



Padres Press Clips

Monday, October 1, 2018

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Preller sees lots of possibilities in Padres' plan

Kevin Acee

Now that the arduous next step of the 2018 season is finished, the shadow of its ugly record behind them, the [Padres](#) are free to be excited about the next step.

“I think the good thing from our standpoint is we feel like we have some talent throughout the organization,” General Manager A.J. Preller said Sunday before the Padres completed another disappointing season with a 4-3 victory over the Diamondbacks at Petco Park. “... And I feel like we’re going to have some financial flexibility because a lot of the players are younger players. We understand we’re at that point from a plan standpoint where we’re going to have to supplement from the outside – be it the free agent or trade route. We’ll look to do that in the next few months.”

That’s the general plan.

“It’s just getting a lot better, starting to climb out of this development mindset (and from) looking at the bottom of the standings,” Preller said of the goal for 2019.

The decision-making process is in perpetual motion and will continue in earnest in the coming weeks as the Padres personnel, development and coaching staffs debrief and move on to refining what they hope to accomplish before next season.

The organization has what is considered an abundance of young talent, some of which began to manifest on the major-league level and much of it that is still in the form of minor league prospects. The team has to decide which of its players are good enough to become even better and which players from other organizations could provide help toward that end.

Then, once the good teams are done playing at the end of October and the major league offseason commences, the Padres, who finished at 66-96 this season, expect to execute a number of moves designed to continue their building process.

“When you’re in the bottom part of the standings,” Preller said. “there are a lot of different ways to get better.”

What roster twists and turns Preller and his crew navigate can’t be mapped out just yet, in large part because every road taken leads to another road.

Being inside Preller’s mind right now would be like Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride combined with a trip down Alice in Wonderland’s rabbit hole. Virtually every player on another team can be considered. Almost every player on the Padres can be kept or traded.

And whatever is done in the next four months has to fit into the plan launched in 2016 and its grander focus on a window the Padres expect to remain open for many years.

“Every decision we make is ... building toward a plan, and what we’re not going to do is short-circuit the last three years of building,” Preller said. “(The object) is really to get away from the mindset of being average and understanding these three years, whether (the team’s record is considered) a step back (and) understanding you may not win a ton of games at the big league level. We do that to try to build up a talent base and an organization that has a chance to win 90-plus games for a five- or six-year period. So I don’t think we’re going to do anything this offseason that deviates from that plan.

“It’s understanding you don’t want to just have one season where you have success and then a bunch of these guys walk away and you’re back in a similar spot. The build of the last three years and the hard work our group has done – our scouts, the development group, our big-league coaches – that’s been designed to go somewhere. We’re going to look for guys for us in the short-term, for sure. But a lot of it is going to be guys we can build with and grow with the group to give us that window where we win for a period of time.”

That means, among other things, assessing whether Hunter Renfroe and/or Franmil Reyes are more valuable as the Padres’ corner outfielders than what one of them might bring as part of a trade. Same goes for evaluating a number of their highly

touted prospects, deciding whether the time has arrived to trade one or more of them as part of packages for a third baseman or starting pitcher.

“In building the farm system, a big part of it is the last 12 months, any time an established player has been put on the trade market, we’ve been part of those discussions,” Preller said. “We’ve had other teams reaching out to us and wanting to tap into guys we have in our system. That will be no different this offseason. We’ll try to evaluate the guys in our system versus what we’re able to acquire and see if it makes sense for us both in the short term and long term and go from there.”

As much as anything, the just-completed season demonstrated in vivid reality the Padres need more and better starting pitching. But the answer is not as simple as deciding to acquire a starter to put at (or near) the top of the rotation for ’19.

The Padres have at least a half-dozen pitching prospects believed to possess that type of potential on track to arrive in the majors in the next three seasons (plus Dinelson Lamet expected to return from Tommy John surgery next summer).

“We’ve worked to get to this point, where we feel we can fill our rotation internally right now and probably have a [Triple-A](#) rotation internally with some depth,” Preller said. “You can never have enough starting pitching. The question is how many of these guys can climb the rotation — can be a legitimate 1, 2 and 3 starter. We’ll look at all of the guys internally, because we believe in them. We think they’re going to build off this year. We’ll look at some of the guys who are coming through the minor league system that have had some big years and put themselves in a position to compete. And we’ll look outside the organization for guys who can stack up on top of that group or compete with that group.”

So, basically, anything could happen.

Manuel Margot in the middle of Padres' walk-off win

Jeff Sanders

A ball kicked away from the first baseman. [Manuel Margot](#), representing the go-ahead run in the eighth inning, hesitated as he rounded third base. The throw to the plate beat him easily to end the threat.

Margot thought of that series of unfortunate events when his speed — via a one-out triple in the 10th inning — again put him in a position to win a game.

This time his hesitation was the right read.

When Jake Barrett's third-strike wild pitch skipped away from [John Ryan Murphy](#), Margot backed up toward third base as Arizona's catcher tracked it down in foul territory. He then broke for the plate the moment Murphy threw to first. With [Daniel Descalso](#) hesitating before making the return throw home, Margot scored easily to send the Padres into the offseason on a walk-off, 4-3 win over the [Diamondbacks](#) on Sunday afternoon at Petco Park.

"I was thinking I had to score no matter what — score anyway I could," Margot said through interpreter David Longley. "I was thinking about it on some other balls that were close, but once I saw that one and saw that he wasn't near home I went for it."

