



# Padres Press Clips

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# Hunter Renfroe battles to get it right

Kevin Acee, SDUT, 2/28/18

Hunter Renfroe's first hit of the spring shot 410 feet into a breeze and was just descending when it bounced off the batter's eye beyond the center field wall.

The feeling is Renfroe will need more of that kind of hitting to retain his spot in the Padres' lineup.

Believe it or not, the former first-rounder draft pick's status is one of the biggest "ifs" hanging over spring training.

Renfroe has flashed the talent — certainly the power and arm — to suggest he will be a solid big-leaguer. What the Padres are looking for is championship-caliber players, and Renfroe has some work to do to be more complete.

The 26-year-old set a Padres rookie record with 26 home runs in 2017, but he swatted at far too many bad pitches. His strikeout rate of nearly 30 percent was higher than his on-base percentage.

And his inability to hit right-handed pitchers made him almost a liability on many nights, an unfortunate circumstance he was placed in due to injuries elsewhere in the outfield not allowing him to platoon.

"There wasn't much of a time last year where we soft-served him," manager Andy Green said. "He went up there against everybody. We didn't take him out of the lineup, we didn't platoon. We didn't try to make it easier on him."

It is possible, if not probable, that this season Renfroe would be part of a platoon in one of the corner outfield positions (whichever one Wil Myers isn't playing). Franchy Cordero, Alex Dickerson and Travis Jankowski all bat left-handed, and Jose Pirela does well enough from the right side. Pirela is a virtual lock to be on the team as both an outfielder and infielder, and one of the three left-handed bats figures to as well.

In the meantime, Renfroe works to improve. It's a little early to say where he is in that progress.

Renfroe's mammoth homer Monday was off Angels left-hander Tyler Skaggs. On Tuesday against Seattle, he grounded into a double-play against lefty James Paxton and hit into a fielder's choice against right-hander Christian Bergman. He is 0-for-8 against righties this spring, though he has hit a couple sharp outs.

"I've had good at-bats against righties," Renfroe said. "I think it's going good."

Against right-handed pitching in 2017, his batting average was 114 points lower, his on-base percentage was nearly 150 points lower, and his slugging percentage was hardly more than half what it was against left-handers. He hit a home run every 22 at-bats against righties versus every 10.4 at-bats against lefties.

Unfortunately, right-handed pitching is far more prevalent. Renfroe's .202/.244/.393 line against righties came in 349 plate appearances. In 130 appearances against lefties, he went .316/.392/.684.

Hitters aren't wired to concede. Renfroe doesn't see the adjustment he has to make — a relatively subtle shift in his stance so he sees the ball differently coming from the right side — as prohibitive.

More than anything, he acknowledges the grind of his first big-league season was overwhelming.

"It was tough," he said. "I was ready to go. But about the middle of the year it started draining on me. I was tired. My body started wearing down."

The Padres noticed as Renfroe came up through the minors and even all the way back to college, he was a far better player in his second go-round at each level. He didn't play much as a freshman and wasn't on anyone's radar until just before his junior season at Mississippi State and was the 13<sup>th</sup> overall pick 12 months later.

He also hit right-handers pretty well in the minors, including a .306/.336/.557 line in 2016 at Triple-A El Paso.

Major league fastballs move and generally don't cross squarely over the plate. Big-league breaking pitches veer more sharply. Pitchers and coaches are smarter. The positioning of fielders is based on computers full of data.

“You get used to everything going on,” Renfroe said. “It’s a big learning experience. ... You’re trying to figure out what you need to work on. I’ve tried to do that, and it has worked so far.”

# Freddy Galvis, a 'dreaded' at-bat?

Kevin Acee, SDUT , 3/1/18

Andy Green referred to shortstop Freddy Galvis as the “The dreaded one” on Wednesday morning, a nod to the shortstop’s roped locks of hair.

If he keeps hitting like he has, Galvis will be dreaded by opposing pitchers.

He finally made an out in his fifth at-bat of the spring after walking twice and hitting a double and single. Both of his hits came after he fouled off multiple full-count offerings.

“It’s really different,” Galvis said. “Early in my career it would take me more than one or two at-bats to get my timing. It would take me 20, 30 at-bats. I think I did good work in the offseason. I don’t know, since the first game I’ve been feeling good. That’s a really good sign.”

The Padres acquired Galvis with the intent of shoring up a hole at shortstop. Galvis led the majors with a .989 fielding percentage in 2017.

He also had arguably his best offensive campaign. His .309 on-base percentage was 35 points higher than the prior season and a seven-point improvement on his previous best. His strikeout percentage was also the lowest of his career and his walk rate the highest. Those ratios still are not where they could optimally be, but the improvements seem to be sticking.

“I love to be part of the offense,” Galvis said. “(Defense) is my main thing. ... (Offense) has become more natural to me. I hope I can keep doing it and help the team with it.”

