



Padres Press Clips

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Tatis, Urias, Reed headed to All-Star Futures Game

Jeff Sanders

For at least a day in July, the future will be *now*.

Shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. – the [Padres'](#) top prospect and the No. 3 prospect in the game, according to MLB.com – headlines a contingent of three Friar minor leaguers selected to the [All-Star Futures Game](#) later this month in Washington D.C.

Triple-A second baseman Luis Urias and high Single-A Lake Elsinore outfielder Buddy Reed will also join Tatis in the July 15 prospect showcase.

Tatis' selection follows a two-plus-month surge that saw the 19-year-old Dominican turn a .177/.231/.333 April at Double-A San Antonio on its head.

He's hitting .339/.416/.596 with 12 homers, 29 RBIs and 14 steals in 57 games since a slow start as the youngest player in the Texas League.

He was the circuit's player of the month in May (1.054 OPS), an all-star at the break and is among the league leaders in homers (15, T-3), total bases (169, 1st) and runs (74, first).

In short, the Padres never concerned themselves with Tatis' slow start and the adjustments he implemented along the way.

“He's very aware of his swing,” Padres farm director Sam Geaney said last month. “He's going to make adjustments as he sees fit and we'll obviously trust him with what he's been able to this first half so far and over the first couple years, honestly.”

Urias, who will play in the Triple-A All-Star Game before the All-Star Futures Game, is ranked the game's 29th-best prospect and No. 3 in the Padres' deep farm system.

The 21-year-old second baseman is hitting .279/.388/.410 with a career-high six homers and 33 RBIs after opening the season as second-youngest player in the Triple-A Pacific Coast League. Urias played in the Texas League and California League all-star games the previous two seasons.

The 23-year-old Reed is unranked in the Padres' system but is having one of the best campaigns in the California League, where he was an all-star last month and remains among league leaders in hits (98, first), batting average (.319, T-2), total bases (162, 2nd), steals (33, 1st) and slugging (.533, 3rd).

Reed was a second-round pick out of Florida in 2016 and will play on the U.S. roster.

Tatis, a Dominican, and Urias, a Mexican, will play on the World roster.

Padres hit, take opener against Diamondbacks

Kevin Acee

The [Padres](#) were finally the ones to get enough big hits on Thursday.

[Austin Hedges](#)' home run in the fifth inning broke a tie, [Wil Myers](#) twice drove in [Carlos Asuaje](#) and Asuaje drove in another run as the Padres beat the [Diamondbacks](#) 6-3.

The win snapped the Padres' streak of eight straight losses in series openers (and 19 of their last 20). It also was just their fourth victory in 17 games.

In their nearly three-week slide, the Padres had averaged 2.7 runs a game and batted .204 with runners in scoring position. They were 3-for-7 with runners in scoring position on Thursday.

Asuaje reached base four times. All but three of those contributed to a run scoring, including his 11-pitch walk that led off a three-run sixth inning.

[Carlos Asuaje provides spark just by being there »](#)

"Offensively, I think Carlos Asuaje was the story of the day for us," manager Andy Green said. "... He was great all day."

From Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo's perspective, a big part of the story was Padres starting pitcher Eric Lauer.

"We just couldn't get the big hit," Lovullo said after his team dropped into a tie with the Dodgers for first place in the [National League West](#). "We had good matchups all night. Just couldn't get the big hit. Lauer was really good."

The rookie left-hander made it through five innings, having gotten himself out of trouble a number of times, before reliever Matt Strahm got him out of trouble in the sixth.

After throwing 46 pitches in the first two innings, Lauer (4-5) did well just to make it as far as he did.

A Ketel Marte double and Jake Lamb single to start the second inning produced the only run against Lauer, and he took just 38 pitches to get through the next three innings. He struck out [Paul Goldschmidt](#) to strand runners at the corners in the fifth.

The third strike came on a 90 mph cutter, a pitch Lauer generally throws at much lower velocity.

"I was definitely amped up a little bit," Lauer said of the pitch that ran in on Goldschmidt. "It was a big situation. I got it in the right spot."

Strahm came on and got three outs after the first two Diamondbacks batters reached base in the sixth.

After a scoreless seventh, Marte's two-run home run with one down in the eighth made it 6-3. Strahm got the next batter before Green called on Kazuhisa Makita, who got [John Ryan Murphy](#) on a line drive to third base.