Consider it an uplifting finish for a promising young player who did not live up to expectations in 2018.

The 24-year-old Dominican had one homer and a .204 average through the first two months of the season. He'd been caught stealing (10) as often as he was successful when he woke up Sunday morning. A summer surge had given way to a fizzling September (.535 OPS) until filling up the box score in Game 162.

Margot's eighth home run staked Joey Lucchesi to a 1-0 lead in the second. He also singled and stole second in the eighth inning and tripled into the right-center alley ahead of scoring the game-winning run on Francisco Mejia's wild-pitch strikeout to send the Padres to their second extra-inning, walk-off win of the series.

The effort was a reminder of who the Padres still believe Margot is.

"Manny has every chance in the world to be right there in the center of everything we do," Padres manager Andy Green said. "He was right in the middle of everything today. ... He's worked so hard and is such a great kid, so I'm thrilled for him to end his season this way."

He wasn't alone.

There was [Eric Hosmer](#) dumping a ball in left field for a game-tying RBI in the ninth, his 69th of the year, after closer Kirby Yates allowed the go-ahead run in the ninth. There was Freddy Galvis collecting two hits and a stolen base in his 162nd start, his last in a Padres uniform before venturing into free agency. There was the 25-year-old Lucchesi striking out eight over six strong innings (4 H, 0 BB) against a team that had tormented him for five of his nine losses.

The rookie left-hander was even in line to win before pinch-hitter Steven Souza sent a sixth-inning drive to left field.

Lucchesi had already given up one run on a solo shot to Ketel Marte in the fourth. His head dropped as he bent over with his hands on his knees to watch Souza's game-tying blast sail over the wall in the sixth.

"I was like, dammit," Lucchesi said. "I thought it was a pop-fly at first and then realized he hit it pretty hard."

The two blasts were all that kept Lucchesi from pushing his ERA below 4.00 and evening his rookie record at 9-9. He wound up with a 4.08 ERA but struck out a team-high 145 batters over 130 innings and enters the offseason as one of the favorites for a 2019 rotation spot.

“I just wanted to finish strong,” said Lucchesi, the first starting pitcher from the 2016 draft class to reach the majors. “I felt like I did that. Of course, it would be cool if I didn’t give up those solo shots, but I felt like I battled for my team.”

He added: “I know what to expect next year. I’m going to work and get prepared for next year.”

Margot, too, is in a good frame of mind after his head-first slide across home plate in the 10th inning touched off one last celebration for a team that lost 90-plus games for a third year in a row.

This season was the worst of the three, the Padres’ 66-96 record guaranteeing them the sixth overall pick in next year’s draft.

“It’s important to finish with something good in your head, something positive — not something bad,” Margot said. “You want to go into the offseason like that. It’s a great way to win a game. Seeing all my teammates as happy as they were, that’s something that fills me with satisfaction.”

Notable

- Sunday’s crowd of 31,243 brought Petco Park’s final 2018 attendance (officially tickets sold) in 78 games to 2,103,420. The average of 26,967 bettered last year’s average of 26,401.

This offensive stat is biggest priority for Padres

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com

7:01 AMPDT

SAN DIEGO -- The Padres spent Sunday evening in the Petco Park clubhouse, packing their bags after their 66-96 season ended with a [walk-off victory](#).

A few notes from bag day, as a busy offseason begins:

Padres need an OBP overhaul

New season, same story in one hugely important offensive category. The Padres posted a .297 on-base percentage in 2018. That marks the fifth straight year in which they've finished last in the Majors in OBP.

"From an offensive perspective, that's hands-down the most important thing for us," said Padres manager Andy Green. "We have to start making our way up that chart. Sometimes it's personnel. Sometimes it's about making the personnel you have grow. We saw growth. It wasn't an astronomical amount of growth, but it was there."

With the addition of [Eric Hosmer](#) and the development of some youngsters, the Padres were supposed to break the mold, OBP-wise, this season. That didn't happen. Instead, they finished two points worse than the 2016 and '17 clubs.

Hosmer slumped, [Wil Myers](#) was hurt for half the season, and [Manuel Margot](#) regressed after an excellent rookie campaign. Now the question is: How to change it?

"With young players, sometimes you don't know what kind of hitter you are yet, so you try to cover too much of the plate," said hitting coach Matt Stairs. "That causes more chase, which causes lower on-base percentage. They have to go back, look at the season, see where they did damage, and come back with a game plan of, 'This is where I'm going to sit on pitches,' and be a stubborn hitter about it."

There were a few success stories. [Franmil Reyes](#) has made huge strides since his May callup. [Austin Hedges](#) and [Hunter Renfroe](#) also saw a bump in their offensive numbers.

But the most important factor for a 2019 on-base boost might be a change in personnel. Middle-infield prospects [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) and [Luis Urias](#) have excelled in the Minors, and both figure to be crucial pieces next season.

"It starts with getting guys who've shown a history of being on base," said general manager A.J. Preller. "From a talent and personnel standpoint we'll continue to look at changing the mix a little bit. ... And then from a messaging standpoint we'll continue to hammer it home every possible way for guys to understand: Getting on base is probably the most important thing in the game."

Hosmer set to bounce back?

Hosmer's debut season in San Diego is over. He posted a .252/.320/.398 slash line with 18 homers in 677 plate appearances -- well below his 2017 numbers in Kansas City.

