



# Padres Press Clips

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# Inbox: Syndergaard, rotation, prospects

Beat reporter AJ Cassavell answers questions from Padres fans

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

SAN DIEGO -- A.J. Preller has a history of being very active at the Winter Meetings. The Padres' general manager arrives in Las Vegas this weekend for baseball's annual offseason showcase, and the stage certainly seems set for more of the same.

The Padres have a wide open left side of the infield. They have a surplus of outfielders they're looking to deal from. And, perhaps most importantly, Preller must address a starting rotation with very little certainty entering 2019.

This week's Padres Inbox centers around that rotation -- the biggest question mark for the franchise moving forward.

## **What are the odds the Padres land [Noah Syndergaard](#)?**

-- Ryan C.

Significantly worse than they were a couple of weeks ago, when San Diego seemed like the best match for a potential deal. Mets general manager Brodie Van Wagonen [has committed to a 2019 run](#) at the National League East. That makes things difficult for the Padres, whose package for Syndergaard would presumably include some big league bats, but would likely be headlined by a big-name pitching prospect.

If the Mets want to win now, the Padres can't really help them, pitching-wise. Syndergaard -- who is 26 and has three years of team control remaining -- still fits San Diego's trajectory perfectly, so you can bet Preller will check in. But those discussions are unlikely to bear any fruit.

It's far likelier the Padres go the free-agent route in adding a pitcher. They're interested in [Nathan Eovaldi](#). (But so are approximately 29 other teams.) They'll probably settle on a more affordable option.

## **What's your prediction on the rotation next season? Who do you see cracking that five?**

-- David L.

OK, so we've established that Syndergaard isn't really an option here. I'm still willing to bet there's at least one member of the Opening Day rotation who isn't yet a Padre. Maybe two.

Last season, San Diego starters combined to post a 5.09 ERA, the worst mark in the National League. If the Padres plan to move toward contention, their poor starting pitching needs to change. That means that [Jacob Nix](#) and [Brett Kennedy](#) aren't merely going to be handed spots because they're young, and [Clayton Richard](#) and [Bryan Mitchell](#) aren't merely going to be handed spots because they're under contract.

It sure sounds like that quartet will need to legitimately earn their rotation places next spring. That's especially true if the Padres can add pieces via trade or free agency. Without further ado, here's my Opening Day starting five:

1. [Gio Gonzalez](#) (added via free agency)
2. [Joey Lucchesi](#)
3. [Sonny Gray](#) (added [via trade](#))
4. [Eric Lauer](#)
5. [Matt Strahm](#)

**How many "untouchable" prospects do you believe the Padres have, and who are they?**  
-- @patp\_pod

Here's the full list:

### **Fernando Tatis Jr.**

And that's the end of the list. Tatis could become a generational talent at shortstop or third base. Both of those spots are open, and the Padres are already planning for him to anchor one of them for the foreseeable future. As for the other prospects? They're all available -- for the right price.

Sure, the Padres love MacKenzie Gore, [Chris Paddack](#), [Francisco Mejia](#) and [Luis Urias](#). But I really don't think there'd be much hesitation if any of those four were to be the difference-maker in a deal for a Syndergaard-type arm.

**Which Padres player left unprotected do you think has the biggest chance of being selected in the Rule 5 Draft?**  
-- Josh

The scripts sure have flipped, huh? Two years ago, Preller maneuvered to land the top three picks in the Rule 5 Draft. Then he used all three picks to swipe unprotected prospects from other clubs, and he stashed all three on the big league roster for the entire season.

Now, it's the Padres' system that's overflowing with Rule 5-eligible guys. [Jason Vosler](#), their newly acquired third baseman, is likeliest to be taken. It surprised me that he wasn't added to the 40-man roster when they traded for him last month. He's 25 and seems big league ready after launching 23 homers in the upper levels of the Cubs' system last year.

Still, there's a chance he isn't taken. Even if he is, he'd be returned to San Diego if he doesn't make a roster elsewhere. It's also worth keeping an eye on outfielder Michael Gettys and righty reliever Trevor Megill. Both are fringe prospects, at best, but their skill sets could make them somewhat useful in one of the final spots on a big league roster.

# This is why the Padres might want Sonny Gray

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

SAN DIEGO -- In the Padres' efforts to build toward contention in 2020, their most pressing concern is the starting rotation. They're deep in numbers and deep in prospects. But they're severely lacking in proven big league talent.

As a result, general manager A.J. Preller is actively searching for established arms who can help the club beyond 2019. It's why he took a risk on [Garrett Richards](#) coming off Tommy John surgery. And it's why he's exploring trades and free agency in an effort to add to the team's rotation of the future.

From all that, a surprising name has emerged among San Diego's offseason targets. The Padres have indeed spoken with the Yankees about [Sonny Gray](#), as MLB.com's Jon Paul Morosi reported. There's no indication that a deal is particularly close, but it's a possibility.

That doesn't exactly fit the plan. Gray is slated to become a free agent next offseason, and he's owed a raise from his 2018 salary of \$6.5 million in arbitration. The Padres, of course, would like to see major improvement on their disappointing '18 campaign. But they've repeatedly said they won't sacrifice the future to do so.

Then why explore this trade? Well, the organization doesn't view a potential Gray deal as counterintuitive to those stated goals. There are a few factors to take into consideration:

## **What's the cost?**

For parts of five seasons, Gray was an extremely effective starter in Oakland. He made 112 starts there and posted a 3.42 ERA.