Pinch-hitter [Daniel Descalso](#) reached on a dribbling ground ball to start the ninth inning before Brad Hand struck out three straight for his 24th save.

Asuaje, the second batter of the game, started the scoring when he tripled and scored on Myers' single in the first inning.

Hedges, who entered Thursday batting .181 in 94 at-bats this season, blasted a 2-0 fastball 421 feet to left field to give the Padres a 2-1 lead in the fifth.

It was the Padres' 73rd home run of the season, fourth fewest in the majors.

The Padres scored twice more before there was an out in the sixth and then again with two outs.

Asuaje fouled off five pitches after falling behind 0-2 to Diamondbacks starter [Shelby Miller](#) (0-3). After Asuaje's worked his second walk of the game, Myers hit a triple to right-center field. Myers scored when [Eric Hosmer](#)'s grounder bounced off the tip of shortstop Nick Ahmed's glove.

Hosmer, who took second base on the play, was on the verge of being stranded there when two strikeouts followed, but [Freddy Galvis](#) drove him in with a single that gave the Padres a 5-2 lead.

Asuaje, hit a single in the seventh to score Travis Jankowski from second base.

"It was fun today," said Asuaje, who has reached base nine times in 11 plate appearances since being called up from Triple-A on Sunday. "... Ultimately, I'm just here to help the team win games."

Esteury Ruiz, TinCaps continue strong second half

Jeff Sanders

Like most of low Single-A Fort Wayne's roster, the second half has been much kinder to **Esteury Ruiz**.

The 19-year-old second baseman stole two more bases and collected three more hits in the **TinCaps' 6-5 walk-off win** in the 10th, Fort Wayne's fourth straight win and 11th win in their last 13 games.

The second half surge has Fort Wayne (11-4, 43-31) in first place in the Midwest League's East Division this half.

Although Ruiz committed a 13th error, his two steals gave him 32, second most in the Midwest League and in the **Padres** system behind Lake Elsinore's **Buddy Reed** (33).

Ruiz is hitting .265/.338/.772 with eight homers and 36 RBIs and has a .905 OPS in 14 games since the all-star break.

Justin Lopez's second walk capped a four-run, walk-off win.

Robbie Podorsky (.361) went 2-for-4 with a walk, his 19th steal and two runs and RF **Tirso Ornelas** (.257) went 2-for-4 with two RBIs and a run scored.

Right-hander **Luis Patino** (2.55) struck out eight, didn't yield a single hit and allowed only an unearned run on three walks.

TRIPLE-A EL PASO (47-40)

- **Chihuahuas 3, Salt Lake 2:** RHP **Brett Kennedy** (7-0, 2.58) struck out only two but scattered six hits and a walk over seventh shutout innings. DH **Franmil Reyes** (.332) went 2-for-5 with a double and an RBI, SS **Javy Guerra** (.197) went 1-for-4 with a triple and an RBI and 2B **Luis Urias** (.279) went 1-for-4 with an RBI and a walk. RHP **Phil Maton** (3.38) allowed two runs on three hits and a walk while recording one out in the ninth before LHP **Brad Wieck** recorded the final two outs for his second Pacific Coast League save.

DOUBLE-A SAN ANTONIO (8-6, 50-34)

- **Missions 4, NW Arkansas 3 (8):** RHP **Andres Munoz** (1-0, 0.00) struck out one, walked one and threw nine of his 16 pitches for strikes in 1 1/3 innings for his first Texas League win. RHP **Jesse Scholtens** (2.67) struck out six and allowed six hits and a walk in 6 2/3

innings in the start. SS **Fernando Tatis Jr.** (.291) went 3-for-4 with two runs scored and LF **Josh Naylor** (.316) and 3B **Ty France** (.265) each had two hits.

- **Missions 4, NW Arkansas 3 (9):** LF **Rod Boykin** (.216) went 2-for-4, including a bunt single that forced throwing error that led to the walk-off run. RF **Nick Schulz** (.128) went 3-for-4, hit his second homer and drove in three runs and Tatis went 2-for-4. RHP **Colby Blueburg** (1-0, 4.32) struck out two over 1 2/3 scoreless innings for the win to cap a bullpen game.