"Obviously, it wasn't the year I wanted to have," Hosmer said. "But I'm excited to get into the offseason now, figure this out and start with a fresh mind."

The biggest task awaiting Hosmer: hitting the ball in the air. No one in the Majors posted an average launch angle lower than Hosmer's negative-1.3-degrees this season.

Given that Hosmer generally hits the ball pretty hard, he understands the importance of changing that launch angle. When he gets the ball in the air, he does damage. When he doesn't, he hits into groundouts, mostly.

"I want to lift the ball, and I want to hit the ball to the opposite field," Hosmer said. "When I'm doing that, those are my strengths."

Perhaps Hosmer can take solace in the strange fact that he has rotated excellent seasons with poor seasons for his entire eight-year career. In other words, he's prone to bouncing back in odd-numbered years.

The Padres, at least, are confident Hosmer will turn things around in 2019.

"The first year here in San Diego [was] just a big change, a big difference," Preller said. "Signing the big contract, as much as you tell him, 'Be yourself, relax,' I think it's pretty natural that a guy's going to want to come show up here and impress, and I think that played a little bit into the whole year for him. ... He's going to learn from it, and we have a lot of faith that we're going to look up next year, and it's going to be an All-Star-caliber season for him, just because of the type of person he is."

End-of-season figures

- The Padres finished 2018 with a Petco Park attendance of 2,103,420 across 78 games (not including the three "home" games they played against the Dodgers in Monterrey, Mexico). The average attendance of 26,967 was up by a few ticks from last season's 26,401 mark.
- By virtue of their 66-96 finish, the Padres will pick sixth in the Draft next season. It marks their fourth consecutive top 10 pick. They've used each of the last three on pitching -- Cal Quantrill, MacKenzie Gore and Ryan Weathers.
- The starting pitching struggled, but the Padres' bullpen was excellent in 2018. Its 3.50 ERA ranked third in the National League and sixth overall. Of course, that number doesn't tell the whole story, because of the burden placed on the relief corps by short starts.

The 'pen was clearly much better than sixth-best. Padres relievers combined to post an 8.8 WAR, according to FanGraphs. That's the second best mark ever recorded in the National League, trailing only the 2003 Dodgers.

Five questions for the Padres this offseason

Tatis' development will determine club's decisions for 2019

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com

Sep. 30th, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- The Padres capped their third straight 90-plus-loss season on Sunday. A busy offseason awaits.

For three years, general manager A.J. Preller has turned over the roster, acquiring young talent with an eye to the future. The Padres, owners of the **best farm system in baseball**, believe that "future" could become the present very soon.

But first, they've got quite a few questions to answer this winter. These five are particularly pressing.

1. Who's the shortstop?

Freddy Galvis started all 162 games for the Padres this season. Now, he's headed for free agency, leaving a gaping hole at short. **Fernando Tatis Jr.**, MLB Pipeline's **No. 2 overall prospect** and the club's presumed shortstop of the future, will be in big league camp next spring. But he's unlikely to crack the Opening Day roster.

Both Galvis and the Padres have expressed interest in a reunion. But Tatis' looming presence means the Padres might not be willing to offer Galvis the length of contract that he's looking for. And if the two sides do agree, Galvis would almost certainly need to be open to something of a utility role. He'd cede playing time to young infielders Tatis and **Luis Urias**.

If Galvis doesn't return, the Padres could look to a thin free-agent market for a stopgap until Tatis arrives. They could also stay in-house and give **Javy Guerra** a look. Guerra has been a defensive wizard in the Minors, but his bat has lagged well behind. Ultimately, the Padres could settle on a spring competition between Guerra and a veteran on a one-year deal, with Tatis waiting in the wings.

2. When does Tatis arrive?

Tatis' situation with the Padres isn't quite the same as two other high-profile service-time debates, Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and **Eloy Jimenez** (ranked No. 1 and 3 by MLB Pipeline, respectively). Both Guerrero and Jimenez appear big league ready. With Tatis, that isn't quite so clear yet.

Tatis missed the last two months of the Minor League season with a broken bone in his left thumb. He batted .286/.355/.507 for Double-A San Antonio and would probably open the '19 season with Triple-A El Paso.

But Tatis' performance in winter ball and Spring Training could go a long way toward pushing his timetable forward. It's been a decade since the Padres had a reliable long-term option at short. Tatis isn't far from filling that void. Finally.

3. Where does [Wil Myers](#) play?

The emergence of right fielder [Franmil Reyes](#) was one of the most positive storylines in San Diego this season. But it leaves the Padres with something of a logjam in their outfield. [Hunter Renfroe](#) seems to have anchored a place for himself in left field.

In August, Myers shifted to third base, and he struggled mightily on defense. He'll spend the offseason honing his footwork and growing acclimated to the position. But his growing pains are cause for concern. If Myers isn't a long-term solution at third -- and he doesn't look the part right now -- the Padres seemingly have three power-hitting corner outfielders, all of whom bat right-handed.

There's also the possibility that one of the three is dealt before the season. The Padres would still have depth in the outfield, with [Franchy Cordero](#) set to return from elbow surgery and [Manuel Margot](#) and [Travis Jankowski](#) capable of playing center.