## **Pirela’s second nature**

The slick play Galvis saw from Jose Pirela at second base on Tuesday was nothing new to him.

The two have been friends since meeting as teenagers in Venezuela, and they played together on Aguilas de Zulia in the Venezuelan Winter League five straight winters through the ’16-17 offseason.

Twice on Tuesday, Pirela ran to field a ball in the middle of the infield and then threw back across his body to get a runner.

“It was really good play, especially coming from the outfield and having that long since being at second base,” Galvis said. “It’s hard, but he made it look easy.

Pirela appeared in seven games (39 innings) at second base for the Padres last season. He’s played in 50 games (200 1/3 innings) in his four major league seasons.

The Padres covet Pirela’s ability to get on base – his .347 OBP (in 344 plate appearances) was highest on the team in ’17 – and his defensive versatility allows them to be creative in their roster construction, perhaps allowing them to keep one more player in a brimming outfield.

### **Extra bases**

- The Padres sent right-handed pitcher Miguel Diaz to the minors. He will begin a progression of being stretched out to become a starter.
- Before Austin Hedges hit his third home of the spring (in his third game of the spring), Green complimented his catcher’s new, relaxed approach at the plate but said: “You don’t want to draw conclusions out of two home runs in two games. Hopefully, he can keep that trend going.”
- Luis Perdomo, Colin Rea and Robbie Erlin will pitch in a B” game Thursday. All three starting rotation candidates are making their first appearances of the spring. Perdomo is working on some specific things, and Erlin and Rea are returning from Tommy John surgery, so the intrasquad allows them a controlled environment in which to work.
- Third baseman Chase Headley practiced again Wednesday and could make his debut Thursday. Green said Headley would play through the finger bruise during the season.

# Fernando Tatis shows confidence, defense, also hits

Kevin Acee, SDUT , 2/28/18

**Score:** Padres 10, Dodgers 5

**Batter's box:** Fernando Tatis Jr., 19, is the youngest player in any major league camp. One of the things the Padres like most is that he carries himself as if he had seven years in the big leagues. Twice on Wednesday, Tatis thought a called strike was inside. He looked at the umpire both times for a long moment, then stepped out of the box shaking his head. He struck out on one of those at-bats and got his first walk of the spring on the second. He went on to double and single as well. ... Carlos Asuaje tripled to right field. ... Eric Hosmer went 1-for-3 with a single for the second straight day.

**Balls and strikes:** Dinelson Lamet made his first start and was hit hard in the first inning, allowing two runs on a double and homer. He allowed a two-out double in a scoreless second. ... Craig Stammen and Kirby Yates both pitched scoreless innings in their spring debuts. ... Hard-throwing Trey Wingenter allowed a full-count home run to Yusniel Diaz to start the ninth. After a popup and a single, he struck out the final two batters.

**Extra bases:** Tatis, at 6-foot-3 one of the new models of big shortstops, used every inch to leap and snare a rocket by Joc Pederson in the first inning. Tatis' glove was probably about 10 feet off the ground when he caught the ball. ... Travis Jankowskistole his second base in three attempts. The utility outfielder is 0-for-7 but has walked four times.

**On Deck:** at Rangers, 12:05 PT at Surprise Stadium. Tyson Ross is scheduled to make his second start. Cal Quantrill, the Padres' first pick in 2016, and reliever Kazuhisa Makita will make their spring game debuts.

# Eric Hosmer shows gratitude, respect for Padres number

Kevin Acee, SDUT, 2/28/18

As Padres third base coach Glenn Hoffman passed by on his way to the start of Wednesday morning's drills here, Randy Jones said, "You're welcome, Hoffy."

Jones, the only man allowed to wear a Padres uniform with No. 35 on the back, is in camp to work with pitchers the next couple weeks. The 1976 Cy Young award winner's number being retired is why new first baseman Eric Hosmer had to switch to No. 30.

And that is why Hoffman has a new Rolex watch, Hosmer having bestowed the gift in gratitude for Hoffman relinquishing his No. 30. (Hoffman switched to No. 26, his high school number.)

It occurred to Jones months ago, when he first heard of the Padres' pursuit of Hosmer, that the first baseman would have to change his number if he came to San Diego.

"It's older than he is," Jones said.

Jones and Hosmer met Tuesday. Jones showed him the glove he was wearing, one of two he wore during the 1975 season, when he won 20 games and led the National League with a 2.25 ERA over 285 innings pitched.

"It's older than he is," Jones said.

It was the next season that Jones won his Cy Young, having led the league with 22 wins and 315 1/3 innings.

Hosmer was not familiar with the specifics, but he showed reverence for Jones' place in franchise history.

"I knew he had to do something good to get his number retired, that's for sure," Hosmer said.



He found out shortly after he signed that he would need to switch numbers from the one he wore for seven seasons in Kansas City.