HIGH SINGLE-A LAKE ELSINORE (6-9, 40-45)

- **Storm 2, Visalia 1:** RHP **Pedro Avila** (4-6, 4.05) struck out seven and allowed one run on seven hits and a walk in 6 1/3 innings for the win. RHP **Elliot Ashbeck** (1.94) saved his third game with a scoreless ninth. 3B **Hudson Potts** (.268) went 2-for-3 with a double, an RBI and a run scored and 2B **Eguy Rosario** (.255) went 2-for-4 with a double and a run scored. SS **Allen Cordoba** (.105) went 1-for-3 with a triple.

SHORT-SEASON TRI-CITY (9-12)

- **Spokane 3, Dust Devils 1:** RHP **Cole Bellinger** (1-2, 4.24) struck out nine and allowed two runs – one earned – on two hits and a walk in six innings in a tough-luck loss. SS **Owen Miller** (.338) went 3-for-3 with a double and RF **Aldemar Burgos** (.288) went 0-for-4 but drove in Tri-City's only run.

ROOKIE AZL PADRES 1 (5-9)

- **Cubs 3, Padres 1:** RHP **Luarbert Arias** (0-2, 2.77) struck out two and allowed a run in five innings. 3B **Carlos Ruiz** (.275) went 3-for-4 and CF **Jawuan Harris** (.200) went 2-for-4 with a double and a walk.

ROOKIE AZL PADRES 2 (7-7)

- **Padres 5, Rangers 3:** LHP **Trent Shelton** (0.00) struck out six over 3 1/3 scoreless innings in relief for the win after LHP **Noel Vela** (5.00) struck out five and allowed a run in 3 2/3 innings in the start. RF **Payton Smith** (.105) went 1-for-2 with a double, an RBI, a walk and a run scored and SS **Jordy Barley** (.228) went 1-for-3 with an RBI, two steals (5) and a run.

ROOKIE DSL PADRES (17-12)

- **Padres 9, D-backs 5:** RHP **Mauricio Rodriguez** (1-1, 1.63) struck out five and allowed four runs – one earned – on six hits in 5 2/3 innings. RF **Cristian Heredia** (.239) went 2-for-5 with a double and four RBIs and SS **Yeison Santana** (.255) went 0-for-1 with two RBIs, two walks, two runs and his fourth steal. 3B **Vladimir Echavarria** (.227) went 1-for-4 with a walk, a run scored and two steals (9).

Padres 9, D-backs 5: RHP **Mauricio Rodriguez** (1-1, 1.63) struck out five and allowed four runs – one earned – on six hits in 5 2/3 innings. RF **Cristian Heredia** (.239) went 2-for-5 with a double and four RBIs and SS **Yeison Santana** (.255) went 0-for-1 with two RBIs, two walks, two runs and his fourth steal. 3B **Vladimir Echavarria** (.227) went 1-for-4 with a walk, a run scored and two steals (9).

Transactions

- RHP **Chris Paddack** was promoted from Lake Elsinore to San Antonio (read about that story [here](#)). Also, RHP **Gerardo Reyes** was transferred from Lake Elsinore to San Antonio.
- RHP **Seth Simmons** was placed on El Paso's seven-day disabled list as LHP **Jerry Keel** was promoted from San Antonio to El Paso.
- LHP **Nick Margevicius** was transferred from Fort Wayne to Lake Elsinore.

Wil Myers keeps focus narrow in return to Padres

Kevin Acee

Wil Myers didn't feel great.

But his double had driven in the Padres' first run, and the run he scored a few minutes later was the game-winner.

And so, near the end of his postgame television interview from the field at Globe Life Park, Myers simply explained, "It's about playing bad baseball well."

He wasn't talking about the Padres' currently dismal stretch and finding a way to get a rare win. He was talking about what he has come to accept as baseball's greatest truth.

At that time, Myers was six games into his return from the disabled list. He had four hits in 19 at-bats.

"I felt the whole weekend went just like it should have been," he said a day earlier, speaking of his 11 at-bats (and two singles) in San Francisco. "Eventually it will click, and then then eventually it will go away and then eventually it will click again. ... That's the way baseball goes."

It is so clear Myers has adopted the philosophy of trying not to ride the highs and lows of a season that you wonder if the sports psychologist he saw over the winter was [actually Marty Schottenheimer](#).

The Padres outfielder is so focused on one thing at a time that the mantra permeates practically every sentence.