It's been a while since we've seen that version of Gray. Before he was demoted from the Yankees' rotation in August, Gray owned a 5.56 ERA in 21 starts. Earlier this offseason, general manager Brian Cashman made it very clear that Gray's time in New York is over.

All of that's to say: Gray's trade value isn't particularly high. The Padres have the deepest farm system in baseball, and if they part with a low- to mid-level prospect or two, it would hardly put a dent in their future.

## **Could they buy low and sell high?**

The Padres' interest in Gray comes from the hope that pitching coach Darren Balsley can help rekindle Gray's All-Star-caliber form of 2014 and '15.

If that version reappears, Gray would be the best pitcher on staff and a valuable innings eater. More importantly, however, he'd be a chip. A revitalized Gray could prove valuable to a contender at the Trade Deadline. In theory, the Padres could flip Gray in July for more than what they would pay for him in December.

If they don't, Gray's performance could still earn him a qualifying offer. He could turn it down, and the Padres would get compensation in the 2020 Draft. Or he could accept, and the Padres would have a useful rotation piece on hand for one more year.

### **What's the upside?**

It's easy to draw comparisons to a similar deal that Preller made last December, when he acquired [Freddy Galvis](#) from the Phillies for pitching prospect [Enyel De Los Santos](#). Galvis was solid at shortstop all season. But now he's a free agent. The return on that investment is essentially over.

The organization views Gray as a different kind of risk. A year ago, it was pretty clear what value Galvis would bring in 2018. He's been the model of consistency, and he started 162 games last season with numbers that were, frankly, entirely predictable.

Gray sits on the opposite end of the spectrum. No one can say definitively what kind of pitcher he'll be in 2019. With a change of leagues and a change of scenery, he could revert to his All-Star form. If so, the Padres would get a nice return on their investment.

Or he could be a dud, and San Diego will have parted with Minor League resources for a commodity that won't help at all beyond 2019.

Is that kind of volatility worth the cost? And perhaps most importantly: What, exactly, is a reasonable cost?

The Padres are asking themselves those exact questions right now.

# These are the top 50 prospects for the '19 Draft

By Jim Callis MLB.com [@JimCallisMLB](#)

The crop of talent for the 2019 Draft appears to be one of the most imbalanced in recent memory. Quality position prospects abound all over the diamond, while question marks surround the best pitchers available.

**MLB Pipeline's new Draft Top 50 Prospects list** reflects this dichotomy, starting with six straight hitters at the top. A lot will change before the Orioles exercise the No. 1 overall pick on June 3, but only once has a Draft started with as many as five consecutive position players. **Justin Upton** (D-backs), **Alex Gordon** (Royals), Jeff Clement (Mariners), **Ryan Zimmerman** (Nationals) and **Ryan Braun** (Brewers) were the first five selections in the 2005 Draft, which coincidentally is considered the strongest so far this millennium.

## Preseason Top 50 Prospects

"If you're in the hunt for pitching up top, this might not be the best year for it, especially with the college arms," an American League scouting director said. "It's definitely a position-player Draft from what I've seen over the summer. It's better than what it's been the last couple of years. It's almost a little scary how good the hitters are compared to the pitchers."

The consensus among clubs is that the top tier of 2019 prospects includes as few as one and no more than three position players: Oregon State catcher Adley Rutschman, Colleyville (Texas) Heritage High shortstop Bobby Witt Jr. and California first baseman Andrew Vaughn. They're also the three most highly decorated prospects in the '19 class.

Rutschman won Most Outstanding Player honors at the College World Series, where he helped the Beavers capture a national title to cap a breakout sophomore season in which he batted .408/.505/.628 and set school records with 102 hits and 83 RBIs. He's a switch-hitting catcher who's just starting to harness what could be plus power, and he's also a quality receiver with a strong arm.

The son of Bobby Witt, the No. 3 overall pick in 1985 en route to a 16-year pitching career in the big leagues, Witt Jr. won the High School Home Run Derby at the All-Star Game and also Most Valuable Player Award honors at the Under Armour All-America Game, the States Play Series and the 18-and-under Pan American Championships in Panama. He's a potential five-tool shortstop who comes with some mild hittability concerns, but also plus raw power, speed, arm strength and defense.

"In 1999, we had the two Joshes [Hamilton and Beckett] and then everybody else," a National League scouting official said. "It could be a similar situation this year with Rutschman and Witt. Bobby Witt's kid is certainly one of the most exciting kids I've seen in a long time. You have to go back a long way to see a shortstop with those tools."

Some teams would group Vaughn, the reigning Golden Spikes Award winner, with Rutschman and Witt. He's the best offensive player available, a .402/.531/.819 hitter as a sophomore who draws raves for his ability to barrel balls, hit for power and control the strike zone.

There's plenty of depth beyond that trio. On the college side, there's another catcher ticketed for the top of the draft in Baylor's Shea Langeliers, a five-tool sleeper in Missouri outfielder Kameron Misner and potential impact bats such as Texas Tech third baseman Josh Jung, Vanderbilt outfielder J.J. Bleday and North Carolina first baseman Michael Busch. Scouts usually bemoan the lack of college shortstops, but this year, there are five who could factor into the first round (even if they might not all stay at the position): UNLV's Bryson Stott, Texas A&M's Braden Shewmake, Auburn's Will Holland, N.C. State's Will Wilson and Clemson's Logan Davidson.