4. Where do the Padres find starting pitching?

There's not a single question more pivotal to the Padres' 2019 success than this one. If you look closely, the pieces for the Padres' long-term offense have mostly already arrived. The pitching staff, meanwhile, isn't close.

All five rotation spots will be up for grabs next spring, and 2018 rookies [Joey Lucchesi](#), [Eric Lauer](#), [Jacob Nix](#) and [Brett Kennedy](#) will compete for jobs. Prospects [Chris Paddack](#) and [Logan Allen](#) are expected to arrive next season, too.

Realistically, however, none of those youngsters is close to ace-caliber for 2019. The Padres need a front-end starter or two if they want to contend, and they will explore their options in free agency. But in a thin pitching market, the best route to acquire pitching might be via trade, and the Padres certainly have enough prospects to swing a deal for a big name.

5. [Austin Hedges](#) or [Francisco Mejia](#) -- or both?

In [Hedges](#) and [Mejia](#), the Padres have two of the best young catchers in the sport. And they've got an important decision to make. [Hedges](#), a defensive wizard, has made serious strides with his bat. [Mejia](#), meanwhile, has strided to make on both sides, but he's still only 22 and the top-ranked catching prospect by MLB Pipeline.

The Padres must decide whether they're going to trade one or find room for both. The latter isn't as far-fetched a possibility as it seems. The organization has expressed a desire to ease [Hedges](#)' workload. Privately, too, they've discussed [Mejia](#) as a part-time outfielder. In theory, there could be enough at-bats to go around, if [Mejia](#) were to split time between two positions.

Ultimately, both [Hedges](#) and [Mejia](#) will almost certainly be dangled in trade talks this offseason. But good catching is hard to find in the big leagues, and the Padres won't be in a hurry to deal either.

Padres cap '18 with wild walk-off in 10th inning

By Katie Woo MLB.com

Sep. 30th, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- The Padres' 2018 season wasn't particularly memorable. But during a period of transition, development and experimentation, there have been shining moments. In their final game of a trying season, the Padres added one more sweet memento.

San Diego walked off in extra innings -- a 4-3 decision against the D-backs at Petco Park on Sunday -- although it wasn't your usual type of celebration.

[View Full Game Coverage](#)

With one out in the 10th inning, [Manuel Margot](#) capped a stellar all-around game by tripling off of [Jake Barrett](#) for his second three-bagger in as many days. But when Barrett's third strike to pinch-hitter [Francisco Mejia](#) got past [John Ryan Murphy](#), Margot hesitated breaking toward home just long enough for the catcher to throw to first to ensure a putout.

Margot raced home, laying out with a head-first slide, en route to the Padres' seventh walk-off of the season. San Diego finished fifth in the National League West with a record of 66-96.

• [Five questions loom for Padres in offseason](#)

For Margot, who was acquired from the Red Sox in 2015 in the [Craig Kimbrel](#) trade, this game encapsulated what his future with San Diego could look like. He went 3-for-5, including a 408-foot solo homer off of starter [Robbie Ray](#) in the second inning.

"There's things he can do that few guys can," manager Andy Green said. "The triple is indicative of that as much as anything. ... We just have to get him squaring up more baseballs more consistently. He works so hard, he's such a good kid. I'm thrilled for him to end the season this way."

Margot has already proved himself as a valuable defender in the outfield, but his season slash line of .245/.292/.384 has raised some concern about the 24-year-old offensively. The Padres are hopeful that those are changes he can make in the offseason as he looks to solidify himself as one of the team's top players next season.

"It's mostly going to be on the offensive side of the game for him," Green said. "I feel like he can defend center field with anyone right now."

"Hopefully that fires him up going into the offseason and excites him about what he's going to put in and what he knows he needs to work on. For us, Manny's got any chance in the world of being right there in the center of everything we do. He was right in the middle of everything today."

LUCCHESI IMPRESSIVE AGAIN

Overshadowed by the theatrics was another emphatic start from [Joey Lucchesi](#). Lucchesi started the second game of the 2018 season as the first pitcher from the 2016 Draft to make his

Major League debut, and he finished Game 162 with an impressive outing. He notched six innings of two-run ball, striking out eight and walking none to finish the rookie campaign of a promising career.

On a day when his command was sharp, he had just two mistakes -- but both ended up over the fence. Lucchesi surrendered a home run to [Ketel Marte](#) to lead off the fourth inning, and was tagged for another solo homer in the sixth inning, courtesy of pinch-hitter [Steven Souza Jr.](#)

"There's a lot of fun things that come from him," Green said. "He's a lot of fun to be around. He's got a great temperament, good personality. He's a funky kid to be around, but he doesn't flinch on the mound."

Lucchesi finished with an 8-9 record and a 4.08 ERA over 26 games. In 130 innings, he struck out 145, and had a K/9 rate of 10.04.

"I definitely have a lot more confidence," Lucchesi said. "I know what to expect and I've been through it all."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

After [Kirby Yates](#) allowed a go-ahead sacrifice fly from [Socrates Brito](#) in the top of the ninth, San Diego responded in the bottom of the frame. [Franmil Reyes](#) knocked a soft ground ball to the right side of the infield, where first baseman [Daniel Descalso](#) made a diving stop, but threw the ball away, allowing Reyes to reach. [Hunter Renfroe](#) and [Eric Hosmer](#) followed with singles, the latter scoring pinch-runner [Javy Guerra](#) to tie the game at 3.