Hosmer wears No. 30 now, in honor of former teammate Yordano Ventura.

# Hedges homers for third time in 3 games

AJ Cassavell, MLB.com, 2/28/18

PEORIA, Ariz. -- When he picks the right pitch to swing at, **Austin Hedges** is confident he can mash with the best of them. Problem is: finding that pitch in the first place.

Hedges didn't do that well enough in 2017. He launched 18 home runs, coming within four of Mike Piazza's record for a Padres catcher. But opposing pitchers exploited his aggressiveness, and his batting average floundered to .214.

So Hedges went into the offseason with the goal of simplifying things at the plate, tinkering with his swing to reduce the moving parts.

So far, so good. Hedges has played three games this spring, and he's homered in all of them, including a solo shot in the bottom of the second inning during the Padres' 10-5 win over the Dodgers on Wednesday.

"When I got mistakes last year, I did damage, but I was chasing out of the zone," Hedges said. "I'm obviously not chasing pitches on purpose. But I don't think my body was in position to see the ball well enough. All I've been trying to do is get into a position where I can see the ball longer, slow the game down a little bit, hunt my pitch. Anything else, just disregard it."

Hedges' primary value will never be derived from his bat. Defensively, he's one of the best catchers in baseball, combining a rocket arm, expert framing skills and a proficiency at handling his pitching staff.

Still, the Padres feel there's no reason Hedges can't bring more value to the plate. Hedges spent the offseason in San Diego, working out daily at Petco Park. His swing changes are subtle, but there's less movement in his hands and upper body when he loads to take a cut.

"We were looking to stay a little bit more centered, keep his head forward instead of rocking back over his back foot," said Padres manager Andy Green. "He's done a real nice job. It's quieted the ball down for him to where he sees it better.". 28th, 2018

On Wednesday, Hedges worked the count full, got a belt-high fastball and sent it three-quarters of the way up the left-field berm. He's 3-for-5 this spring with a walk and five RBIs.

That sample size is far too small to draw any conclusions, but for Hedges, it's a sign he's headed in the right direction.

"It's great to see results now obviously, just because you work so hard for so many months in the offseason," Hedges said. "You definitely want to prove to yourself that what you did is going to work in a game. Yeah, it's Spring Training, but you're still seeing big league pitchers. It gives you some confidence going forward to continue trusting the process."

# NBA legend Sampson assisting at Padres camp

AJ Cassavell, MLB.com, 2/28/18

PEORIA, Ariz. -- Ralph Sampson has never been one to blend into a crowd.

This week, the 7-foot-4 Basketball Hall of Famer is at Padres camp. The organization invited him to the Peoria Sports Complex to assist behind the scenes.

Sampson is merely an observer during the team's morning workouts, where he towers over members of the Padres' front office. Even from the sidelines, his presence is massive.

One player joked that when he shook Sampson's hand, "it tickled my elbow." Padres 6-foot-10 right-hander **Chris Young** told manager Andy Green, "He makes me feel small."

But despite Sampson's stature, he's taken a back seat at Padres camp, learning the ropes of a new sport -- but one he's always loved.

"At a young age, I played, I pitched a little bit, and then my size kind of overtook baseball, and I started to focus on one sport," Sampson said. "I love this game. Baseball is interesting to me, especially the strategy. I love being outside, the field, the fans."

Sampson, who resides in Los Angeles, visited Petco Park several times during the offseason. His initial Padres connection came through managing partner Peter Seidler, who attended the University of Virginia with Sampson.

Members of the Padres' coaching staff and front office met with Sampson during the offseason. They came away impressed with his world view.

"I've really enjoyed his takes on just about everything," Green said. "His mind works really well. He's got some philosophical things that might marry up with our organization."

Sampson arrived at Padres camp over the weekend. In that time, he's gone to dinner with groups of players and members of the Padres' staff. He's also sat in on various meetings around the complex.

It's not an uncommon occurrence. The Padres often invite guests to Spring Training, and they'll have several speakers over the course of camp. Of course, most of those guests aren't quite so conspicuous.

"When you're 7-foot-4 and a basketball Hall of Famer, it's hard to blend in," quipped Padres general manager A.J. Preller.

Preller, a lifelong basketball fan, recalled watching Sampson play for the Rockets in the 1986 NBA Finals.

"One of the lucky things when you work in pro sports, you sometimes have access to people you grew up watching, and you definitely have respect for guys who have done great things in different sports," Preller said. "You see a guy that was basically a legend, in terms of high school, college and eventually the NBA. And you pick his brain, trying to see if there's any similarities, commonalities he can bring to the baseball side."

Sampson was a three-time college player of the year at Virginia before he was drafted by the Rockets in 1983. He'd go on to win Rookie of the Year the following season, and he'd amass more than 7,000 points and 4,000 rebounds over a nine-year NBA career.

