. Reader mailbags, which I supplied for the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, could become a regular feature. I’ll be accessible on Twitter and in the comments sections of stories.

If you’d like to read about something in particular—say, the Padres’ [approach to new data](#), or a [profile of an interesting personality](#)—there’s a decent chance we will touch on it. The goal isn’t to inundate you with game stories, injury updates or content you can find anywhere else.

Yes, I’ll still strive to keep you up to date on day-to-day developments with the big-league club, but there will be many opportunities to go deeper and more time to do it. Prospect features, for instance, will be a regular thing.

The best part of this venture? A subscription grants you full access to all of the content at *The Athletic*, including the tireless work of MLB insider Ken Rosenthal.

Lin: Padres, Royals Still Competing To Sign Eric Hosmer

By Dennis Lin

Padres pitchers and catchers report Wednesday to Peoria, Ariz., less than 10 miles from where their counterparts with the Royals will show up. Eric Hosmer is unlikely to be among the early arriving position players for either club. The first baseman remains one of the top free agents in an anemic job market.

But with baseball's preseason just about underway, both teams have made efforts to end an impasse. The Padres have engaged in regular dialogue with Hosmer's agent, Scott Boras, over the last several days, sources told *The Athletic*. This followed a period in which neither side seemed to feel much urgency. The Royals, meanwhile, have continued their quest to retain a homegrown star. In a radio interview last Monday, general manager Dayton Moore said he'd had "a lot of discussion" with Hosmer's camp over the previous week. Sources say Kansas City has kept in contact with the free agent.

A [USA Today report](#) last month put a seven-year offer from the Royals at \$147 million, and a competing seven-year proposal from the Padres at \$140 million. People with knowledge of the negotiations disputed the dollar amounts, with Boras describing the report as "inaccurate" to *The Athletic's* Ken Rosenthal.

Sources familiar with the Padres' initial offer said it was worth less than \$140 million, though they would not divulge the exact difference. While team officials thought the Royals may have submitted a higher bid, they indicated satisfaction with their own. "I think we were pretty creative in the way we put a contract proposal together," Padres Executive Chairman Ron Fowler said in a Jan. 16 radio interview. "We like it. I don't know if Mr. Boras likes it."

Nearly four weeks later, it's clear that neither offer was appealing enough. But the Padres and Royals each continue to make Hosmer their top priority.

The Royals have shed payroll in recent trades, hoping to accommodate a return. Kansas City—Hosmer's home of seven seasons, and the place where he won a World Series—has the advantage of familiarity. The team is rebuilding, but Hosmer, 28, is young enough to see it through.

The Padres have hosted Hosmer for multiple visits and pushed their own selling points. With a payroll that projects to start the season around \$70 million, they don't have to shed. Enthused by the prospect of a major acquisition, first baseman Wil Myers has approved a potential move to the outfield and added more than 20 pounds of muscle.

San Diego's rebuild is further along than Kansas City's. Hosmer does not require an education on the Padres' deep farm system; Boras represents a number of their highly regarded prospects, including MacKenzie Gore, Michel Baez and Adrian Morejon.

Observers have questioned whether the Padres' want in this case surpasses their need. Myers had a somewhat disappointing 2017, but his career OPS+ (110) is nearly identical to Hosmer's (111). A contract with Hosmer would shatter the franchise record, which now belongs to Myers.

But after seeing Japanese star Shohei Ohtani choose the Angels, the Padres might view a non-signing as another, albeit lesser, disappointment. Hosmer isn't a rare commodity from a positional standpoint, but he would supply left-handed offense, and few players of his caliber hit the open market before turning 29. A

similar opportunity is unlikely to present itself next winter, and San Diego has designs on contending by 2020.

The Padres believe Hosmer's leadership and work ethic would set necessary examples, accelerating the roster's development. Boras has marketed his client's intangibles throughout the offseason, even as teams rely more heavily than ever on quantifiable information. Hosmer may be fortunate that Padres' GM A.J. Preller still assigns significant value to conventional scouting methods, even as the Padres seek to expand their analytics department.

In their recent discussions with Hosmer, the Padres and Royals have suggested flexibility beyond their original bids. Maybe there is still time for another suitor to enter the picture. Or perhaps Boras is prepared to make concessions of his own, should an offer land in the ballpark of his asking price. Position players report to Peoria and Surprise on Feb. 19.

"The ballpark includes backfields at this point, right?" one baseball official said. "Guys are going to give in."

Rosenthal: Ideas on improving baseball's competitiveness (draft lottery? tank tax?); potential pace-of-play compromise

By Ken Rosenthal 16 hours ago

Here's a plan to improve competitive balance, create greater incentives for winning and calm the rhetoric between Major League Baseball and those on the players' side:

Re-open the collective bargaining agreement. Restructure the amateur draft. And maybe adjust the international signing bonus pools, too.

The idea would address what union chief Tony Clark called a "race to the bottom"—the seeming desire of some clubs to gain advantages in the domestic and international markets by losing at the major league level.

