



Padres Press Clips

Thursday, May 10, 2018

<u>Article</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Page</u>
Andy Green's moves help lead to Padres victory over Nationals	SD Union Tribune	Acee	2
First pitch: Matt Szczur gets cameo as leadoff hitter	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	5
Adrian Morejon spins a gem for Storm	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	7
1998 Padres take pride in helping make downtown ballpark a reality	SD Union Tribune	Krasovic	9
Eric Hosmer shocked by supposed rift with Andy Green, hint of Padres discord	SD Union Tribune	Acee	14
Margot provides spark as Padres solve Nats	MLB.com	Cassavell	16
Lucchesi becoming master of deception	MLB.com	Cassavell	18
Morejon fans seven for Storm	MLB.com	Boor	20
Lyles brings reliever's mentality to starting role	MLB.com	Cassavell	21
Margot's 5-for-10 set could mark end of slump	Padres.com	Center	23
Austin Hedges' pitch framing magic is a thing to behold	The Athletic	Palmateer	25
Szczur's RBI double lifts Padres past Nationals 2-1	Associated Press	AP	28
Many Miles later, Cardinals' Mikolas faces Padres	Fox Sports	Stats	30
This Day in Padres History—May 10	FriarWire	Center	32
#PadresOnDeck: Morejon Pitches Seven Scoreless Innings for A-Lake Elsinore	FriarWire	Center	33

Andy Green's moves help lead to Padres victory over Nationals

Kevin Acee

Andy Green hasn't been able to pull enough of the [Padres'](#) tenuous strings to change many results so far this frustrating, talent-thin, injury-riddled season.

For a change on Wednesday, a game went pretty much according to the Padres manager's plan.

Green made some interesting choices both before and during his team's game against the [Nationals](#).

And those decisions contributed to the Padres staving off a sweep, as they won for the first time in three games this home stand, coming from behind for a 2-1 victory.

"There's a method to his madness, for sure," [Matt Szczur](#) said.

Szczur's cameo as leadoff hitter included a double in the seventh inning that scored [Manuel Margot](#), the struggling center fielder who Green kept in the eighth spot Wednesday.

It was Margot's RBI double that tied the game in the fourth inning.

[Craig Stammen](#), called on an inning earlier than his typical appearance, pitched two scoreless innings in relief of starter Joey Lucchesi, who was pulled after just 69 pitches when he got in trouble in the sixth inning and was about to face the batter who had drilled one of his hanging churves into the seats earlier in the game.

"I felt like the rest of the lineup he was borderline dominant against," Green said of Lucchesi, who allowed three hits to Anthony Rendon and [Ryan Zimmerman](#) and three hits to the rest of the Nationals. "We had a fresh bullpen. We have three guys we really trust in Stammen, (Kirby) Yates and (Brad) Hand and when you have an opportunity to win a baseball game and you think the other guy gives you a great opportunity to get a double play ball and get out of a tough inning, we went that way."

For his work – and because he was in the game when the Padres went ahead – Stammen (1-0) got the victory. Yates pitched a perfect eighth inning, and Hand pitched the ninth for his 10th save.

After Rendon's homer led off the fourth, Lucchesi would get through the rest of the fourth and the fifth facing just six batters despite giving up two hits.

[Howie Kendrick](#)'s one-out single in the fourth was erased when Lucchesi's pick-off throw got Kendrick in a rundown. Wilmer Difo's one-out single in the fifth was erased the same way.

The Padres tied the game in the bottom of the fourth on back-to-back doubles by A.J. Ellis and Margot.

The Nationals started the sixth with a single and walk, and that was it for Lucchesi, just 69 pitches into his outing.

Lucchesi was not pleased to be taken, which Green expected and respected.

Still, Lucchesi acknowledged who was coming up and what had happened earlier.

"I left a few (pitches) up, and they got smoked," he said.

Stammen got Rendon to ground into a double play, walked Zimmerman and left runners at first and third when he struck out Kendrick.

Stammen also made sure Szczur's start in right didn't cost the Padres.

Szczur turned Matt Wieters' single into a double to lead off the seventh inning. Szczur looked like he wanted to make a spectacular play, pulled up and ball skipped past him.

Wieters would get to third on a wild pitch, but Stammen struck out [Moises Sierra](#) and Difo and got pinch-hitter Matt Adams on a soft liner to third.

With left-hander [Gio Gonzalez](#) starting for Washington, Green sat the left-handed Travis Jankowski, a defensive wizard who was 6-for-14 leading off the previous four games.

Green also kept Margot, the preferred leadoff man when the season began but demoted because his batting average sat below .200 all of April, in the eighth spot in the lineup Wednesday. Margot went 3-for-4 and has five hits in his past 10 at-bats to get his batting average up to .202.

“Seems like his timing is coming back,” Green said. “He's putting in a lot of work. ... It's good seeing some of that work start paying off and seeing him turn the corner a little bit.

For all that, the Padres improved to 14-24, the same record they had 38 games into last season.

First pitch: Matt Szczur gets cameo as leadoff hitter

Jeff Sanders

The Padres were no-hit Friday. They didn't get a baserunner of any kind until the seventh inning Tuesday. They remain without two of their best producers against left-handed pitching and a left-hander is on the mound today. Their projected leadoff hitter is still mired in a season-long rut.

So Padres manger **Andy Green** is trying something new:

Matt Szczur, leadoff hitter.

Might as well.

The Padres have a .678 OPS against left-handed starting pitchers, slightly up from the .655 mark against right-handers. The team entered the season thinking they'd have a distinct platoon advantage any time someone like **Jason Vargas** (see last homestand) or **Gio Gonzalez** stepped onto the mound. But **Wil Myers** (oblique) has played in 10 games, **Hunter Renfroe** (elbow) is out as well and **Manuel Margot** – who missed time with bruised ribs – is batting .179/.233/.295 to start the season.

The 28-year-old Szczur, meanwhile, is hitting .286/.375/.571 in 16 plate appearances against left-handed pitching. His one homer came off left-hander **Derek Holland**.