Along with Witt, shortstop C.J. Abrams (Blessed Trinity Catholic High, Roswell, Ga.) and outfielders Jerrion Ealy (Jackson Prep, Flowood, Miss.) and Maurice Hampton (University High, Memphis, Tenn.) headline an impressive group of premium high school athletes. Ealy and Hampton are also four-star football recruits, with the former a running back committed to Mississippi and the latter a cornerback earmarked for Louisiana State. Outfielder Corbin Carroll (Lakeside School, Seattle) is one of the best pure hitters in the Draft, third baseman Rece Hinds (IMG Academy) may have the most raw power available and third basemen Brett Baty (Lake Travis High, Austin, Texas) and Tyler Callihan (Providence School, Jacksonville, Fla.) combine the ability to hit for average and power.

"You'll see position players, and especially the college bats, move up into the top half of the first round," an NL scouting director said. "You could see 18-20 bats in the first round, because it's just not a great class of pitching."

MLB Pipeline's top-rated pitcher is right-hander Carter Stewart, who went No. 8 overall to the Braves in the 2018 Draft but didn't sign after a disagreement over the severity of a wrist injury that hampered him at the end of his senior season at Eau Gallie High (Melbourne, Fla.). Stewart, who had the best curveball in the '18 class as well as a fastball that reached 98 mph, is expected to enroll at Eastern Florida State Junior College for the spring semester.

There's also uncertainty with the top arms at four-year colleges, all of whom are left-handers: Duke's Graeme Stinson, Kentucky's Zack Thompson and Texas Christian's Nick Lodolo. Stinson has to prove he can succeed and hold up as a starter after relieving for most of his college career, and Thompson missed two months last spring with an elbow injury that didn't require surgery. Lodolo was the highest unsigned pick in the 2016 Draft (No. 41 overall, Pirates) but has been more respectable than dominant with the Horned Frogs.

Clubs consider high school pitching to be the riskiest Draft demographic, and prep righties often seem to last longer than they should. Brennan Malone (IMG Academy, Bradenton, Fla.), Daniel Espino (Georgia Premier Academy, Statesboro, Ga.) and Matthew Allan (Seminole, Fla., High) are the premier power arms among prepsters. Former All-Star Al Leiter's son, Jack (Delbarton School, Morristown, N.J.), is the most polished high school hurler, while two-way star Spencer Jones (La Costa Canyon High, Carlsbad, Calif.) is the best left-hander.

"This is a good Draft. I like it," a second NL scouting official said. "There's not a lot of pitching at the top, but there are a lot of bats to go get."

## BREAKDOWN

**College:** 27

**HS:** 22

**JC:** 1

**RHP:** 12

**OF:** 10

**SS:** 10

**LHP:** 6

**3B:** 5

**1B:** 4

**C:** 2

**2B:** 1

### Top tools

All players, as always, are given grades on the 20-to-80 scouting scale for all tools or pitches. These are future grades, a reflection of what the scouting industry thinks each of these amateur players can become in the future. Here are the top grades for each tool and pitch.

#### Position players

**Hit:** 60 -- Adley Rutschman, C, Oregon State; Andrew Vaughn, 1B, California; Riley Greene, Hagerty (Fla.) HS; Corbin Carroll, Lakeside (Wash.) HS

**Power:** 60 -- Andrew Vaughn, 1B, California; Rece Hinds, 3B, IMG Academy (Fla.)

**Run:** 75 -- CJ Abrams, SS, Blessed Trinity Catholic (Ga.) HS; Jerrion Ealy, OF, Jackson Prep (Miss.)

**Arm:** 70 -- Shea Langeliers, C, Baylor

**Field:** 60 -- Adley Rutschman, C, Oregon State; Bobby Witt Jr., SS, Colleyville Heritage (Texas) HS; Shea Langeliers, C, Baylor; Mike Togliano, 1B/OF, UCLA; Nasim Nunez, SS, Collins Hill (Ga.) HS

#### Pitchers

**Fastball:** 70 -- Brennan Malone, RHP, IMG Academy (Fla.); Daniel Espino, RHP, Georgia Premier Academy; Ryne Nelson, RHP, Oregon

**Curveball:** 65 -- Carter Stewart, RHP, None

**Slider:** 65 -- Graeme Stinson, LHP, Duke

**Changeup:** 65 -- Nick Lodolo, LHP, TCU

**Control:** 55 -- Jack Leiter, RHP, Delbarton (N.J.) HS



# Tatis leads way in loaded Padres system

## No. 2 overall prospect highlights San Diego's bountiful farm

By Chris Bumbaca / MiLB.com

Brighter days are on the horizon in sunny San Diego.

The Padres have not finished higher than fourth in the National League West since 2014 and are coming off a 64-98 campaign that sent them to the cellar.

But there's plenty of hope within the organization -- and with good reason. Three of the system's prospects participated in the Futures Game and San Diego possesses arguably the deepest system in baseball with 10 prospects ranked among MLB.com's [top 100](#), including five in the top 35.

And sooner than later, those players will begin making their way to Southern California.

"We're really excited about the talent pool in the system," Padres director of player development Sam Geaney said. "The guys down there now know they have a chance to be a part of something special in San Diego and want to get here."

### Padres Organizational All-Stars

**Catcher -- [Austin Allen](#), San Antonio (119 games):** For the second straight season, Allen cracked 22 homers, leading the system while playing in the Double-A Texas League. In fact, most of his numbers closely mirrored what he produced in 2017 at Class A Advanced Lake Elsinore.

The [Padres' 25th-ranked prospect](#) hit for a slightly higher average and more power following his promotion in 2018, posting a .290/.351/.857 slash line while driving in 56 runs. The 24-year-old had the same number of hits (131) and doubles (31) each of the last two seasons.

Geaney praised the backstop's work ethic, particularly the efforts he's put in to improve his defense.