Toward the end of that career, Sampson dealt with numerous knee and back injuries, which kept him off the court for long stretches. One of those "commonalities" Preller talked about was dealing with adversity -- particularly rehabbing injuries -- and bouncing back. Sampson has plenty to offer in that regard.

Sampson is quick to note that the first bridge between the two sports is the hard work and behind-the-scenes process necessary for success.

"They've gotten here for a reason," Sampson said. "They're talented, they have athletic skills and have been playing baseball since a young age. You see that, but you have to understand to mold it, shape it: 17-, 18-, 19-year-old kids are still very young in this game. It's a process you've got to go through, and they have to understand how to undertake that process."

The Padres have certainly enjoyed Sampson's presence, and it's a possibility he'll be around the club on an occasional basis when the regular season hits.

"Obviously in different sports, it's a different culture, different challenges," Preller said. "From our standpoint, it's a great opportunity to bring Ralph in, have him see some baseball, watch some baseball and figure out where it goes from there."

Sampson has done far more listening than talking at Padres camp. He's still learning the ins and outs of baseball.

Upon his arrival, he was particularly surprised at the size of the complex and the total number of players in the Minor League system. He pointed out what a huge undertaking it must be to build a World Series-caliber team. He's happy to help any way he can.

"How can I use my career and my life to help them a little bit in one way or another, personally?" Sampson said. "Just life lessons, life skills, from making your bed up every day to being a professional player at the top level and maintaining that level."

"I think I can help with that. I'm getting my feet wet with the language of baseball, learning the kids and learning how I can instill those values."

# Top 20 players who will shape NL West race

Will Leitch MLB.com 2/28/18

## 20. Ryan McMahon, Colorado Rockies

McMahon has shown considerable talent in the Minors -- he hit .374 in 70 games for Triple-A Albuquerque last year -- and the Rockies have rewarded him by giving him every chance to win the first-base job. But in a world where **Logan Morrison** is only getting \$6.5 million a year, is entirely trusting the rookie at an easily upgradable position the right call?

## 19. Manuel Margot, San Diego Padres

Margot's first full season in the Majors gave us a rough sketch of the player he is, and who he might become. Present: Plays a great center field, can run like crazy, brings energy and youth to the top of the lineup and has a little more power than we may have thought. Future: Needs to strike out less, walk a lot more and generally just get that on-base percentage higher. Also, can we just all call him Manny now?

## 18. Brandon Crawford, San Francisco Giants

The 2017 season **was a nightmare** for Crawford, losing a close family member in April, suffering from minor nagging injuries all year and ultimately putting up the worst numbers of his career. He was nearly a **six-win player** in 2016, and if he can return to something close to that form, the Giants, for all their offseason acquisitions, will find one of their biggest improvements from within.

## 17. Archie Bradley, Arizona Diamondbacks

Another reminder that yesterday's failed starters are often tomorrow's dominant closers, Bradley thrived in relief in 2017, striking out more than a batter per inning and exhibiting pinpoint control that eluded him previously in his career. The D-backs are still debating whether or not he'll be the closer, but if he's not, it's because they want to deploy him in the highest-leverage position possible. Bradley is key to everything Arizona's bullpen does.

## 16. Fernando Tatis Jr., San Diego Padres

All right, so Tatis is probably not going to get called up until September, if even then. But at 19, he's already the most exciting prospect the Padres have had in years, and with only **Freddy Galvis** (whose contract is up at the end of the year and thus has no real reason for San Diego to stick with him) ahead of him, the club will have to be tempted if he's raking in the Minors. This franchise is all about the future, and Tatis is the face of that future. Though if he doesn't hit **two grand slams** in an inning, I won't be impressed. (Does Chan Ho Park have any pitching sons?)

## 15. Joc Pederson, Los Angeles Dodgers

The advantage of being the Dodgers is when you have a young hitter like Pederson -- who looked like a budding superstar at age 23 -- struggle, you can give him time to figure it out *and* still have plenty of options if he doesn't. The step backward last season led to many Dodgers fans losing patience with him, but he's still just 25 and coming off an excellent postseason. Pederson may need to produce now, though, or he may find himself on the bench ... or on another team.

#### 14. Tyler Anderson, Colorado Rockies

The dirty secret about the Rockies is that their team strength is pitching, not their lineup. But to repeat its 2017 success, Colorado will need Anderson, who missed much of last year with a left knee injury but was excellent when he returned in September, to become a rotation mainstay. Many in Denver think he's due for a **breakout season**, but the metrics are **more skeptical**.

#### 13. A.J. Pollock, Arizona Diamondbacks

Pollock was one of the 10 most valuable players in baseball in 2015, and it's been all about staying on the field since then. He missed almost all of '16 with a right elbow injury -- derailing the D-backs' season right along with him -- and his return in '17 was hampered by a groin injury. Pollock is still a fantastic center fielder with power and speed, but he's also 30 years old now. Can he be that '15 player again?