"You're looking for someone who can go out there and get on base," Green said. "... Matt has swung the bat well against lefties this year. We'll give **Travis (Jankowski)** a day off against the lefty. We've got three righties coming in (against St. Louis). My expectation is Travis will be out there every day against those guys. You're looking for a guy (today) and it's either him or Manny at this point in time."

Green said he was inclined to leave Margot – who is 3-for-22 this month – alone in the eighth spot for the third straight game.

“At this point, I had bounced Manny back and forth a lot and he hasn't really found a consistent rhythm,” Green said. “For his sake, just settle, stay, hit. He hit lefties really well last year. Hasn't had as much success this year. I felt inclined to let him be and not jerk him around again.”

Tony Gwynn's birthday

Hall-of-Famer **Tony Gwynn** would have turned 58 today. Green said he would like to honor the Mr. Padre in an appropriate way.

“I'd love to see a lot more hits through the 5-6 hole from our left-handed hitters,” Green said.

He added: “He's what the Padres are. Him and **Trevor Hoffman**. That's what everyone thinks about when they think of the Padres. Those are the two names in people's minds. **Randy Jones** is not far behind. It's a special day. We'll honor him.”

Notable

- OF **Hunter Renfro** (elbow) is throwing from 120 feet and serving as the designated hitter in extended [spring training](#) rehab games. “He's had some good swings,” Green said. “It's a matter of how quickly we can get him going again and into games, throwing from the outfield. He's definitely not within three or four days of returning.”
- [Nationals](#) RF **Bryce Harper** is off the first time this season. He is 0-for-16 over his last four games and 0-for-8 with two strikeouts and a walk through the first two games of the series in San Diego.

Adrian Morejon spins a gem for Storm

Jeff Sanders

Adrian Morejon opened the season as the second-youngest player in the California League. He looked advanced beyond his years Wednesday night.

The 19-year-old left-hander struck out seven over seven shutout innings, setting the tone in [high Single-A Lake Elsinore's 1-0 win](#) over visiting Rancho Cucamonga.

Morejon (1-3) scattered three hits and walked one batter in lowering his ERA to 3.68.

The seven innings were a career-high for Morejon, who signed for a [Padres](#) amateur record \$11 million in 2016 out of Cuba.

Ranked No. 5 in the system by Baseball America and No. 64 overall, Morejon went 3-4 with a 3.86 ERA, 58 strikeouts and a 1.29 WHIP while debuting in the low minors in 2017.

He'd yet to pitch into the sixth inning when he threw 60 of his 84 pitches for strikes in tailoring his first quality start Wednesday.

Through six starts, Morejon has struck out 30, walked 11 and allowed 25 hits in 29 1/3 innings.

Right-hander **Lake Bachar** (1.91) struck out two in a scoreless eighth and right-hander **Trevor Megill** (3.06) saved his first game with a strikeout in the ninth.

Edward Olivares (.284) and **Kelvin Melean** (.227) both had two hits and Melean scored the game's only run on a passed ball a half-inning before Morejon exited.

TRIPLE-A EL PASO (18-16)

- [Tacoma 8, Chihuahuas 5](#): RF **Franmil Reyes** (.344) went 0-for-3 with a walk, snapping his nine-game hitting streak as El Paso lost a fifth game in a row.
LF **Cory Spangenberg** (.265) went 2-for-5 with a double, two RBIs and a run

scored and 2B **Luis Urias** (.299) went 1-for-4 with a walk and two RBIs. RHP **Walker Lockett** (1-3, 5.49) struck out five and allowed six runs on 11 hits and a walk in 6 1/3 innings in the loss. RHP **Robert Stock** (4.50) allowed two runs on two hits in the ninth.

LOW SINGLE-A FORT WAYNE (14-19)

- [Quad Cities 7, TinCaps 1](#): RHP **Emmanuel Ramirez** (1-2, 2.20) struck out nine, but allowed two runs on five hits and three walks in five innings in the loss. RHP **Adrian Martinez** (9.92) allowed four runs in two innings in relief. 2B **Esteury Ruiz** (.264) went 1-for-3 with his team-leading fifth homer. C **Juan Fernandez** (.257) went 1-for-4 with a double, extending his on-base streak to 20 games.

1998 Padres take pride in helping make downtown ballpark a reality

Tom Krasovic

Twenty years ago this October, the [Padres](#) and San Diegans by the thousands did to baseball — good, old, staid baseball — what American teenagers had been doing to music for years.

They outfitted the sport with woofers and amplifiers and cranked up the sound levels that made inner ears ache.

These woofers and amplifiers had lungs. Sixty-five thousand adults and children, some of whom may not have known [Tony Gwynn](#) from a school teacher, filled the massive Mission Valley stadium that had been built — and twice expanded — largely for once-per-week football crowds.

With the attendees whipped up further by screeching and pulsating music, this brand of baseball theater was akin to having Jimi Hendrix riff “Take Me Out to The Ballgame,” and rolling out the punk-rock Ramones for the “Seventh Inning Stretch.”

Among the baseball participants were several hardened October veterans, including visitors who wondered if San Diego sunshine had attained the ability to act like caffeine.

Pitchers Tom Glavine and Greg Maddux of the sport’s dynasty of the 1990s, the [Atlanta Braves](#), would call the Mission Valley atmosphere for the 1998 NL Championship Series the loudest of any they’d encountered in their Hall of Fame careers.

Padres hitting coach Merv Rettenmund had played for and coached with several other teams deep into other postseasons.

Had he heard anything like this?

“No, never — not even close,” Rettenmund recalled this week.

The noise dealt Rettenmund headaches that chased him up a clubhouse tunnel to the quiet of the clubhouse, while the Padres pitched.

Twenty years later, the San Diego ballclub is this week celebrating the 1998 squad that turned the Mission Valley stadium into Thunder Dome.

It's only fitting, Rettenmund and former pitcher Joey Hamilton said Wednesday, that the downtown ballpark will house ceremonies honoring the 1998 team.

They contend, not without merit, that the 1998 Pads excited San Diegans into voting for the ballpark initiative that passed days after the 1998 [World Series](#) had ended. The subsidy would come to more than \$400 million in today's dollars, an amount that is still growing.