"He's answered everything that we've put in front of him, that we want to see out of him," Geaney said. "That's also carried over into some really strong performances on the field the last couple of years."

**Honorable mention -- [Brett Nicholas](#), El Paso (117 games):** Nicholas led the system with 83 RBIs across 412 at-bats. The 30-year-old, who spent the first part of his career in the Rangers organization and has 103 Major League at-bats, hit .291 with a .893 OPS, cracked 30 doubles and registered 200 total bases.

The University of Missouri product is no longer with the Padres after signing a Minor League deal with the Rockies on Nov. 19.

**First baseman -- [Brad Zunica](#), Lake Elsinore (123 games):** Zunica isn't a hitter who consistently puts the ball in play, but his bat has pop. In 2018, the 23-year-old belted 17 homers and drove in 60 runs with a .769 OPS. Those numbers come a year after he clubbed 18 dingers in 84 games with Class A Fort Wayne.

Zunica posted a modest slash line of .251/.340/.429 and struck out in 34.3 percent of his at-bats.

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**Second baseman -- [Luis Urias](#), El Paso (120 games), San Diego (12 games):** One of the system's jewels, Urias is the Padres' fourth-ranked prospect and No. 27 overall. With Triple-A El Paso, his slash line was .296/.398/.447, but behind the numbers were inconsistent stretches in which he'd go from locked in to slumping at the dish.

The Mexico native's campaign was strong enough to earn him a Futures Game selection in July, and he heated up following All-Star Weekend. In 24 August contests, Urias batted .420 with a 1.139 OPS. That led to his first big league callup, and he hit .208 with two homers in 48 at-bats with San Diego before a hamstring injury ended his season.

"It was positive for him to get a taste," Geaney said. "He's a guy who's swung the bat ever since he signed with us back in 2013. He continues to answer every challenge. He saw some adversity, offensively, for maybe the first time in his career at Triple-A this year. Either way, he dug himself out of that in August and it culminated with his big league debut in September, which was very cool."

Geaney wouldn't say for certain whether Urias, who also can play shortstop, will begin the season as the Padres' starting second baseman.

"I think there's going to be a lot of competition," he said. "I don't think there's anyone on the club, Luis included, that's guaranteed of anything. He's in San Diego, rehabbing that hamstring injury. He's going to be ready. He's going to be a strong consideration to be a part of the club that goes north from Phoenix in April, but there's definitely a lot of time between now and then."

**Third baseman -- [Hudson Potts](#), Lake Elsinore (106 games), San Antonio (22 games):** Potts is progressing how the front office imagined when the Padres selected him with the 24th overall pick in the 2016 Draft.

Potts mashed with Lake Elsinore to start his second full season in the Minors, batting .281/.350/.498 with 17 homers and 58 RBIs in the California League. The Southland, Texas, native was the second-youngest player selected in the first two rounds of his Draft class, so the Padres are excited by the numbers, given his age.

"Huddy continues to have really strong performance separate from his age," Geaney said. "But if you look at his age relative to his peers, this is a guy who turned 20 years old at the end of the Arizona Fall League and put up a really, really nice year. He hits the baseball really hard, continuing to walk more, making [plate discipline] a weapon."

Geaney noted Potts' defense, which he projects as a strength at the hot corner.

"We've seen as much, if not more, development from Huddy on the defensive side of the ball, to the point where he's going to turn himself into an above-average defender at third base," he said. "It's something we're very proud of."

Following a promotion to San Antonio, Potts hit .154 with two homers, but Geaney sees the fact that Potts made it to the Texas League as a positive.

"We've had him now for only two full seasons," he said. "To see him touch the Double-A level and prepare himself for the level he's likely to play at next year, it's definitely a successful season for him."

In the AFL, San Diego's No. 23 prospect batted .228 with two homers and 13 RBIs in 21 games.

**Shortstop -- [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#), San Antonio (88 games):** Tatis Jr. gets two thumbs up for his 2018 season, despite the fact his left one cost him several weeks when it had to be [surgically repaired in July](#).

MLB.com's No. 2 overall prospect was scary at the dish when healthy, posting a .286/.355/.507 slash line with 16 long balls and 43 RBIs. For all of 19 years old, Tatis has an advanced approach at the plate.

The Padres hope his time spent in the Dominican Winter League allows him move smoothly into the 2019 campaign.

"He was in the midst of a really, really strong season," Geaney said. "There was a lot of growth on both sides of the baseball. I think the underwritten story of Fernando over the last couple of years is the progression of him as a true defensive shortstop. It's something he takes a lot of pride in. It's something we as an organization are very proud of. I think with his size and his overall athleticism, he's a pretty unique player in the middle of the infield, in addition to everything he does offensively. It's been really fun to see that."

The 2018 Futures Game selection, who was acquired from the White Sox in 2016 as part of the trade for right-hander [James Shields](#), has plenty of weight on his shoulders as the organization's top prospect. And despite being a teenager for another month, Geaney believes he's ready to deal with the hype.

"I think he definitely understands at a young age -- he was in Major League camp and got off to a nice start there, and then to have the season he did before it was interrupted -- I think he knows that he's under a microscope," Geaney said. "I think he's excited about what we're trying to build here in San Diego. He knows that with his talents and his prospect status comes with responsibility. I think he welcomes that."

## Outfielders

**[Josh Naylor](#), San Antonio (128 games):** Naylor used a scorching start -- he hit .379 with seven homers in April -- to set the tone for a strong 2018 season. Along with a move from first base, the 2015 first-round pick combined average and power at the plate. Naylor batted a career-best .297 at a new level and set another personal best with 17 homers while driving in 74 runs.