#### 12. Wil Myers, San Diego Padres

Myers has benefited in recent years of being the biggest fish in the small San Diego pond, looking like a brighter star than he is because there was nobody else around. Now that **Eric Hosmer** is in town, he has some help, but he'll have to move to the outfield to make room. Myers still doesn't quite get on base enough and is a larger factor in fantasy baseball than in reality, but he's only 27; maybe there's more growth to be had.. 22nd, 2017

#### 11. Cody Bellinger, Los Angeles Dodgers

The power was downright staggering at times -- Bellinger is one of those players who makes hitting homers look *easy* -- but it sure was brutal to watch him in the postseason. That ugly October, including those 17 World Series strikeouts in 29 at-bats, has many predicting a sophomore slump. But even a slump probably ends with 35-plus homers. He's going to hit 50 soon. If it's this year, the Dodgers might not lose a game.

\* \* \* \* \*

Halftime mascot break! NL West mascots, ranked.

#### 1. Lou Seal

All love to the **Crazy Crab**, but everybody loves seals, particularly ones that wear sunglasses.

#### 2. Swinging Friar

You can keep your Chicken. I'll stand with the Friar, who has always struck me as what your biology teacher would look like if he were a cartoon. He could probably use some help with the hair, though.

#### 3. Dinger

You're not going to count me among the **Dinger haters**. Someone probably needs to get him a bigger jersey though.

#### 4. Baxter the Bobcat

Baxter's got spirit, but he's still mostly indistinguishable from a mascot for a middle-tier college basketball team. He has his utility, though: A snake mascot would probably be too scary.

## 5. Unknown Dodgers mascot

This scary thing doesn't count, and, alas, neither does **Rally Bear**.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 10. Evan Longoria, San Francisco Giants

It's going to take half the season just to get used to Longoria in that uniform.

## 9. Andrew McCutchen, San Francisco Giants

Oh, McCutchen even *more* so.

## 8. Ian Desmond, Colorado Rockies

Many questioned the Rockies' signing of Desmond before last season, but 2017 went even worse than the most grizzled skeptic could have anticipated, with a broken left hand in Spring Training, a strained right calf later in the year and all sorts of positional confusion. It ended up a lost year, but he's still a line-drive hitter with speed who now doesn't have to pretend he's a first baseman. Colorado had one of its best seasons without Desmond contributing much last year; if he can at least approach what they thought they were buying, this lineup gets some much-needed depth.

## 7. Robbie Ray, Arizona Diamondbacks

How do you improve on a season in which you shaved two runs off your ERA and posted the highest strikeouts per nine innings in the NL? Ray maybe walked a few too many guys in 2017, and he sometimes had a difficult time going deep into starts. If he can add more innings pitched and chop off a few walks, you're looking at an NL Cy Young Award contender. Ray says last season was "**the floor**." If so, look out.

## 6. Eric Hosmer, San Diego Padres

The contract was a lot, but San Diego has to spend that money somewhere, so why not spend it on a steady, if unspectacular, producer who you can put in the lineup every day for the next half-decade and feel positive about it? You'd like Hosmer to join the "launch angle revolution," but even if he doesn't, he's still the best hitter on a team that, frankly, could use a few more like him. Plus: Face of the franchise! (Until Tatis gets here.)

## 5. Yasiel Puig, Los Angeles Dodgers

All right, **the agent thing** was pretty strange, and definitely raised all those eyebrows that are constantly raising whenever Puig's name comes up. But from 10,000 feet up, it sure looks like the Dodgers have their budding star back. Puig shook off two subpar seasons to put up career highs in homers, RBIs and stolen bases, and while the average probably isn't going to approach .300 again, that arm in right field more than makes up for that. The Dodgers stuck with Puig through all the turmoil, and they have been rewarded. Now, as long as all that turmoil is over ... And it is, right? Right?

## 4. Wade Davis, Colorado Rockies

Colorado's bullpen splurge stunned the game this offseason, spending more than \$100 million on three guys to theoretically set up a dominant end-of-game strategy. It's not a terrible way of doing business in 2018, but Davis might have been the riskiest of the investments. Sure, he only blew

one save last year for the Cubs, but his velocity was down and his walk rate way up. The Rockies think they're getting a **shutdown closer**. Their season may depend on it.

### **3. Paul Goldschmidt, Arizona Diamondbacks**

We're never going to fully appreciate Goldschmidt. He put together another jaw-dropping season in 2017, reaching his career high in homers and remaining one of the most consistent players in the sport. The advantage Goldschmidt had last year that he won't this year is **J.D. Martinez** next to him in the lineup. The Diamondbacks have gotten MVP production from a guy who has never made more than \$10 million in a season; that allows for a rather wide margin of error elsewhere. But he went six seasons in between playoff appearances. Without Martinez and entering his 30s, how long will Goldschmidt have to wait for the next one?