"I'm sure that the team's success and the atmosphere did get people to vote for it," Rettenmund said. "You had to be a sports enthusiast afterward, if you were at the games."

Hamilton, who will travel from near his home in Atlanta to attend the festivities, said he feels a personal connection to the East Village ballpark that opened in 2004.

"I think we were partially responsible for the stadium being there," said the pitcher, a former first-round draftee of the Pads who logged 34 starts and 217 innings that season. "It's a fantastic place, a great place to play. Obviously, San Diego is a phenomenal place to live. To spend your time as a baseball player, I can't think of really anywhere else that would be more enjoyable than that city."

Winning was paramount

Noting that Padres ownership had increased the payroll in anticipation of winning over San Diego voters to approve public money for a downtown ballpark, Rettenmund said the 1998 team felt extra urgency to win the [National League West](#) and drive onward to the World Series.

The Pads had won the West two years earlier, only to get swept in the first round by the [St. Louis Cardinals](#), so they were neither novices nor "happy to be there" participants in the playoffs this time. Tony Gwynn hadn't been back to the World Series since getting

there in 1984 with San Diego. He reminded his teammates of the 1996 sweep, and said that if the club made another fast exit, he would have a few salty things to say about it.

The Padres handled the pressure, winning the West in a runaway and setting a club record with 98 victories.

In the playoffs, they rewarded the revved-up crowds with victories over [Astros](#) and Braves teams that had won more than 100 games.

Rettenmund said what stands out to him today about the '98 squad was the professionalism of the players. He said they made his job easy.

“They were supposed to get to the World Series. It was a one-shot deal and they did it,” he said.

The most important victory in the coach’s telling was the Game 1 triumph at Houston, against Astros ace Randy Johnson.

Kevin Brown outpitched Johnson, and key hits from Jim Leyritz and Steve Finley powered the offense.

Not the sentimental type, Rettenmund sprinkled some salt onto his memories of 1998.

He said he wishes the Pads had traded for not only Brown, the ace acquired as a one-year rental the previous offseason from the Marlins, but also Johnson, whom Houston had obtained from Seattle. “We would have won the World Series,” he said.

As for Petco Park, he deemed it lacking the downtown vibe of the Pittsburgh ballpark.

What is objectively true, he would agree, is that the 1998 Pads were able to succeed against big-league pitching of many types.

“Talent-wise,” he said, “we were questionably over the hill and had injuries. But, we still went to the World Series, and that was because we had a real major league team and that would be: Everybody knew what they were supposed to do, and they were prepared to do it.”

Still together

Hamilton said he and several members of the '98 team have remained in touch through a text network.

From each other, several '98 alums learned early Jan. 30 of the death of [Kevin Towers](#), the general manager who made several key additions in building the 1998 team.

Hamilton said he dearly misses Towers, remembering him as an intense competitor and a strong, effective and humble leader and man.

Towers will be inducted into the Padres Hall of Fame before the game Saturday. His wife, Kelley, and '98 catcher Carlos Hernandez will team up for a ceremonial pitch.

Bobbleheads of the late Gwynn (who would have turned 58 on Wednesday) and the late Ken Caminiti, each a regular on the '98 team, will be handed out Thursday and Friday, respectively, with Gwynn's son and Caminiti's daughters throwing pregame pitches on those nights.

Similar souvenirs of two other '98 mainstays, Trevor Hoffman and Greg Vaughn, will go out Saturday and Sunday.

"I'm sure there's going to be a wide array of emotion from all of the fellas over the weekend," Hamilton said.

Celebrating the 1998 Padres

Schedule of events for Padres' four-game series against the Cardinals at Petco Park:

Thursday (7:10 p.m.)

Tony Gwynn '98 commemorative bobblehead

Ceremonial first pitch: [Tony Gwynn Jr.](#)

Friday (7:10 p.m.)

Ken Caminiti '98 commemorative bobblehead

Ceremonial first pitch: Nicole and Lindsey Caminiti

Saturday (5:40 p.m.)

Trevor Hoffman '98 commemorative bobblehead

1998 National League championship team 20-Year reunion pregame ceremony

Padres Hall of Fame ceremony: Kevin Towers

Ceremonial first pitch: Kelley Towers and Carlos Hernandez

National Anthem: Anisha Gwynn

Postgame fireworks

Sunday (1:10 p.m.)

Greg Vaughn '98 commemorative bobblehead

Ceremonial first pitch: Greg Vaughn

Eric Hosmer shocked by supposed rift with Andy Green, hint of Padres discord

Kevin Acee

Padres first baseman [Eric Hosmer](#) was stunned Wednesday when told of the furor caused by a social media post and ensuing discussion about the topic on talk radio.

A fan writing on reddit claimed to have heard Hosmer disrespecting manager Andy Green after hitting a two-run homer Saturday against the Dodgers.

“It seems crazy to me,” Hosmer said when told of what became a viral incident among many Padres fans. “We’ve got a good thing going.”

The fan posted on the social media platform that he was sitting near the dugout at Estadio de Beisbol Monterrey and claimed that as Hosmer passed Green while entering the dugout, the first baseman said, “Am I earning my paycheck now Chief?”

The post said players’ wives were sitting nearby as well, and were talking about how Green “dressed down” the team after the Padres were no-hit Friday.

One problem with the veracity of the post is that no wives were on the trip. Another apparent contradiction is that three sources maintained Green never met with the team outside their regular daily hitters meeting and never upbraided them.

It has, in fact, been Green’s pattern to rarely resort to such tactics.

A review of the Fox Sports San Diego broadcast briefly shows Green smiling and patting Hosmer on the rear end as the first baseman passed him on the dugout steps.

Hosmer seemed to genuinely fluctuate between being perturbed and bemused before Wednesday’s game against the Nationals.

The 28-year-old was signed to an eight-year, \$144 million contract in February in part due to his willingness to be an active participant in the team’s building process. He is likely one of just a handful of current Padres who will be with the team in a few years, when it expects to be a contender.