SOUND SMART

After the Padres were walked off on the last game of the season two years in a row, they finally got some revenge. In 2016, [Brad Hand](#) surrendered a walk-off single to the D-backs' [Phil Gosselin](#). In 2017, [Pablo Sandoval](#) hit a walk-off home run off [Phil Maton](#).

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

With the game tied at 2 in the sixth inning, [Cory Spangenberg](#) pinch-hit for Lucchesi, and sprinted up the right-field line to beat the throw on an infield single. The D-backs challenged, but the call stood.

Myers' role for Padres in 2019 up in the air
Stocked farm system gives club options on trade market
By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell
Sep. 30th, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- [Wil Myers](#) played center field when he arrived in San Diego for the 2015 season. He moved to first base for the next two years, then started the '18 campaign in left and finished it at third.

So where does Myers play in 2019? Even the Padres aren't sure yet. They'll spend the next few weeks evaluating their roster options (and Myers' performance over the past two months at third) and settle on a plan.

[View Full Game Coverage](#)

Myers' future was one of a number of topics that general manager A.J. Preller addressed in his end-of-season press conference on Sunday morning.

"We'll definitely give direction," Preller said. "If outfield is going to be [the] spot, we'll let him know that. If we feel he's going to be moving around the diamond, we'll let him know that. If he needs to bring a third-base glove and be ready for that, we'll talk about that as well."

This much is certain: Myers believes he's capable of playing third base, despite the early struggles.

In 36 games at third base, Myers committed six errors, and he made quite a few mishaps that weren't ruled as errors, too. Much of that, Myers said, comes down to inexperience. He had about three weeks of training at third before he was thrust into the position -- one he had never played with any regularity in his life.

"Anyone who says, 'You can't play third base,' bro, you go do that," Myers said of the quick position change. "I feel like, with an offseason, I will absolutely be able to play third base. I will absolutely be able to work those things out. ... People love to judge after 30 games at third base. Listen, I ain't played a great third base, but I don't really know what I'm doing yet. As soon as I get comfortable, get confident, get to my glove side instead of backhanding, I know I'll be able to play third base."

Preller didn't discount that notion, adding, "He's definitely athletic enough to do it."

But there are other decisions this offseason that could affect where Myers plays. The move to third was a product of breakout seasons from [Hunter Renfroe](#) and [Franmil Reyes](#) in the two corner-outfield spots.

Next year, the dynamic could be different. Third baseman [Christian Villanueva](#) will return from a broken finger, which sidelined him over the last couple months. If [Freddy Galvis](#) is re-signed, that could shift [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#) -- the club's top prospect -- to third base on occasion, too.

It's also entirely possible the Padres look to deal Myers, Reyes or Renfroe, which would seemingly alleviate the outfield logjam (and, in turn, the need to play Myers at third).

"With the development of Franmil, and with Hunter, that was a way to basically get all three guys in the lineup," Preller said. "For someone to go out in a big league game and be willing to do it says a lot about him. We'll get into the offseason and talk about what's the best configuration for our club. We have some depth at different positions that I'm sure will be discussed with other teams as well."

Active on the trade front

In a bit of a surprise, the Padres were linked with several front-line starting pitchers at the non-waiver Trade Deadline in July. Don't be surprised if that's the case again this offseason.

"In the last 12 months, any established players that have been put on the trade market, we've been part of those discussions," Preller said. "We've had other teams reaching out to us, wanting to tap into some of the resources we have in our system. I think that'll be no different this offseason. We'll evaluate the guys we have in our system, versus what we're able to."

Given the Padres' obvious pitching needs, it's likely they explore trade options to add a starter. Before the Deadline, they were linked with [Chris Archer](#) and [Noah Syndergaard](#), among others.

That said, Preller made it clear he's not willing to sacrifice his [top-ranked farm system](#) just for the sake of making a deal.

"Every decision we make is built toward a plan," Preller said. "What we're not going to do is short-circuit that. The last few years, we're building, really, to get away from the mindset of being average. ... We do that to try to build up a talent base in the organization."

'We're going to look to start to compete'

Preller wouldn't get too specific with his expectations for the 2019 season. But suffice it to say, he expects better.

"[We're] starting to climb out of this point where it's a development mindset, where we're at the bottom part of the standings," Preller said. "We have a lot of players that are starting to show they're big league caliber players, that they're not Minor League guys or prospects."

Preller was asked if finishing .500 would be a realistic goal.

"From our standpoint next year we're going to look to start to compete," he said. "You've got to get over .500 to do that."

Noteworthy

- On whether the Padres will be linked with any top-tier free agents in this offseason's monster class, Preller said:

"You have some guys that are going to be big-ticket items. I think we start with: Never say no to anything. It's not like anything is off-limits. We're open to every possibility, every situation."

- Preller expressed a desire to retain Galvis, but he noted that if Galvis returns, his role would almost certainly change. Given Tatis' pending arrival, Galvis would probably have to cede some playing time, were he to remain in San Diego.

- Since the Padres acquired catcher [Francisco Mejia](#) via trade in July, there has been speculation he'd move to the outfield part-time. That would allow the Padres to get both Mejia and [Austin Hedges](#) into their lineup. But Preller was noncommittal on that possibility.

"We want to look at everything as far as what's going to make us a better club, but internally, we're pretty certain Mejia can catch at the big league level," Preller said. "... We'll look at it. To get his bat in the lineup and another bat in the lineup, you want to consider different positions."