Geaney described Naylor as one of the system's most talented all-around hitters who has raked at every level. The Padres' 15th-ranked prospect truly loves hitting, he said.

"He loves his craft. He works at it relentlessly," Geaney added. "He's layered several strong seasons on top of each other, a little stronger this year at least in terms of power and in terms of his average. He continues to be everything you want in a hitter. He walked more this year and struck out less. He's checking all of the boxes we look for in a young player."

Naylor welcomed the transition to the outfield, Geaney said. The Mississauga, Ontario, native also displayed noticeable athleticism, despite a stocky frame -- he's listed at 5-foot-11 and 250 pounds. The Padres have confidence that he'll develop into a solid defender.

"He might not be built like a conventional outfielder, but he runs well," Geaney said. "He's an average runner. Very, very athletic. He throws well. He really enjoys playing the outfield."

**Buddy Reed, Lake Elsinore (79 games), San Antonio (43 games):** Another Padres prospect who participated in the Futures Game, Reed excelled with Lake Elsinore, hitting .324/.371/.549 with 12 dingers and 47 RBIs.

The Padres' No. 13 prospect struggled after a midseason promotion to Double-A, hitting .179 with one homer in 179 at-bats.

"None of these prospects are going to face a linear path to the big leagues where they have success at every level," Geaney said. "Double-A is a pretty robust challenge for a lot of these guys."

Geaney pointed to Reed's strong Fall League showing -- the University of Florida product hit .333 with a .882 OPS, six homers and 32 RBIs -- and said that fell in line with what he accomplished in the first half of 2018.

"These guys aren't going to climb every step of the Minor League ladder with success along the way all the time," Geaney said. "I think it's really cool to see them respond to little bits of adversity."

**Shane Peterson, El Paso (126 games):** At the age of 30, Peterson batted .286 with a .793 OPS, 11 homers and 74 RBIs in the Pacific Coast League. The 2008 second-round pick had not driven in that many runs since 2014, when he totaled 90 RBIs for Triple-A Sacramento in the Angels system.

Peterson elected free agency last month and is no longer with the organization.

**Honorable mention -- Edward Olivares, Lake Elsinore (129 games):** Olivares came over from the Blue Jays in January 2018 in the Yangervis Solarte deal. He hit .277 with a .750 OPS. 12 homers and 62 RBIs in the Cal League in his first season in the Padres system.

The organization rewarded the strong first impression by adding him to the 40-man roster ahead of the Rule 5 Draft this month.

**Right-handed starting pitcher -- Chris Paddack, Lake Elsinore (10 starts), San Antonio (seven starts):** Obviously, the hurler who captured the Top Starting Pitcher MiLBY makes this list. Even more impressive is the fact that he skyrocketed up the prospect rankings in 2018, his first season back from Tommy John surgery.

The Padres eased him back to form. The 22-year-old never threw more than 86 pitches or went longer than six innings in a start. Paddack went 4-1 with a 2.24 ERA for Lake Elsinore before impressing even more with San Antonio, where he was 3-2 with a 1.91 ERA. The Cedar Park, Texas, native struck out 120 over 90 innings and fanned at least nine six times (all in the Cal League).

"The level he dominated the California League and Double-A, I can't sit here and say that I expected it," Geaney said. "Knowing Chris and knowing the competitor he is, what kind of shape he puts himself in, how he viewed adversity, how he viewed getting hurt, how he responded, I'm not surprised, but maybe a little taken aback with how dominant he was."

Paddack is another example of how the Padres have constructed their system through trades; the Marlins took him in the eighth round of the 2015 Draft and dealt him to San Diego for [Fernando Rodney](#) in 2016.

**Left-handed starting pitcher -- [Logan Allen](#), San Antonio (20 games, 19 starts), El Paso (five starts):** The Padres have four left-handed starters ranked in MLB.com's top 100 prospect, but none had a better season than Allen.

The No. 76 overall prospect went 10-6 with a 2.75 ERA for San Antonio, striking out 125 over 121 innings while posting a 1.05 WHIP. Opponents hit .195 against him in his final eight appearances for the Missions.

That earned him a promotion to El Paso, where he went 4-0 with a 1.63 ERA to close the season.

"Logan's very much put himself into consideration to be a part of hopefully our Major League club here in the next couple of years, taking the ball every five or six days," Geaney said.

A large part of Allen's success was the dominance of his off-speed pitches, particularly his slider, which developed as a putaway pitch.

"He's very intelligent, a quick thinker," Geaney added. "Another guy who is young in terms of his date of birth but has evolved quickly."

**Honorable mention -- [Osvaldo Hernandez](#), Fort Wayne (21 games, 19 starts):** His final six starts were a microcosm of Hernandez's season as he allowed three earned runs over 33 2/3 innings. The 20-year-old finished with a 11-4 record and 1.81 ERA (1.59 ERA as a starter) with Class A Fort Wayne.

A native of Havana, Cuba, Hernandez gave up two earned runs in four May starts after posting a 4.26 ERA in April. He compiled a 1.34 ERA in 10 games after the Midwest League All-Star break.

"[He's] a very competitive guy, probably has one of the best breaking balls in the entire organization," Geaney said. "To see it play at the low-A level in his first full professional season, it sort of gave an affirmation to the work our scouting department did."

**Relief pitcher -- [Miguel Diaz](#), San Antonio (19 games, nine starts), El Paso (five games, two starts), San Diego (11 games):** As a reliever in the Texas League, Diaz posted a 1.57 ERA and 1.14 WHIP over 34 1/3 innings, surrendering just one homer. The native of the Dominican Republic allowed 10 earned runs over 18 2/3 innings with the big league club.