“We’re in this together,” Hosmer said. “We understand how hard this process is. We bought into this before we took it on. ... We’re building in the right direction. This organization is going in the right direction.”

Green and Hosmer talk every day and even dined together Tuesday night. Both have expressed patience with the process while also acknowledging the frustration with current results.

“One of the great things is the relationship we have,” Hosmer said. “We’re in daily communication. ... Honestly, things are great.”

Margot provides spark as Padres solve Nats

Lucchesi's strong start backed by impressive bullpen showing

AJ Cassavell MLB.com

SAN DIEGO -- The Padres strongly believe in **Manuel Margot** as their leadoff man of the future, a multifaceted table-setter who can impact games with his bat and with his wheels.

In the present, however, Margot finds himself at the bottom of the San Diego order, where the club feels he's best suited to break out of his season-long sophomore slump. The 23-year-old speedster showed signs of doing just that Wednesday night.

Margot notched a season-high three hits in the Padres' 2-1 victory over the Nationals at Petco Park. He doubled home the tying run in the fourth inning, then created the winning run in the seventh.

"It feels good to see that the work I'm putting in is coming to fruition and finally showing itself," Margot said. "The only thing I can do is keep working, staying with the same process to make sure the results keep showing up."

Margot swatted a single into center field to lead off the bottom of the seventh. Two pitches later, he swiped second base and made it to third on a throwing error by Nationals catcher **Matt Wieters**. **Matt Szczur** plated Margot with a double later in the frame, and the Padres bullpen had a lead it wouldn't relinquish.

Margot entered the series with one hit in 16 May at-bats, but he went 5-for-10 with a pair of extra-base hits against the Nationals. A year ago, Margot put forth a rookie campaign in which he never fell into a prolonged drought. This past month marked his first legitimate Major League slump.

"He's been putting a lot of work in," said Padres manager Andy Green. "He's a tremendous kid. He puts everything he's got into the game. It's good seeing some of that work starting to pay off and seeing him turn a corner a little bit."

Starter **Joey Lucchesi** continued his excellent rookie campaign with five-plus innings of one-run ball. He allowed only a homer to **Anthony Rendon** in the top of the fourth, while striking out six.

Rendon's next trip to the plate spelled the end of Lucchesi's night, even though the rookie left-hander was sitting on just 69 pitches. Lucchesi allowed the first two men to reach base in the sixth, and with Rendon due up, Green called for right-hander **Craig Stammen**.

"I can't really argue with the coach," Lucchesi said. "If that's what he wants, it's fine. I didn't want to come out. I wanted to keep competing."

Green is just fine with that mindset.

"If I ever go take a baseball from a guy and they're happy about coming out of the game, we have a problem," Green said. "If I take a baseball from a guy and he wants to continue to pitch, we have a competitor. That's a good thing."

Stammen promptly induced a double play and an inning-ending popup. **Kirby Yates** and **Brad Hand** followed with more scoreless relief, as the Padres avoided being swept by the Nationals for the first time at Petco Park.

"We had a very fresh bullpen," Green said. "We had three guys we really trust in Stammen, Yates and Hand. ... Craig has proved over and over again that it's wise to have faith in him."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Slick picks: Lucchesi owns one of the sport's best pickoff moves, and he put it **on full display** Wednesday night. In the fourth, he caught **Howie Kendrick** off first base, then he nabbed **Wilmer Difo** an inning later. It's early, but Lucchesi's three pickoffs lead the Majors, and his two-pick game was the first in MLB this season.

Great Yates: Trailing by one in the eighth, the Nationals sent the top of their order to the plate against Yates. He quickly set them down in order, including strikeouts of **Trea Turner** and Rendon. They were Yates' 100th and 101st K's for the Padres -- and he's reached that mark in only 67 innings.

HE SAID IT

"There were a lot of times where I was going up to the plate with things in my head, thinking about things. If you're doing that, that doesn't really let you be who you need to be. I do think I'm getting back to just being myself." -- *Margot*

UP NEXT

Jordan Lyles' strong showing in the bullpen has earned him admittance into the Padres' starting rotation, after a struggling **Bryan Mitchell** was moved to a relief role. Lyles, whose hard curveball has come to life in the 'pen, will start Thursday against the Cardinals at 7:10 p.m. PT. He'll be limited innings-wise, having maxed out at 45 pitches this season. Meanwhile, former Padre **Miles Mikolas** gets the start for St. Louis.

Lucchesi becoming master of deception

Padres starter picks off 2 Nationals runners

AJ Cassavell MLB.com

SAN DIEGO -- On every pitch **Joey Lucchesi** throws, his quirky delivery makes it seem as though he's about to step toward first base before he ultimately kicks home.

Except sometimes he doesn't come home at all.

Sometimes, when there's a runner on first base, Lucchesi brandishes one of the sport's best pickoff moves. And it took center stage in Wednesday night's **2-1 Padres victory** over Washington, when Lucchesi nabbed two Nationals baserunners, shutting down a pair of would-be rallies.

"I've been trying to work on my craft," said Lucchesi, who allowed one run over five-plus innings while striking out six. "Little things like that get you out of innings quicker."

Lucchesi is the only pitcher in the Majors with three pickoffs this season, and Wednesday marked the first time this year that a pitcher has recorded two picks in the same game.

Just how good is Lucchesi's move? Ask first baseman **Eric Hosmer**. He has the best vantage point, after all.

"Honestly, to this point in the season, I still couldn't even tell you when he's coming over," Hosmer said. "It's that deceptive."

Hosmer recalled the team's first bunting drills during Spring Training. He was stationed on first while Lucchesi threw to the plate. Instead of breaking toward home, Hosmer was fooled into retreating to the bag, because he believed Lucchesi was about to throw over.

The deception has always been there. But since Lucchesi arrived in the organization via the 2016 Draft, he's gotten smarter about using his move. He's developed a second move -- he calls it "a bad move" -- to bait runners into leaving too soon.

Then he strikes. That was the case in the fourth inning with one out and **Howie Kendrick** leading off first base.