It will be a winter of discontent for Eric Hosmer following disappointing Padres debut season

By Dennis Lin Sep 30, 2018

With two on and two out, Eric Hosmer took aim at the third pitch of an at-bat. Then he struck out on a foul tip. The tools of his trade began an accelerated fall.

Hosmer first exercised his frustration on his bat. His helmet crashed to the ground with a thud. His elbow guard followed, discarded like rubbish.

The scene unfolded in the third inning Sunday at Petco Park, in the Padres' final game of 2018. Hosmer had collected his 142nd strikeout, one of a few career worsts in his most frustrating season. The first baseman has submitted weaker overall numbers before, but they did not coincide with the first year of a \$144 million contract, played in a city that expected his arrival to speed an arduous rebuilding process.

"It's not where I want to be, obviously," Hosmer said the previous night, assessing his San Diego debut. "It was a lot of ups and downs. It felt like there were some times where I was going to get hot there, and I could just never really get stuff going. It's kind of how baseball goes. I'm not making any excuses about how it was, but I'll go home for about a week or so, take some time off and put in the work that I need to put in to be ready to go for next year."

Late Sunday afternoon, Hosmer and his teammates capped the season with a celebration. In the bottom of the ninth, Hosmer fouled off several fastballs from Arizona's Archie Bradley before sending a bloop into left field for a tying single. In the bottom of the 10th, he led a joyous charge out of the Padres' dugout; Manuel Margot, who also [experienced a disappointing season](#), had dashed home from third base to deliver a 4-3, walk-off victory over the Diamondbacks.

Still, the Padres finished with a 66-96 record. When general manager A.J. Preller signed Hosmer to a franchise-record pact in February, some fans

wondered whether such a move constituted a deviation from the plan. The questions only intensified.

Hosmer, who hit .282/.373/.461 through May, ended at .253/.322/.398, with 18 home runs and the second-highest ground-ball rate among qualifying major-leaguers. Following a contract-year success with Kansas City, his new deal already looks burdensome. And yet, it remains too early to render a full judgment on the decision that led him to this corner of the country. Both of these things can be true.

“The first two months, that was the player that we feel like we signed. That was the player we feel like he’s going to be,” Preller said. “I think our group expected a little bit, the first year here in San Diego, just a big change, a big difference, signing the big contract — as much as you tell him, ‘Be yourself. Relax.’ I think it’s pretty natural that a guy’s going to want to come show here and impress, and I think that played a little bit into the whole year for him.”

Hosmer, long among the most gravity-bound hitters in baseball, saw his tendencies get the best of him. Through Saturday, his 19.4 percent flyball rate was the lowest of his career. Between June and July, he produced a 66.7-percent groundball rate and a .222/.261/.314 slash line. He had hit slightly better of late while focusing more on elevating the ball. But the end output still represents a major disappointment for a corner bat with Hosmer’s credentials.

“Different sorts of ways you can get the ball in the air more — I think that’s what I’m really going to try to break down,” Hosmer said. “Obviously, I feel like I’ve got enough pop to where, if I get the ball in the air on a consistent basis, I can really drive the ball and drive the ball out of the ballpark. I’m going to start right there in the offseason, and I’m going to see if I can get that down.”

The Padres, as you would expect, maintain they do not regret making a lengthy commitment to Hosmer. They have repeatedly pointed to his steady brand of leadership, an ingredient they felt they had lacked. They remain optimistic that, at 28, he is young enough and sufficiently motivated to engineer a rebound.

Of course, such statements tend to ring hollow in the absence of production. A long winter awaits. It will be four-plus months and an entire spring camp before Hosmer can show whether 2018 was a hiccup or the beginning of an ill-timed decline.

“We obviously knew when we signed him he’s shown the ability to get the ball in the air to the seats to left field,” Preller said. “He’s going to be the first person to look in the mirror and try to find every possible way to look up and make .250 .280 and make his on-base go to the .360 level or better and be a productive player. We’ll definitely talk about everything, about using the field, about getting the ball in the air, about where he felt mechanically, where he felt physically. We’ll look at all those areas and try to help and support him. But (we have) a lot of faith he’s going to come out of it with some answers and be a better offensive player next year.”

Preller spent nearly 20 minutes fielding questions from the local media before Sunday’s game. Besides Hosmer’s first season with the Padres, the GM commented on his two young catchers, Wil Myers’ third-base play, free agency and other topics.

- On free agency: “We’ll definitely look at the free-agent market. We’ll continue to look to fortify the starting rotation, and then from a position player standpoint, we feel like we have a lot of internal answers. But when you’re at the bottom part of the standings, there’s a lot of different ways to get better. ... The good thing overall is we feel like we have some talent throughout the organization. We have some talent at the upper levels of the minor leagues, and I think we have some financial flexibility because a lot of the players are younger players. I think we’re at that point where, from a plan standpoint, we know we’re going to have to supplement that from outside via the free agency, trade route. We’ll look to do that the next few months.”
- On whether the Padres will pursue the priciest free agents: “We’ll look at it. Obviously, it’s a big free-agent class. You have some guys that are going to be big-ticket items. I think we start with never (saying) no to anything. It’s not like anything is off-limits. I think we’re open to every possibility, every situation, and we’ll start to rank guys out in terms of what fits for us. ... Then we’ve got to look at where we’re at, what we want to do with our resources, and figure out what those decisions are.”
- On potentially keeping Austin Hedges and Francisco Mejía on the roster: “We’ve talked about it for a long time. It’s something we strive for. It’s good to have really quality major-league players at every spot. I think both guys have really shown ... they’re going to be major-league-caliber catchers. They’re really talented, you see them both control the running game, Hedges’

development with the bat, Mejía's bat potential. I think we're going to look in the offseason — is this a situation where both guys are splitting time? Does one guy take the lead and become the main guy? Do we go after a veteran catcher to supplement and give us more depth at the Triple-A level? All those things will be determined here as we go forward.”