"I think the fun part about Miggy is that on any given night he has a chance to throw up some of the best stuff in the entire organization," said Geaney, adding he wouldn't be surprised if Diaz's repertoire makes an appearance on the Pitching Ninja Twitter account.

Geaney also said the organization likes what it's seen from the 24-year-old right-hander in terms of possibly becoming a multi-inning reliever.

# Padres roster review: Pedro Avila

Jeff Sanders

Sizing up the Padres' 40-man roster, from A to Z, heading into the 2019 season:

## PEDRO AVILA

- **Position(s):** Right-handed starting pitcher
- **2019 Opening Day age:** 22
- **Bats/throws:** R / R
- **Height/weight:** 5-foot-11 / 190 pounds
- **Acquired:** From the Nationals in December 2016 trade
- **Contract status:** Added to the 40-man roster in November 2018.
- **Key stats (Lake Elsinore):** 7-9, 4.27 ERA, 142 strikeouts, 54 walks, 1.45 WHIP, .270 opponent average (24 games, 23 starts, 129 innings)

## STAT TO NOTE

- **8.33** – Avila's strikeout-to-walk ratio this winter in Venezuela. He has struck out 25 and walked three in 20 1/3 innings while posting an 0.89 ERA for Margarita.

## TRENDING

- **Up** – An international signee of the Nationals in 2014 for \$50,000, Avila joined the Padres in 2016 in a straight-up trade for C **Derek Norris**, who was a non-tender candidate. He finished his first full season in the organization with more strikeouts (170) than any other Padres farmhand, which included 17 in a Midwest League record-breaking start. Avila was much better that year in Fort Wayne (3.05 ERA) than he was in Lake Elsinore (4.98), but returned to the California League in 2018 with much better results. He did allow eight home runs, two shy of his career-high, but his opponent average dropped from .284 in 43 innings in 2017 to

.270. Armed with a 91-92 mph, a swing-and-miss curve and a change-up, Avila is ranked No. 29 in the Padres system by MLB.com and was added to the 40-man roster in November after his second full year in the organization.

## **2019 OUTLOOK**

- Protected from the Rule 5 draft, Avila will advance to Double-A for the first time in his career. Look for him to spend at least half a season at the Padres' new affiliate in Amarillo, Texas.

## **PADRES POWER RANKINGS**

*(Currently 40 players on the 40-man roster)*

1. [Austin Allen](#)
2. Pedro Avila
3. [Carlos Asuaje](#)



# SDSU hosts USD in the crosstown basketball rivalry that isn't

**Mark Zeigler**

The [San Diego State](#) men's basketball team has two nonconference games that it wouldn't otherwise schedule. They're four days apart.

One was Saturday at [Illinois State](#) as part of the Mountain West/Missouri Valley Challenge, requiring a nine-hour trip of planes and buses and winter parkas to the frigid flatlands of middle America. The other is tonight at Viejas Arena, against a team located 10 miles away.

The Aztecs won the first, 75-65 at Redbird Arena. Now they'll put on a good face and try to win the second, against a 6-2 USD team that starts four seniors and a fourth-year junior who run a hard-to-guard, Princeton-style offense in their sleep.

This is the third of a four-year contract between the schools, with just next season's game at Jenny Craig Pavilion remaining, that was orchestrated by former SDSU Athletic Director Jim Sterk and influential boosters like Padres managing partner Ron Fowler, who donates substantial amounts of money to both schools. They operate under the premise that an annual meeting between the city's Division I basketball programs is "good for the community."

The argument against is that the risk outweighs the reward for an SDSU program trying to build a nonconference résumé worthy of an at-large NCAA berth, unnecessarily exposing it to an amped-up team resentful of the immense shadow cast by its crosstown brethren.

Or put another way: You never hear SDSU players or coaches calling it a rivalry or referring to the "city championship," as some media outlets do.



“They’re the ones who think it’s a rivalry,” Aztecs senior guard Jeremy Hemsley said after last year’s 66-57 win at USD. “We don’t try to act like it’s a rivalry or hype up any game. I think the rivalry game is more them. We just had to go out there and make sure we didn’t blow off a game like we did in my freshman year with them at Petco Park.”

Ah, Petco Park.

The series had expired and looked like it was headed for hiatus when a decision was made, well above the coaches’ pay grade, to play an outdoor game at the Padres’ home in 2015. The initial idea was for SDSU to face a high-profile opponent from a power conference in a nationally televised game; instead, USD became the opponent in Fowler’s ballpark and the series was extended four years beyond that in their own arenas.

The Aztecs looked lethargic and missed 19 of their first 22 shots in the afternoon sun and wind, and lost for the only time in the last 12 meetings. Three months later, the head of the NCAA Tournament selection committee mentioned it as one of the reasons they were snubbed despite convincingly winning the [Mountain West](#) with a 16-2 regular-season record.

The arguments against playing USD, though, are muted this season by two factors. One, the game is at Viejas Arena, where the Aztecs haven’t lost to the Toreros since 2000. Two, the Toreros are actually pretty good after nearly a decade wallowing in the lower half of Div. I and enduring an ugly point-shaving scandal.

That mitigates the previous fear of having nothing to gain from a win in terms of computer metrics and résumé optics, and everything to lose. This year, they get an opponent that beat the [Pac-12’s Colorado](#) at home and took [Washington](#) to the wire on the road.

Their rankings in the NCAA’s new NET metric: 43 for SDSU, 74 for USD.