"I said, 'I'm going to go slow and see if this guy goes, because I'm pretty sure he's going to go,'" Lucchesi said. "He went, I just flicked it [to first] and got him."

Lucchesi has an excellent mentor in left-hander **Clayton Richard**, owner of 34 career big league pickoffs. Richard was the last pitcher to pick two baserunners in the same game. Coincidentally, it came last May against the Nationals.

Lucchesi has also worked with the Padres coaching staff at varying his moves. An inning after he nabbed Kendrick, Nats second baseman **Wilmer Difo** was hung up on a Lucchesi pick that was much more direct than the first.

"I'm just becoming smarter about it," Lucchesi said. "I'm just learning the game better. I'm a student of the game, man."

Morejon fans seven for Storm

William Boor MLB.com

- No. 48 overall prospect Adrian Morejon (**Padres' No. 6**) bounced back from a rough outing in a big way with Class A Advanced Lake Elsinore. The lefty set a career-high with seven innings and a season-high with seven strikeouts in the outing. Morejon walked one, gave up three hits and didn't allow a run.

Lyles brings reliever's mentality to starting role

AJ Cassavell MLB.com

SAN DIEGO -- **Jordan Lyles** wasn't thrilled in mid-March when he learned he would open the season in the bullpen. It may have been a blessing in disguise.

"At the time I wouldn't have thought that," Lyles said. "But everything has worked itself out, and I'm happy to be in the position I am."

Lyles is slated for his first start of the season Thursday in the series opener against the Cardinals, taking the place of right-hander **Bryan Mitchell**. He's a notably different pitcher than he was during last season's stint in the rotation, and he says his move to the bullpen is to credit for that.

"One thing it taught me was being on the attack a little bit more," Lyles said. "Sometimes as a starter you slow things down, process everything, go over previous at-bats. I definitely want to take the mentality of getting after it a little bit more and being on the attack."

Lyles has seen a noticeable uptick in velocity with every one of his pitches since his move to the bullpen. His fastball has averaged 94.5 mph this season, up 1.5 from last year. His 84 mph curveball is the third-highest average velo in baseball.

It's worth wondering whether Lyles can maintain that success as a starter, given that his velocity figures to dip with more innings to eat. The Padres are optimistic that the strides he made in the 'pen will carry over into the rotation.

"Starters have the mentality to get through six or seven innings; that's ingrained in them," Padres manager Andy Green said. "Relief pitchers think, 'I've just got to get this next guy out.' So they go after him with everything they have. That's what we want him to take to the rotation -- that same type of mentality."

Picciolo, Towers honored with patch

The Padres will don patches honoring Rob Picciolo and Kevin Towers on their throwback uniforms Saturday, as they commemorate the 20-year anniversary of the 1998 National League pennant-winning squad.

Towers, the club's general manager from 1995-2009, passed away from thyroid cancer on Jan. 30. Picciolo, the longest-tenured coach in Padres history, suffered a heart attack Jan. 3.

The patch will feature the initials of both men, and the Padres will continue to wear it for five more games this season -- all Wednesday games when they don their 1998 throwback uniforms.

Yates raises money for Hawaii flood relief

Padres right-hander **Kirby Yates** has created a fundraiser to support flood relief in his hometown with the goal of raising \$10,000 toward the Hawaii Community foundation.

Yates, the Padres' setup man, grew up in Koloa, Hawaii, on the south side of Kauai. The town was not issued a flood warning last month, when record rainfall arrived, resulting in severe damage to homes and loss of countless personal belongings.

Yates has pledged to match the efforts up to \$5,000, and donations can be submitted at youcaring.com/koloa.

"It's a small town," Yates said. "Everybody on the south side knows each other, I grew up there, went to Koloa elementary school, learned to play baseball there. A lot of these families ... I went to school with, I played baseball with, I'm just trying to help out, hopefully help them back on the right side of their feet."

Padres announce honorary bat girl

Major League Baseball announced its honorary bat girls for Mother's Day, naming Sandra Lopez as the Padres' representative. Lopez, a mother of three, was originally diagnosed with breast cancer in 2008, then rediagnosed in 2012 after having earned a clean bill of health and being in remission.

The Padres will honor Lopez during a pregame ceremony Sunday, where she will be joined by 100 other survivors on the baselines at Petco Park.

For Mother's Day, all players will wear newly designed caps with uniforms featuring a pink ribbon. Louisville Slugger will donate proceeds from the sale of their pink bats, which will be stamped with the MLB breast cancer awareness logo, to Susan G. Komen and Stand Up To Cancer, and MLB will again donate its licensed uniform royalties through Mother's Day apparel to Susan G. Komen and Stand Up To Cancer.

Margot's 5-for-10 set could mark end of slump

Notes on Lucchesi, Ellis, Hand

Bill Center, longtime sportswriter for U-T San Diego, is an employee of the Padres.

Center fielder **Manuel Margot** was 3-for-5 Wednesday night with his fifth double and a stolen base and had a hand in both runs scored by the Padres in their 2-1 win over the Washington Nationals at Petco Park.

Margot doubled home **A.J. Ellis** to tie the game in the fourth then singled, stole second, moved to third on the catcher's throwing error and scored the game-winning run on **Matt Szczur**'s double in the seventh.

Margot was 5-for-10 in the three-game series against the Nationals to climb above the .200 mark for the first time since the second game of the season.

This is the second time this season that the 23-year-old sophomore appears to be breaking out of his season-long slump. Margot was on a three-game hitting streak April 10 when he was hit in the ribs by a pitch and forced to go on the disabled list for 10 games.

Since April 24, Margot has gone 13-for-47 (.277) with four doubles and two triples, although he drew only one walk. The spurt has raised his batting average from .135 to .202. His on-base percentage remains well below average at .252.

Margot hit .263 as a rookie last year with a .313 on-base percentage.