- On the possibility that Mejía works in the outfield during the offseason: “I think everything will be on the table. Not just Mejía, specifically. In general, we want to look at everything as far as what's going to make us a better club. Internally, we're pretty certain from what we've seen and feel like Mejía can catch at the big-league level, at a championship-level caliber. ... To potentially get his bat in the lineup or another bat in the lineup, you want to consider different spots, different positions. But I think we go into the offseason with Mejía, Hedges, Austin Allen — we have three catchers at the upper levels that are probably going to play in the big leagues for a long time.”
- On the plans for Myers: “With the development of Franmil (Reyes) and Hunter (Renfroe), for us, it was a way to basically get all three guys in the lineup and see how he handled that spot. He hadn't played there since high school days. For someone to go out in a big-league game and be willing to do it, it says a lot about him. We'll get into the offseason and talk about what's the best configuration for our club. We have some depth at different positions that I'm sure will be discussed with other teams as well. I think one of the things not to be forgotten this year about Wil, when he was out in left field, he played a really good left field for us. We'll get into those discussions in a few weeks and figure out what's the best mix-and-match.”
- On evaluating Myers at third base: “I think good and bad. He'll probably be the first to tell you that. ... He's definitely athletic enough to do it. It's the consistency of being able to handle a lot of baseballs being hit at your direction and the consistency of handling the routine play, being able to make a throw or a play down the line. All those things we'll look at as far as comparing him to what other options are going to be at third base.”
- On whether there could be a place for pending free agent Freddy Galvis: “Yeah, for sure. I think we'll get more into the details going forward in terms of exactly what the role is, what we're looking for, who the different players are that will fit (at shortstop) internally and guys outside the organization. With Freddy, he did exactly what we thought when we made the deal, which was

solidify a spot that had been a hole for us the last few years. He came in, played great defense, got big hits, just the day-to-day grind, effort, leadership. You just knew he had that as a steady performer every single day. He's a winning person. And from that standpoint, I think it's going to rub off on a lot of guys who were around him this year."

- On what will factor into the Galvis decision: "I think a combination of a bunch of things. Obviously, the market. This is the first time he's ever been in the free-agent position, so I'm sure he's going to want to look at that as well. The good parts for us is that I think he really enjoyed his time here as far as the city, the team. I think he definitely wants to be part of a winning situation. I think he sees some of the groundwork laid here, I think he wants to be part of that here going forward. And I think the role is going to be a part of it for him as well. He's 29, 30 years old in the next few years, and he knows he has a lot of good baseball (left). We've seen that here this year. ... Obviously, you have to line up from a financial standpoint, from a years standpoint. But probably equally important is exactly what role he's willing to do, what role fits and what role works for us."

- On the rotation: "The positives for us, and we've worked to get to this point, is that we feel like we can fill a rotation internally right now and probably have a Triple-A rotation internally with some depth. And again, you can never have enough starting pitching. From our standpoint, the question is, how many of these guys can climb in the rotation and be legitimate 1, 2 and 3 starters? I think we'll look at a lot of the guys internally because we believe in them and we feel like they're going to build off of this year. We'll look at some guys that are coming through the minor-league system that have had some big years and put themselves in position to compete. And we'll clearly look outside the organization for guys we feel like could stack up on top of that group and compete with that group. But we're going to continue to look to add starting-pitching options."

- On trading prospects for starting pitchers: "In the last 12 months, any time established players have been put on the trade market, we've been part of those discussions. We've had other teams reaching out to us, wanting to tap into some of the guys we have in our system. I think that'll be no different this offseason. We'll evaluate the guys we have in our system versus what we're able to acquire and see if it makes sense for us, both in the short term and in the long term."