### **2. Madison Bumgarner, San Francisco Giants**

Bumgarner avoided the injury bug that takes down most pitchers for his entire career until, ultimately, the dirt bike got him. He wasn't *quite* himself when he returned, though, to be fair, the Giants' season was long lost by that point. For all the postseason love, Bumgarner, if you can believe this, has never actually finished higher than fourth in the NL Cy Young Award voting. He is still somehow only 28 years old -- he's younger than **Tommy Pham!** -- and has two years left on the deal he signed in 2012 before he can finally hit the free-agent market. Now would be the time to get one of those Cy Young Awards.

### **1. Clayton Kershaw, Los Angeles Dodgers**

Of course, this guy might have something to say about that, and he might have a free agency coming up of his own, were he to opt out of his contract at the end of the year. (Fun fact: Kershaw has *already* made almost \$100 million more than Bumgarner in his career.) Kershaw remains the best pitcher in baseball by a wide margin, but he's gotta stay on the mound; if he had stayed healthy the last two seasons, he would probably have five NL Cy Young Awards by now. If he can reach 200 innings, which he hasn't done since 2015, he'll win another NL Cy Young Award, maybe an NL MVP Award and make *all* the money next offseason. And he might just get the Dodgers back to the World Series. Kershaw turns 30 in three weeks. With health, we're looking at peak Kershaw. Yikes.

### **Outlook: Kershaw, SP, LAD**

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We finish this preview, as we will with all of them, with predictions. I apologize in advance because these predictions are guaranteed to be correct and thus I'm a little worried I'm spoiling the season for you.

Los Angeles Dodgers: 102-60  
Arizona Diamondbacks: 86-76  
San Francisco Giants: 83-79  
Colorado Rockies: 78-84  
San Diego Padres: 71-91



# Padres icon Jones impressed by Hosmer

AJ Cassavell, MLB.com, 2/28/18

PEORIA, Ariz. -- Randy Jones wants some company among the Padres' retired numbers.

The legendary left-hander arrived in camp this week, and he introduced himself to the newest Padre, **Eric Hosmer**, on Tuesday. Jones came away from their first conversation as a certifiable Hosmer fan, touting his leadership qualities.

Of course, Jones' No. 35 has been retired in San Diego since 1997. Hosmer wore that same number with the Royals but switched to 30 upon his arrival in San Diego, a tribute to former teammate Yordano Ventura, who died in a car crash in January 2017.

When the two began talking, Jones was quick to bring up No. 35.

"I said, 'You can't have 35,'" Jones said. "You've got to get your own number and build a reputation here."

Hosmer, however, already had a number in mind and was more than happy to switch.

"I told him I would not even think about taking that from him," Hosmer said. "When you're a Hall of Famer for your organization, nobody deserves to come in and try and even ask him for that. But it's been great to talk to him, get to know him."

Jones' number is one of six retired by the Padres. He wouldn't mind seeing No. 30 grace the facing of the upper deck behind home plate one day.

"That was my whole point," Jones said. "We'd love to have your number up there, man. He's going to be a real positive for the Padres. ... He's a student of the game, and he understands the history of the game, which is good. What I really like is the way he's assumed that role of a leader."

## **Hosmer on his spring debut**

Jones won the 1975 National League ERA title with a 2.24 mark, and he took home the NL Cy Young Award the following season, leading the league with 22 wins, 25 complete games, a 1.03 WHIP and 315 1/3 innings pitched. It's arguably the best stretch by a pitcher in Padres history. Jones spent eight years in San Diego -- also the length of Hosmer's contract -- amassing a 3.30 ERA from 1973-80.

Last offseason, Jones was diagnosed with throat cancer. He was declared cancer-free in May.

## **Tatis channels his dad**

It wasn't quite two grand slams in the same inning, but **Fernando Tatis Jr.** had himself quite a frame in the top of the sixth inning of Wednesday's 10-5 victory over the Dodgers.

Tatis, the **No. 8 prospect** in baseball according to MLB Pipeline, opened the inning with a double to left field. The Padres would bat around, and Tatis tacked on an RBI single, plating the seventh run of the inning for San Diego.

It was Tatis' father who made baseball history for the Cardinals in April 1999 when he became the only player in history to launch two grand slams in the same inning. He also did it against the Dodgers.

At 19, Tatis is the youngest player in any Major League camp this spring. He is now 3-for-14, including an opposite-field homer in his second at-bat. He's destined to start the season in the Minors, but a late-season callup isn't out of the question.

### **Camp battles**

- The Padres are slated for a 'B' game against the White Sox on Thursday with **Colin Rea** and **Robbie Erlin** slated to take the ball in relief of starter **Luis Perdomo**. For Rea and Erlin, it's their return to game action after missing all of 2017 while recovering from Tommy John surgery.