NOTEBOOK

- **Joey Lucchesi** became the first Major League pitcher to pick off two runners in a game Wednesday night. Lucchesi picked **Howie Kendrick** off first in the fourth and caught **Wilmer Difo** off first an inning later. Lucchesi lowered his ERA to 2.98, which is the lowest among the Padres' starters. Lucchesi is 2-0 (and the Padres are 3-2) in his five starts at Petco Park with a 2.39 ERA.
- Seven of the last eight outs recorded by closer **Brad Hand** have come via strikeouts. Hand has 10 saves in 12 conversion attempts and has lowered his ERA to 2.55 with four straight scoreless appearances. Despite the Padres' slow start, Hand is tied for third in saves in the National League. Hand has 29 strikeouts in 17 2/3 innings this season or 14.8 per nine innings.
- A.J. Ellis, 37, who entered the season as a .237 career hitter over 606 games, is 7-for-16 over his last five games with two doubles and two walks to raise his season batting average to .278. He has reached base in five straight games.

- **Christian Villanueva** is hitless in 28 straight at-bats dating back to May 1. The slump, which includes 10 strikeouts and only one walk, has lowered his batting average from .324 to .243.

Austin Hedges' pitch framing magic is a thing to behold

By Dustin Palmateer The Athletic

When elbow tendinitis put Austin Hedges on the disabled list last week, the casual observer might have viewed the bad news as a needed respite from watching Hedges try to hit. In fact, anyone could have come to that conclusion.

Despite some offseason swing tinkering and the encouraging results that followed early in spring training, Hedges hit just .173/.235/.293 through April, leading San Diego's strikeout brigade with a 37 percent clip. Since the start of 2017, his [67 wRC+ ranks 259th](#) in baseball among the 267 players to record at least 400 PAs over that stretch. His replacements — veteran A.J. Ellis and minor league vagabond Raffy Lopez — aren't known as offensive stalwarts, but the combo could conceivably outhit Hedges on the strength of good fortune alone.

One group that wasn't happy to learn about Hedges' extended absence was the Padres' pitching staff. Hedges is one of the few players in baseball who can go 0-for-4 with two whiffs at the plate and still positively impact the game — thanks to his work *behind* the dish. His glove work rates better than average in just about every facet, from handling a pitching staff to blocking pitches in the dirt to throwing out baserunners to, most importantly, stealing strikes by framing borderline pitches.

Last year, even with an ugly slash line attached to his bat, Hedges was worth a team-leading four wins above replacement level, according to Baseball Prospectus. The [25.9 runs](#) he added in pitch framing alone last season placed him second in the majors, and it's been more of the same so far this year.

Hedges has already saved the Padres 3.5 runs from pitch framing in 2018, a number that leads the league — even though he's missed the last six games to injury. Ellis, on the other hand, works with a stone glove. His -0.010 CSAA ranks 47th out of 57 catchers this season (min. 500 opportunities), and he's posted a -39.5 Framing Runs figure over his 11-year career. Lopez rates as a plus framer in limited big league chances, but his minor league numbers paint a different picture.

Predictably, the Padres have dealt with a shrinking strike zone without the services of Hedges, their umpire whisperer. The following side-by-side images show the Padres' strike zone this season:

Strikes are on the left and balls are on the right. The yellow circles are with Hedges catching, the blue ones are for Ellis, and the red ones represent Lopez's limited work.

What jumps out are the low pitches. Hedges has racked up a bunch of strikes on pitches at or below the bottom of the strike zone so far this season. On the other hand, check out all those blue circles at or just below the zone in the image on the right. Some of them are rule-book balls, but most of them are pitches Hedges has been turning into

strikes at a better than 50 percent clip this season. Ellis hasn't been getting the calls on those pitches, so pitchers have been forced to move closer to the heart of the zone to get calls, a dangerous high-wire act in an era of launch angle-obsessed hitters and an apparently juiced baseball.

Let's check out a few examples. Here's Hedges catching a low fastball from Joey Lucchesi:

Lucchesi hits his spot, but it's just below the zone. Hedges doesn't let the trajectory of the pitch bring his glove down farther, however; instead, he sticks it and then brings his glove back into the strike zone. If anything, Hedges might have overframed this one, but he got the call either way.

Now watch Ellis on a similar pitch:

Same location, same handedness for batter and pitcher, same pitch. Ellis wants a fastball low and Robbie Erlin puts it there. Unlike Hedges, however, Ellis pulls the cardinal sin of framing the low pitch: *he turns his glove over [gasps]*. A pitch at the knees suddenly looks like a clear ball, and there's no way the umpire is giving Ellis this call, even against the crouching Evan Gattis. Look where the gloves of Hedges and Ellis end up just after the catch:

Same pitch, different result.

Same idea here, except this time it's a slider. Hedges gets a pitch at the bottom of the zone and subtly moves it closer to the middle after he catches it. Everything is pretty quiet.

There's so much more movement with Ellis. Before the pitch, he slides over to his set-up position and flashes a target. Then he drops the glove down, brings it back up, then drops it back down to catch the pitch, then — finally — brings it back up again to try to frame it. Even in a 9–3 game in the bottom of the eighth, the umpire is having none of it.

And it's not like Hedges is just a low-pitch specialist. Above the top of the zone, Ellis has only gotten one strike call while missing plenty *inside* the strike zone. Hedges has missed his fair share of pitches in the upper third of the zone, too — he's still caught more innings than Ellis and Lopez combined, remember — but he's also gotten strike calls on some 19 should-be balls above the top of the strike zone.

Hedges is actually getting more high strikes this season than last, proving his ability to nab strikes both high and low.

If Hedges misses extended action, the Padres' pitching staff — already beleaguered some by Dinelson Lamet's Tommy John surgery — could be in trouble. The only starter to pull Ellis as a personal catcher, Bryan Mitchell, just lost his rotation spot after walking 26 and striking out 16 in 32 innings. (Ellis, incidentally, went from Clayton Kershaw's

personal catcher to Bryan Mitchell's personal catcher in a two-year span.) Mitchell's struggles aren't fully attributable to his backstop, but it's not the kind of thing you put on a resume, either.

The rest of the rotation could have a hard time adjusting to a smaller strike zone. Rookies Joey Lucchesi and Eric Lauer could both be classified as soft-tossing lefties, relying more on either deception or location to beat hitters. Veteran Clayton Richard falls into that same category, as his fastball doesn't get much higher than 90 mph. Tyson Ross has recaptured his swing-and-miss slider, but his velocity is down a couple of miles per hour from his prime. Jordan Lyles, Mitchell's temporary replacement, has a career ERA+ of 79.