- On how internal or prospect depth affects offseason pursuits: “Every decision we make is built toward a plan. What we’re not going to do is short-circuit that. The last three years in building, it’s really to get away from the mindset of being average, and understanding ... whether it’s a step back or understanding we may not win a ton of games at the big-league level, we do that to try to build up a talent base in an organization so you look up and you have a chance to win 90-plus games for a five- or six-year period. I don’t think we’re going to do anything this offseason that’s going to deviate from that plan.”
- On realistic expectations for 2019: “Just getting a lot better, starting to climb out of this point where it’s a development mindset or looking at the bottom part of the standings. We’re starting to see guys and we have a lot of players that have shown they’re big-league-caliber players. They’re not minor-league guys or prospects. I think there’s guys throughout that room who have shown they’re going to play in the big leagues for a long time. We’ve got to get those guys to another level, to where they’re winning big-league players and they’re guys that, every night, impact the game.”
- On whether a .500 record is a goal: “I don’t get too much into a number goal from a wins standpoint. I think the thing we focused on, these things are not usually linear. You don’t really see teams go from 60 to 70 to 80 to 90 wins. I think you see more some teams go from that lower tier of wins and all of a sudden they have some guys hit, some guys come up and develop, some guys that have been at the big-league level mature, and ... you jump up and you may have a 20-win spike in one season. There’s not a lot of difference between a team that wins 68 games and a team that wins 76 or 77 games. I think you look at your own situation and analyze it, see if you think you’re a team that should be winning, has enough talent at each spot. From our standpoint, next year we’re going to look to start to compete. You’ve got to get over .500 to do that, so when I talk to Ron (Fowler) a lot that’s what we talk about. We’re going to come into next year not trying to put a ceiling on anything, explaining to these guys we expect to be a lot better here going forward, and I think the guys in that room understand and believe it as well.”
- On the offense’s continuing struggles with getting on base: “It starts with getting guys who’ve probably shown a history of being on base. From a talent and personnel standpoint, we’ll continue to look at that and changing the mix a little bit, getting guys that grind at-bats and recognize pitches and have shown the ability to get on base. And then I think from a messaging standpoint, we’ll

continue to hammer it home every possible way for guys to understand that getting on base is probably the most important thing in the game, passing the baton, not feeling they have to do more than the next guy. I think we've had some guys that have demonstrated an ability to do that. This year, for whatever reason, they didn't quite get on base at the clip that they have. We have some guys in the minor leagues coming up that have been drilled, and it's been a pretty consistent theme from our minor-league group. . . . It can be contagious. When you start looking up and you get one or two guys that have really quality big-league at-bats night in and night out, other guys want to start following that path."

Diamondbacks end deflating September with 4-3 loss to Padres

5:20 PM PT
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO -- [Manuel Margot](#) made sure the woeful [San Diego Padres](#) finished the season on a positive note and the deflated [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) went into the offseason lamenting one more game that got away.

Margot scored on a dropped third strike in the 10th inning, two innings after he was erased at the plate by being too aggressive, and the Padres beat the Diamondbacks 4-3 on Sunday.

"I had to score no matter what," Margot said. "When I saw no one was at home, I went for it."

Thanks to Margot's hustle, the last-place Padres (66-96) took two out of three in their last series of the season.

"The first time they threw me out by quite a bit," Margot said.

The Diamondbacks, a playoff team last year who led the NL West on the first day of every month this season, ran out of steam to finish in third place, nine games behind the [Los Angeles Dodgers](#) and [Colorado Rockies](#).

Margot, who also homered and stole a base on a 3-for-5 afternoon, reached in the 10th on his career-high eighth triple. When [Jake Barrett](#) (0-1) struck out pinch-hitter [Francisco Mejia](#) and the ball got away from [John Ryan Murphy](#), Margot raced home on Murphy's throw to first baseman [Daniel Descalso](#). The relay back to home was tardy after Descalso hesitated, unsure where he should aim his toss.

"It was kind of a weird play and I should have just thrown it," Descalso said. "I was thinking the whole time, 'Get it back to Murph,' and then I realized Barrett was there and I double-clutched and it was too late."

Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo said Margot took advantage of the miscue.

"It looked like (Descalso) didn't think anyone was at home plate," he said. "Give credit to Manuel. He made a very athletic play."

The Padres are hopeful Margot is a key piece in their rebuilding effort. His numbers fell off from his rookie year but he provided a glimpse of what he can do in the season finale.

"It was a great day for him and hopefully it fires him up going into the offseason," Padres manager Andy Green said. "He has a chance to be right in the middle of what we're doing here."

Arizona went ahead 3-2 in the ninth on a sacrifice fly from [Socrates Brito](#), but the Padres tied it 3-3 on [Eric Hosmer](#)'s bloop single to left. [Jose Castillo](#) (3-3) pitched the 10th for the win. Arizona went 8-19 in September to finish 82-80, salvaging a winning record for the second consecutive year.

"I think that is something," Lovullo said earlier in the series. "When it's all said and done after the month that we had, it is really positive and a good way to finish."

The Padres, who spent all but four days in the NL West basement, again look ahead to better days. It was their eighth straight losing season and their third straight year with at least 91 losses.

"From our standpoint, we expect to be a lot better," Padres general manager A.J. Preller said before the game. "I don't get too much into a number goal from a win standpoint. I think from out standpoint next year, we're going to start to compete. You've got to get over .500 to do that. We're going to come in next year and not try to put a ceiling on anything. We expect to be a lot better here moving forward and I think the guys in that room understand that and believe that as well."

Arizona starter [Robbie Ray](#) pitched four-plus innings, allowing two runs on five hits. He walked four and struck out eight.

[Joey Lucchesi](#) was surrendered two runs and four hits over six innings. The rookie's eight strikeouts were one off his career high.

Steven Souza's first career pinch-hit home run tied it 2-2 in the sixth.

With [Freddy Galvis](#), who played in all 162 games, and [Wil Myers](#) aboard on singles in the fifth, Brito dropped to one knee while trying to find the ball in the sun in right field. Instead it landed beside him, with Galvis scoring for a 2-1 Padres advantage.

Margot homered in the second, and the Diamondbacks pulled even when Marte connected in the fourth.

UP NEXT

Diamondbacks: Open next season in Los Angeles against the Dodgers.

Padres: Host the [San Francisco Giants](#) on March 28, 2019.