Or, as Seattle Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto recently put it, "You could argue you're going to compete with more clubs to get the No. 1 pick in the draft than you would to win the World Series."

As Dipoto's remark indicates, the issue—tanking, rebuilding, whatever you want to call it—is not simply a concern of the players. An owner from a rebuilding club told me last week that he, too, believes the non-competitive stance of some clubs is harmful to baseball. And he said he is not alone among owners in that opinion.

Let's be clear: The rebuilding clubs are playing by the rules established by the current CBA, which was agreed upon by the players and owners in November 2016. But remember commissioner Bud Selig's mission to restore "hope and faith" to low-revenue markets and create greater parity in the sport? The refusal of some teams to compete to their maximum potential seems almost a violation of the spirit of his message.

Re-opening the CBA would not be unprecedented; the players and owners frequently have adjusted past agreements, most notably to adopt tougher stances on performance-enhancing drugs. The players, in accepting harsher penalties and more frequent testing, did not act completely in their best interests. But they recognized such measures were in the best interests of the game.

The same idea applies here: The sport would benefit if teams were given greater incentives to win. Unlike, say, the raising of the luxury-tax threshold or the implementation of a payroll floor, changes in the draft would not necessarily require economic concessions by the owners. In fact, some on the players' side believe such changes would not make enough of an impact; the greater issue, they say, is teams dumping proven major leaguers—and their salaries—for more affordable prospects in their organization.

Still, adjusting the draft so teams do not simply select in reverse order of record—and receive larger bonus pools for higher selections—would be a start. Baseball has discussed different draft models internally, produced binders full of proposed changes to the current structure, a management source said. Each side claims the other refused to engage on the matter in the last round of bargaining; lately, union and ownership representatives cannot even agree on the color of the sky. But baseball is indeed willing to discuss different draft mechanisms with the union, the management source said.

A number of possibilities would merit consideration:

*An NBA-style draft lottery. As the Philadelphia 76ers have shown, the current NBA system actually is not enough of a deterrent to massive rebuilding; the lottery determines only the top three picks among the 14 teams that do not make the playoffs.

A 30-team lottery in baseball, giving the World Series champion as much chance at the No. 1 pick as the worst-performing club, would be too random. Some form of lottery among the 22 teams that do not qualify for the playoffs—or perhaps only the 10 teams with the worst records—would be more realistic.

Perhaps a lottery also would help baseball address the plight of low-revenue teams. The Detroit Tigers and San Francisco Giants will pick 1-2 in the 2018 draft despite fielding two of the game's highest payrolls; they essentially are getting rewarded for incompetence. Baseball could arrange the lottery to give low-revenue teams a better chance, or otherwise reward them with higher slots and/or extra picks.

*The Cooper plan. J.J. Cooper, the executive editor of *Baseball America*, recently proposed what he called the “Tank Tax,” a plan that would penalize clubs for performing poorly in consecutive seasons.

Cooper recommended that any team failing to win 70 games in back-to-back seasons fall 10 slots in the draft. Three straight sub-70 win seasons would drop a team 15 spots, four straight 20 spots. A 70-win season at any point would enable a team to re-set.

As Cooper wrote, the threshold need not be 70—maybe 68 would be better, maybe 72; the players and owners could figure it out.

*The Boras plan. Agent Scott Boras, who has been railing all off-season about teams he says are not trying to win, would reward teams that reach certain victory plateaus with larger draft pools.

Boras has talked about giving a 78-win team \$2 million more in draft money, an 80-win team \$4 million more, all the way up to \$10 million for an 86-win club. A playoff appearance would net a club an additional \$2 million. High-revenue clubs would get half those amounts. Any team that failed to win 68 games would be disqualified from getting a top-five pick.

As with the Cooper plan, all of the numbers would be adjustable, subject to negotiation. The Boras plan even could be extended to international pools, but any form of it would require greater payouts by the owners, almost certainly necessitating a giveback by the union.

Pace of play would be one potential area of compromise. With spring training games beginning on Feb. 23, baseball wants an answer from the union this week on its latest pace-of-play proposal, sources say. A union official said the likelihood of an agreement was “slim and none,” meaning that commissioner Rob Manfred will need to decide whether to unilaterally implement his original plan, as he is empowered to do under the CBA.

Manfred's original plan includes a 20-second pitch clock that would be used at all times, with ball-strike penalties in effect after one warning. Baseball, however, believes the CBA allows Manfred to pull back and implement only parts of the proposal, sources say. So, it's possible the commissioner could withdraw the clock, implement less controversial changes and continue trying to negotiate with the union.

An exchange of olive branches is warranted after the bickering of the past few weeks; the CBA does not expire until 2021, and no one on either side would benefit from four more years of heightened tensions.

Maybe it's too soon to re-open the CBA. Maybe changing the draft would have a minimal effect. But at this point, both sides should be motivated to make a good-faith effort toward improving the sport's competitive integrity. Stop fighting. Get to work.