All pitchers benefit from getting more borderline strike calls, but these Padres hurlers may be less equipped to withstand the constraints of a shrinking strike zone than some other teams. In that sense, everyone's hoping Hedges returns to action in a hurry. There's an eighth hole in the lineup for a reason, and it's got Hedges' name on it. Even if he's just a .600-something OPS guy for a while, he'll more than make up for hack-tastic hitting by getting the most out of his pitching staff

Szczur's RBI double lifts Padres past Nationals 2-1

AP

SAN DIEGO -- [Matt Szczur](#) doesn't get many chances at the plate. So, he didn't waste his opportunity with the game on the line Wednesday night.

Szczur hit a go-ahead RBI double in the seventh inning and San Diego's bullpen pitched four scoreless innings to lift the Padres past the [Washington Nationals](#) 2-1.

Padres manager Andy Green penciled in Szczur against lefty starter [Gio Gonzalez](#) and it paid off.

"Andy has faith in me and knows I will get the job done when he puts me in there," said Szczur, who made his sixth start of the season and had only 37 at-bats coming in. "I always appreciate that. It's good to get the job done, that's for sure."

With the game tied at 1, [Manuel Margot](#) opened the seventh with a single -- his third hit of the game -- and stole second before advancing to third on catcher [Matt Wieters'](#) throwing error. Szczur doubled off reliever [Trevor Gott](#) (0-2) to the left-field fence to score Margot.

"I was just trying to get something good to hit," said Szczur, who turned on a fastball. "I knew I had to get something in the air and I put a good swing on it."

[Kirby Yates](#) pitched a perfect eighth, and [Brad Hand](#) got three outs after [Ryan Zimmerman's](#) single for his 10th save.

"Our guys were great and they have been great all season," Szczur said. "They come in and dominate for sure and it's fun to play behind those guys."

The Nationals, who had their three-game winning streak snapped, had the go-ahead run on in the seventh on Wieters' leadoff double. But [Craig Stammen](#) (1-0) struck out [Moises Sierra](#) and [Wilmer Difo](#) before pinch-hitter [Matt Adams](#) lined out to third.

Neither starter figured into the decision, although both pitched well.

Gonzalez, who threw 24 pitches in the first inning, worked six innings for the Nationals, allowing one run, five hits and three walks. He struck out eight.

"I worked my pitch count up because I wasn't being aggressive in the strike zone," Gonzalez said. "Finally it worked."

[Joey Lucchesi](#), who entered with the top ERA (3.13) for rookie starters, pitched five-plus innings. He gave up a run and six hits with a walk and six strikeouts.

"He pitched well," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said. "Then, Stammen came in and pitched well. I tip my hat to them."

Lucchesi exited after only 69 pitches when [Michael Taylor](#) singled and [Trea Turner](#) walked to start the sixth. Stammen entered and got [Anthony Rendon](#) to ground into a double play. After a walk, [Howie Kendrick](#) flied to right.

"When you have an opportunity to win a baseball game and you got someone that can get a double play ball and get out of tough inning, we are going to go that way," Green said. "Craig has proved that over and over again.

"But I thought Joey was really good today and we're looking for him to pitch for us for a long time. I felt good about what he did today and I can't ask for much more from Joey."

The Padres broke through in the fourth when [A.J. Ellis](#) and Margot hit consecutive doubles to tie it at 1.

Rendon hit his eighth homer in the fourth to give the Nationals a 1-0 lead.

PICK ON SOMEONE ELSE

Lucchesi's nifty move to first base resulted in two Nationals being picked off as he erased Kendrick and Difo. It was the first time this season a pitcher has picked off two runners in a game.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Nationals: RF [Bryce Harper](#) got the day off to rest. ... LHP [Matt Grace](#)(groin) suffered a setback in his minor-league rehab assignment after throwing for Triple-A Syracuse on Tuesday. Grace won't make his scheduled appearance on Thursday.

Padres: OF [Hunter Renfroe](#) (elbow) is hitting in extended spring training games, but hasn't played defense. ... C [Austin Hedges](#) (elbow) started a light throwing program. ... OF [Wil Myers](#) (oblique) hasn't resume baseball activities.

UP NEXT

Nationals: RHP [Tanner Roark](#) (2-3) starts the first contest of a four-game series at Arizona. Roark, who has lost two of his last three starts, has split his four career decisions against the Diamondbacks.

Padres: RHP [Jordan Lyles](#) (0-0) makes his season debut as a starter. Lyles has limited opponents to a .194 (14 for 72) batting average in his 19.2 innings of relief.

Many Miles later, Cardinals' Mikolas faces Padres

FOX Sports, STATS

SAN DIEGO — When the [Padres](#) traded right-handed reliever [Miles Mikolas](#) to the [Pittsburgh Pirates](#) on Nov. 25, 2013, some members of the San Diego family felt a mistake had been made.

Mikolas was 25 at the time and a bit raw, but the Padres loved the ceiling.

In parts of two seasons with the Padres, the 6-foot-5, 220-pound Mikolas, who was a seventh-round draft pick in 2009, was 2-1 with a 3.44 ERA in 27 relief appearances.

Mikolas, of course, has matured into a formidable starting pitcher for the St. Louis [Cardinals](#) — thanks in large part to a successful, three-season detour to Japan where he posted a 31-13 record with a 2.18 ERA.

Mikolas is 4-0 with the Cardinals this season with a 2.70 ERA in six starts. He has allowed 13 runs (12 earned), 37 hits and two walks with 31 strikeouts in 40 innings.

Thursday night, he returns to Petco Park to face the Padres for the first time in the opener of a four-game series that the Padres will use to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their 1998 National League championship season.

While Mikolas will be facing his original team for the first time Thursday, he has had success at Petco Park. He was 2-0 at Petco Park as a Padre with a 2.84 ERA in 14 relief appearances.