Tactically, the Aztecs (5-2) should have an advantage if 6-foot-10 post Yauhen Massalski doesn’t play after spraining his ankle a week ago in a 93-86 loss at Mississippi. Illinois State, picked to win the Missouri Valley, struggled against SDSU’s

length inside, especially when 6-10 freshman Nathan Mensah (and his 7-5 wingspan) was paired with 6-10 Jalen McDaniels. Together, they had 25 rebounds.

And last year, SDSU's Devin Watson (26 points, five steals) got the better of Isaiah Wright (10 points, 4-of-15 shooting) in the battle of veteran point guards.

"They've got many, many playmakers who present a lot of matchup problems on both ends of the floor," first-year USD head coach Sam Scholl said. "(They're) well-schooled defensively. And their offense is clicking at a pretty high rate right now."

The intangible, of course, is human nature. The occasion is far bigger for the senior-laden roster that largely exists in anonymity and views this as a last chance to command the spotlight. (USD has drawn 6,266 fans, total, in five home games and as little as 544 in one; SDSU has drawn 32,037 to just three games.)

Asked if there's extra incentive playing a team from across town, Watson said: "Not really."

Hemsley, sitting next to him, added: "It's just another game."

Maybe the biggest game of the season for one team ... and maybe the third biggest game in eight days for the other, sandwiched on the schedule between road dates at Illinois State and Cal.

Sounds like the quintessential trap game.

"I mean, I'd be more concerned if USD was 2-6 instead of 6-2," SDSU coach Brian Dutcher said after painstakingly working against USD's offensive sets in practice Tuesday. "Then you sit there and worry that we're taking them lightly because they're 2-6. They're 6-2. They've got a very good team this year.

"Trust me, we won't be taking them lightly."

## **USD at SDSU**

**Wednesday:** 7 p.m. at Viejas Arena

**On the air:** Stadium web stream (also carried on Facebook live); 1360-AM and 101.5-FM (SDSU), 1700-AM (USD)

**Records:** USD is 6-2; SDSU is 5-2

**Series history:** This is the 50<sup>th</sup> all-time meeting. SDSU leads 31-18 and has won 11 straight played indoors and eight straight at home. The lone loss in that stretch was 53-48 outdoors at Petco Park in 2015. The last USD win at Viejas (then Cox) Arena was 55-52 in 2000.

**Toreros update:** It's highly doubtful 6-10 sophomore Yauhen "Squirrel" Massalski, the Toreros' second-leading rebounder, will play. He missed the Toreros' game Saturday against Long Beach State with a sprained right ankle and has been limited to rehabbing the last two days. With Massalski sidelined and 6-8 Alex Floresca expected to start for him, an already thin USD bench becomes even thinner. The next highest scoring bench player is 6-10 Jose Martinez at 3.5 points. The Toreros have outscored opponents 338-273 in the second half, an average of 42.2-34.1. USD is shooting 75.7 percent on free throws, 35<sup>th</sup> out of 353 Division I programs. Three starters are over 80 percent: Isaiah Wright (86.2), Isaiah Pineiro (85.7) and Tyler Williams (83.3). Pineiro led USD in scoring and rebounding last season (15.7 and 6.2). He's leading in both categories again and has upped the numbers to 21.3 and 8.1.

**Aztecs update:** They are healthier than Saturday, when Nolan Narain skipped the trip with the flu, Jordan Schakel was so sick he couldn't warm up and Devin Watson was on antibiotics. Everyone practiced Tuesday. The 75-65 decision at Illinois State gives the Aztecs a second "resume" win, to go with the 19-point comeback against Xavier in the Maui Invitational. The test now is not to suffer a letdown after a long trip home, the loss of two days practice due to travel and overconfidence from beating an Illinois State team with one of the nation's best home records in recent years. The Aztecs won 66-57 at USD last year despite playing without Trey Kell (ankle) and Max Montana (knee), and with Malik Pope slowed by a foot injury. Devin Watson had 26 points, Matt Mitchell had 13 and Jeremy Hemsley had 11. Jalen McDaniels played only eight minutes and finished with two points.

# #PadresOnDeck: Podorsky, Marcano, Basabe Put Themselves on the Padres' Radar in 2018

*By Bill Center*

Let's be honest.

Few of even the Padres' most devoted fans had any idea who **Robbie Podorsky**, **Olivier Basabe** and **Tucupita Marcano** were going into the 2018 season.

Podorsky entered the season as a 5-foot-7, 170-pound, 25th-round pick from the 2017 Draft. Marcano was best known for being named for his hometown in Venezuela—Tucupita. And although he was also a native of Venezuela, Basabe was an eighth-round pick in the 2017 Draft out of Faulkner University.

In a Padres' minor league system that numbers some 200 players, Podorsky, Marcano and Basabe weren't on the radar going into the 2018 season.

They are now.

Each had something of a breakout season. A look at the trio:

— Robbie Podorsky, 23, was drafted out of McNeese State in his native Louisiana. The right-handed hitter's game is speed. Although he lacks the size and power of the prototypical left fielder, Podorsky has hit for a high average with a high on-base percentage in his first two professional seasons.

Before his 2018 season was cut short by an injury during the first week of July, Podorsky was hitting .353 with a .403 on-base percentage between Single-A Fort Wayne (57 games) and Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore (five games). Podorsky had seven doubles, six triples and a homer with 24 steals, 38 runs scored and 27 RBIs in 224 at-bats. He had a .854 OPS this season.

In 2017, while playing in the Arizona Rookie League and with Short-Season Single-A Tri-City after the draft, Podorsky was identified as the fastest runner in the Padres' system by Baseball America. The right-handed hitter batted .325 in his first professional season with a .375 on-base percentage and a .764 OPS.