Erlin pitched a few instructional league games last fall, but hasn't faced Major League competition. Rea hasn't thrown in a competitive environment since July 2016.

- **Carlos Asuaje** put forth another impressive display in his quest to win the starting job at second base. His three-run triple was the highlight of the Padres' seven-run sixth. He also ranged to his right to make a diving stop on a ground ball.

### **Asuaje's bases-clearing triple**

- The Padres optioned right-hander **Miguel Diaz** to Minor League camp, paving the way for him to be stretched into a starting role. A Rule 5 pick last season, Diaz spent the majority of the season in the Major League bullpen, but the organization has always viewed him as a starter in the long run.

### **Injury updates**

- **Cory Spangenberg** participated in the full workout Wednesday morning, as he recovers from a sore left wrist. It's unclear when he'll return to game action.

- The Padres are optimistic **Chase Headley** will make his first Cactus League appearance on Thursday. He's been battling a bruised finger on his throwing hand.

### **Up next**

**Tyson Ross** and **Chris Young** continue their push for a rotation place on Thursday, when the Padres head to Surprise to face a Rangers split squad at 12:10 p.m. PT (listen to an exclusive webcast **live on MLB.com**). Righty reliever Kazuhisa Makita -- who signed a two-year deal during the offseason -- is set for his first appearance for San Diego after spending seven seasons with the Seibu Lions in Japan. **No. 2 prospect Cal Quantrill** is also slated for his spring debut.

# Sarris: The Padres' revamped infield offers cascading returns

Eno Sarris, *The Athletic*, 2/28/18

Other than at catcher, not a single infielder atop the Padres' current depth chart was in the same position on opening day last season. That's good news, because no team in baseball last year was as bad, defensively, on the infield.

Take a look at how bad they were by combined infield Ultimate Zone Rating:

Carlos Asuaje played some second base, and that counts as good news here because second base was San Diego's best situation. First base is now patrolled by some dude named Eric Hosmer. Third base welcomes back Chase Headley. At shortstop, Freddy Galvis.

It's projected to be an extreme turnaround. Only nine teams in the past five years have seen a thirty-point swing in defense, and if there are any surprises—maybe from Eric Hosmer, whose D has been up and down, or from a young player who could come up and replace Chase Headley at third—they could challenge for one of the biggest turnarounds in recent memory.

Galvis, for one, is looking forward to it.

“I’m really excited,” he told *The Athletic*. “Some of the pitchers, they pitch for contact and ground balls. And that’s what I like. I like to be part of the game every single time. If they hit me 27 ground balls, I will be happy.”

Galvis makes a great point about the pitchers. Because, even though this defensive swing is baked into the team projections, it won't affect each pitcher the same way.

The evidence is that extreme ground ball pitchers get better results from their defense than players with middling ground ball rates—maybe their defenders are more on their toes—so an extreme ground ball pitcher on a team that's about to undergo an extreme positive swing in infield defense would seem to benefit the most.

There's one pitcher on the Padres that fits the bill: Luis Perdomo. He used his bottom-ten spin rate sinker to allow 62% of his contact on the ground. Only one qualified pitcher coaxed more ground balls last year, and yet his defense allowed 32.5% of Perdomo's balls in play to become hits. Perdomo could see a large swing in results due to the better defenders behind him.

How large? Only two pitchers had a ground ball rate over 50% and were on one of the teams above. They both took advantage, though.

Alex Cobb, currently a free agent, was on the 2012 Rays and had a 4.03 ERA despite putting up peripherals that supported better outcomes. He had a .295 batting average on balls in play, and then the team went out and added Ben Zobrist and Yunel Escobar. In 2013, Cobb kept his ground ball rate up—he went from 59% to 56%—and his results all took a leap forward. He ended the season with a 2.76 ERA built on a .279 BABIP.

For Dallas Keuchel in 2014, the swing in results was a little less dramatic, because he was already so good in the first season. That year, he had a 2.93 ERA with a 64% ground ball rate and a .295 BABIP. In 2015, his team replaced Matt Dominguez, used Jonathan Villar less often, and saw improvement from Jose Altuve. Keuchel won the Cy Young with a 2.48 ERA with a 62% ground ball rate and a .269 BABIP.

The sample isn't big enough to say anything definitive, but if Perdomo sees the same sort of improvement, and even has just a league average .300 BABIP this year with the Padres, he'll see a big improvement. He could easily beat the best projected ERA in the team's starting rotation next year—Clayton Richard's 3.93—and that's without any adjustment to the improved defense behind him.

Will he, possibly, adjust to the new defenders behind him?

“No, it's not gonna affect game-calling,” says his catcher Austin Hedges. “I mean, we've got some guys with good sinkers, and we're gonna attack with those.”

Still, even if the pitcher doesn't change his approach, he'll enjoy the defense, and on that much Hedges could agree.