Starting for the Padres Thursday night will be right-hander [Jordan Lyles](#), who comes out of the bullpen to replace [Bryan Mitchell](#) (0-3, 6.47 ERA) in seven starts) in the Padres rotation.

Lyles, 27, made five starts for the Padres last season and was 1-3 with a 9.39 ERA. He contended for a rotation spot this spring, but was told a week before Opening Day that he would be starting the season in the bullpen.

Lyles has made 13 relief appearances with the Padres this season and is 0-0 with a 3.66 ERA. He allowed eight runs on 14 hits and seven walks with 16 strikeouts in 19 2/3 innings.

Padres manager Andy Green is hoping Lyle's bullpen experience will alter his thinking as a starter.

“Starters have a different mentality and they can learn from the bullpen,” Green said Thursday. “A starter’s mentality is to go six or seven innings. In the bullpen, it’s ‘I have to get this guy out’ and they go after the hitter with everything they have.”

“That’s what we want Jordan to take to the rotation, that same type mentality. He’s earned the right to go back into the rotation and we’ll see how he does and takes the opportunity to run with it. I’d love to see the full complement of his arsenal used in the rotation the way he’s used it in the bullpen.”

“I think if he goes at his three or four innings the way he’s gone at his one inning, he’ll have a lot of success. The fastball has been really good. The breaking ball has been really good. The changeup has gotten underneath bats a lot. He’s left one or two up, but he’s been really good.”

Lyles is 0-1 with a 4.86 ERA in six games (two starts) against the Cardinals. He has never won at Petco Park, where he is 0-3 with a 4.91 ERA in 16 games (six starts).

This Day in Padres History—May 10

By Bill Center

May 10, 1969—Light-hitting Padres shortstop **Roberto Pena** (.225) had four hits, including a grand slam homer off future Hall of Famer **Steve Carlton**, as the Padres score a 5–3 win in St. Louis.

May 10, 1978—Left-hander **Randy Jones** pitches a complete-game, six-hit shutout and center fielder **George Hendrick** homers for the game's lone run as the Padres defeat the Cubs 1–0 at San Diego Stadium.

May 10, 2008—**Greg Maddux** wins the 350th game of his career pitching for the Padres in a 3–2 win over Colorado at Petco Park. Maddux allows one unearned run on three hits and no walks with two strikeouts over six innings. **Adrian Gonzalez** hits a three-run homer and **Trevor Hoffman** gets the save.

May 10, 2014—Left fielder **Seth Smith** goes 3-for-4 with a double, triple and homer (falling a single shy of the cycle) with four RBIs in the Padres 9–3 win over the Marlins at Petco Park.

May 10, 2016—**Alex Dickerson** becomes the first Padre ever to hit a pinch-hit grand slam for his first Major League home run in the Padres 8–7 loss to the Cubs at Wrigley Field.

#PadresOnDeck: Morejon Pitches Seven Scoreless Innings for A-Lake Elsinore

By Bill Center

Left-hander **Adrian Morejon** turned in his best outing of the season Wednesday night for Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore.

Morejon, 19, allowed three hits and a walk with seven strikeouts over seven scoreless innings.

The Padres' sixth-ranked prospect improved to 1–3 while lowering his earned run average to 3.68. The Cuban is rated the [48th overall prospect by MLB Pipeline](#) and the No. 6 prospect among all left-handed pitchers.

Other performances Wednesday by Top-30 prospects:

— Second baseman **Esteury Ruiz**, 19, the [Padres' 11-ranked prospect](#), homered in three at-bats for Single-A Fort Wayne. Ruiz, who is hitting .264, also drew a walk.

— Center fielder **Edward Olivares**, 22, the [Padres' №19 prospect](#), was 2-for-4 for Lake Elsinore to raise his batting average to .284.

— Second baseman **Luis Urías**, 20, the [Padres' №3 prospect](#), had a two-run single and a walk in four at-bats with Triple-A El Paso. He is hitting .299.

— **Cory Spangenberg**, who started in left for the Chihuahuas, was 2-for-5 with a double, two RBIs and a run scored for El Paso to raise his batting average to .265.

Around the Farm:

TRIPLE-A EL PASO (18–16): Tacoma 8, CHIHUAHUAS 5—CF **Shane Peterson** (.224) was 2-for-3 with a walk and two runs scored in support of Urías and Spangenberg. C **Stephen McGee** (.125) was 1-for-4 with a RBI. Starting RHP **Walker Lockett** (5.49 ERA) allowed six runs on 11 hits and a walk with five strikeouts in 6 1/3 innings to take the loss. LHP **Kyle McGrath**(4.38) allowed a hit with two strikeouts in 1 2/3 scoreless innings. RHP **Robert Stock** (4.50) allowed two runs on two hits in an inning.

DOUBLE-A SAN ANTONIO (22–10): The Missions were off Wednesday.

ADVANCED SINGLE-A LAKE ELSINORE (13–20): STORM 1, Rancho Cucamonga 0—RHP **Lake Bachar** (1.91 ERA) followed Morejon and struck out two in a perfect inning RHP **Trevor Megill** (3.06) struck out one in a perfect inning to complete the shutout and get his first save. SS **Kelvin Melean** (.227) was 2-for-3 with a run scored in support of Olivares. DH **Eguy Rosario** (.284) was 1-for-2 with a walk and a hit-by-pitcher. 2B **Deion Tansel** was 1-for-2 with a hit-by-pitcher in his debut with the Storm.

SINGLE-A FORT WAYNE (14–19): QUAD CITIES 7, TinCaps 1—DH **Jalen Washington** (.216) backed Ruiz, going 1-for-3. C **Juan Fernandez** (.257) had a double in four at-bats. 1B **Carlos Belen** (.258) was 1-for-4. RHP **Emmanuel Ramirez** (1–2, 2.20 ERA) allowed two runs on five hits and three walks with nine strikeouts in five innings. RHP **Adrian Martinez** (9.92) allowed four runs on four hits and a walk with a strikeout in two innings. RHP **Evan Miller** (0.84) allowed a run on a hit with a strikeout in an inning.