— Basabe is also a right-handed hitter. The 5-foot-11, 190-pound 21-year-old hit .272 with a .348 on-base percentage and a .737 OPS in the Arizona Rookie League following the 2017 Draft.

This season, Basabe hit .296 between Tri-City and Fort Wayne with a .349 on-base percentage and a .440 slugging percentage for a .789 OPS. The versatile infielder-outfielder played 40 of his 57 games with Tri-City, where he hit .313 with a .371 on-base percentage. Overall, Basabe had 14 doubles, a triple, five homers and six stolen bases in 216 at-bats with 25 runs scored and 32 RBIs.

— Marcano turned 19 on Sept. 15 after his first season in the United States. He hit .366 between the Arizona Rookie League (35 games) and Tri-City (17 games) last summer with a .450 on-base percentage and a .438 slugging percentage for a .888 OPS.

Marcano, who played shortstop and second base, drew 30 walks in 225 plate appearances in 2018 with just 16 strikeouts. He had five doubles, three triples and a home run with 15 steals. He also scored 45 runs in 52 games with 26 RBIs.

The 6-foot, 150-pound left-handed hitter was a member of the Padres' deep 2016 international signing class, although he wasn't as highly regarded as other prospects. Marcano was spotted by Antonio Alejos and Yfrain Linares while they were scouting other players.

Marcano hit only .206 as a 17-year-old during his first pro season in the Dominican Summer League in the summer of 2017. But he had a .337 on-base percentage while drawing 34 walks against 15 strikeouts in 204 plate appearances.

# Javy Guerra, Allen Córdoba Open Play in Panama as Gerardo Reyes returns home with a 0.00 ERA in Mexico

Tatis Jr., Gettys, Torrens, Burgos continue with hot bats

*By Bill Center*

The off-season winter leagues don't play out in a way that United States fans are accustomed.

Most players from U.S. leagues don't sign on for a full season in winter ball. Some players start a season and return to the United States before Christmas. Others join winter league teams later in the season and use the second half and playoffs as a tune up for spring training.

And the winter league seasons have differing schedules.

For example, while Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Mexico have been playing since October, Puerto Rico and Australia didn't start play until late November. And Padre infielders **Javy Guerra** and **Allen Córdoba** will be in lineups Tuesday night (Dec. 4) as the Panamanian Winter (Probeis) opens play.

But winter ball ended for some players this past week, most notably relief pitcher **Gerardo Reyes**, outfielder **Edward Olivares** and starting pitcher **Pedro Avila**. Also, the season ended early for right

fielder **Franmil Reyes** when he returned to San Diego from the Dominican Republic to have a meniscus tear surgically repaired in a knee.

Gerardo Reyes, 25, who was recently added to the Padres' 40-man roster, was close to perfect in his 19 outings with Obregon in the Mexican Pacific League. He finished with a 0.00 earned run average in 18 innings, allowing no runs on nine hits and seven walks with 20 strikeouts. That's a 0.89 WHIP, a .153 opponents' batting average and 10 strikeouts per nine innings.

Olivares, 22, the [Padres' N<sup>o</sup>28 prospect](#), hit .340 with three doubles, two triples, two homers and 14 RBIs in 29 games in Venezuela. He had a .404 on-base percentage and a .slugging percentage for a .883 OPS.

Avila, 21, ranked the [Padres' N<sup>o</sup>29 prospect](#), had both a 0.89 ERA and 0.89 WHIP in four starts in Venezuela with a .211 opponents' batting average over 20 1/3 innings.

Franmil Reyes played only 13 games for Escogido in the Dominican Republic before being hurt. He was hitting .444 with a .510 slugging percentage and a .689 slugging percentage for a 1.199 OPS. He had two doubles and three homers.

Meanwhile, a number of Padres continue strong runs in winter ball.

— Outfielder **Franchy Cordero**, 24, who was Franmil Reyes' teammate with Escogido, is hitting .308 with a .357 on-base percentage and a .462 slugging percentage for a .819 slugging percentage after 16 games. He has five doubles, a triple and a homer.

— Top prospect **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, 19, is hitting .269 after 15 games as the shortstop for Estrellas in the Dominican Republic. He also has four doubles, three homers and six stolen bases in 52 at-bats for a .377 on-base percentage and a .519 slugging percentage for a .896 OPS.



— Catcher **Francisco Mejía** is hitting .255 as Tatis' teammate with Estrellas.

The hottest hitters from the Padres system in winter ball are outfielders **Michael Gettys** and **Aldemar Burgos** and catcher **Luis Torrens**.

— Gettys, 23, is hitting .341 with two doubles, a triple, four homers and 11 RBIs in just 41 at-bats over 12 games for Adelaide in Australia. He has a .391 on-base percentage and a .732 slugging percentage for a 1.123 OPS. Infielders **Justin Lopez** and **Kelvin Melean** continue to play for Canberra in Australia while middle infielder **Jarryd Dale** is with Melbourne.

— Burgos has a .333/.396/.500/.896 slash line after 14 games with Carolina in Puerto Rico. He has three doubles, a triple and a home run in 48 at-bats in his second straight impressive start in Puerto Rico, where right-handed reliever **Colby Blueberg** has a 4.32 ERA after seven appearances.

— Torrens is hitting .366 with a .463 slugging percentage and a .829 OPS after 13 games with Magallanes in Venezuela, where he is playing first base as well as catching. **Gabriel Arias**, 18, continues to play short for La Guaira in Venezuela, where he is hitting .254.