“Obviously, it's gonna help out a lot, with all the ground balls we get, having guys that can pick it back there,” he said to *The Athletic's* Dennis Lin. “Especially Freddy. Really looking forward to having an elite shortstop over there that can get to some balls that may not have been gotten to in the past. We definitely made some nice upgrades.”

And those upgrades will be a part of how the team begins the slow march to contention. Even if some pitchers benefit more than others.

# Padres second base job up for grabs this spring

John Horvath, FSSD, 2/28/18

From now until Spring Training concludes, Fox Sports San Diego will preview each player at each position that is in big league camp.

Previous position previews:

Starting pitchers

Catchers

First Base

Today we will take a look at second base, a position that is up for grabs this spring as the organization waits for a young talent to break through.

The Padres enter 2018 with a handful of candidates for the second base job, but there is no real clear-cut favorite.

Currently, Jose Pirela, Carlos Asuaje, and Cory Spangenberg are all getting looks at the position.

After being acquired by the Padres in November of 2015, Jose Pirela battled injury for a chunk of 2016. He was healthy during the first half of the season; playing in 35 games at AAA El Paso, where he hit a pedestrian .248 with a .681 OPS. The Venezuela native also had a brief cup of coffee in the majors, but hit only .154 with two extra base hits in 39 at-bats. Only a few weeks after being optioned back down to the minors in May, Pirela injured his Achilles and did not play again for the rest of the season.

After being non-tendered by the Padres on December 2, 2016, Pirela re-upped with the Padres on a minor league deal four days later. It turned out beneficial for both parties.

Finally healthy, the utility man began his 2017 season in El Paso, where he tore up the PCL. In 48 games, Pirela hit .331, belted 13 home runs, and registered a very impressive 1.022 OPS. He was called up to the Padres in June and did not look back, hitting .288/.437/.490 with a .837 OPS. Playing mostly left field on an everyday basis, the 28-year-old led the Padres in fWAR (2.1) and OPS+ (122).

Andy Green was not shy in calling Pirela a strong favorite for the everyday left field job this winter. However, with Wil Myers moving to the outfield, Pirela could very well spend more of his time at second base this season. Although he has only appeared in 50 games at second base at the big league level, he has played in 322 minor league games there.

In what was something of a surprise, Cory Spangenberg was not part of the Opening Day roster in 2017. That spot went to Ryan Schimpf, whose power display in 2016 and performance in spring earned him a starting role. Looking to prove a point, Spangenberg came out of the gates in AAA on fire. In 18 games, he hit .348 with a .403 OBP and was called up in late April. After Schimpf fizzled out and his strikeout rate was too extreme for the Padres' liking, the 26-year-old Spangenberg assumed full time 3B duties. He then proceeded to set a career high in home runs, belting out 13. His previous professional high was 4. The Padres would certainly like to see his strikeout rate decrease (26.3%) and his OBP increase (.322), but Spangenberg displayed potential at the plate and will certainly not begin his 2018 season in AAA.

Although Spangenberg played mostly third base last year, he struggled defensively. The emergence of Christian Villanueva and the arrival of Chase Headley (if he remains on the roster) will likely push him to play more second base, where he only logged 42 innings in 2017.

Carlos Asuaje is another second base option, and he has the most recent 2B experience out of the bunch. The 26-year-old was acquired in the Craig Kimbrel deal in the winter of 2015. In his first season with the Padres organization, Asuaje hit .321 and scored 98 runs for AAA El Paso. At the conclusion of the season, he was awarded with the PCL Rookie of the Year award. His performance earned him a week in the big leagues to end 2016.

Although he started 2017 back in AAA, Asuaje was called up in June and finally got the opportunity to play everyday at the big league level. He took advantage of it, too. In 89 games, the lefty slashed .270/.334/.362 with four home runs.

### **Conclusion:**

The Padres might not necessarily have an "everyday" second baseman in 2018 per say- at least not right away. Rather, Andy Green & co. might be better off shuffling all three players around the diamond, platooning them according to each day's matchup. With the versatility that all three possess, this is certainly an option.

### **On the farm:**

This offseason, 2B Luis Urias was ranked as the #32 prospect in baseball by Baseball America and the #36 prospect by MLB.com Pipeline. The Padres are expecting that he and SS Fernando Tatis Jr. will anchor the middle of their infield for years to come. Urias played his entire 2017 season in AA San Antonio, where he hit .298 with a league-leading .398 OBP. He walked (68) more times than he struck out (65). The Mexico native is a career .310 hitter in the minor leagues. At age 20, it does appear that he needs a little bit more seasoning in the minor leagues.. but how

much? He certainly looks the part in spring training action so far. In his nine at bats, he has hit three doubles and has walked three times.

If all goes well, an MLB appearance late in the 2018 season seems like a definite possibility.