"Just last year," Myers said by way of explaining the shift from a guy who intrepidly expressed his goals for all to know. "I was thinking about too much going on. Now it's just have one job, and you ride out the roller coaster. I know if I continue to work on what I'm trying to do, in turn I will get better.

"This is new. All I want to do is focus on having good at-bats every pitch. I have no expectations on the year. I just know if I can do that I can get the most out of whatever it is."

It's not denial.

Myers not only invested in a sports psychologist during the offseason, but got bigger and stronger and in the spring started wearing contacts to improve the vision in, primarily, his left eye.

He knows the expectations that have come with having the second-richest contract in Padres history. He has those same lofty expectations of himself.

He just internalizes — and externalizes — things differently now.

Myers is disappointed he missed 64 games during two stints on the DL — for an arm issue and then strains in his lower back and oblique. The key for him is impeding the flow from disappointed to frustrated.

“It is (disappointing),” he said. “But it’s like, ‘Fine. I don’t care.’ I know if I get this, it’s going to be good. I know if I get consistent at-bats, that’s all that matters. I feel very confident how I plan, how I prepare. I know if I stick with this, it’s going to pay off.”

The *this* he speaks of is, on a grander level, his singular focus on the now. And within that, *this* is also his approach at the plate.

Myers has always had a grasp on the big picture. He is too aware of that picture to not know he is being evaluated along with every other Padres outfielder.

His salary — which spikes to \$20 million in 2020 — will either be something the Padres happily invest for a productive cog in the middle of their order or it will be an impetus for their packaging him in a trade as part of their attempt to create a championship roster.

That just cannot be his concern.

“All I’m thinking about is being on time with the fastball,” he said. “That’s literally the only thing I have to do this year. It’s the only thing I thought about coming into the year. It’s all about being on time. It’s about being sound with my mechanics. I have no expectations on the year. If I can get to a spot that I work on consistently, that’s all that matters.”

This is not a contradiction. It should have been expected.

The myopic approach is his way to slay the beast that has bested him in the past — that he freely acknowledged gobbled him up and spit him out.

Myers’ return has not yet affected a drastic change in results for the Padres. There has been no offensive explosion in his 12 games back.

However, he does appear to be finding his timing, which has manifest in great comfort and, thus, greater production the past week.

Myers is 6-for-19 with two doubles, a home run and a walk over the past six games. He walked twice on Wednesday to up his on-base percentage to .333 since his return.

“His at-bats get higher and higher in quality as somebody who is big for us,” manager Andy Green said. “The walks he took today ... that means he’s seeing the baseball. And when Wil sees the baseball he is going to hit the baseball really well.”

The slumps, which used to drive him crazy, which only perpetuated them, will come. He knows that.

“It’s all about playing better when you’re bad,” Myers said. “Everyone knows how to hit. It’s about playing better when you’re bad.”

Padres notes: Carlos Asuaje's positive effect; injury updates

Kevin Acee

Carlos Asuaje was recalled from Triple-A on Sunday, essentially because he was the one who made sense.

He had been hitting well (.348/.422/.496) for El Paso, and the Padres had to promote someone already on the 40-man roster after designating Matt Szczur for assignment in order to make room for minor-league shortstop Allen Cordoba on the 40-man roster.

Since arriving, Asuaje has played like someone who deserves to be here and to be playing.

Sure, it's just seven plate appearances, but he has three hits and two walks. That includes a pair of pinch-hit singles off A's closer Blake Treinen, against whom batters were hitting .169 this season.

Asuaje earned himself a start at second base Thursday night against the Diamondbacks and right-hander Shelby Miller.

"He's had a good start here," manager Andy Green said. "He's put himself in position to earn more playing time. ... Whatever he makes of that opportunity is up to him."

Three days is a little soon to assess Asuaje's staying power. He was batting .193 when he was optioned on May 21.

However, it hardly took even a day to understand what the gregarious Asuaje's return means to the Padres.

The clubhouse is simply a better place to be when he is around.

"It's hard to get that energy from anyone else," catcher Austin Hedges said. "He's one of a kind. One of the best teammates I've ever had. Just having him in the clubhouse, in the dugout, on the field, on the bus, in the plane — wherever he's at, he cares about everybody. He genuinely cares about everybody. When you have someone like that who never takes a day off mentally, it's a spark. He's confident in who he is, and he's trying to make everyone around him happier."

Whether it is making conversation about video games or politics or cards or baseball or really anything, teasing someone else or happily absorbing being the object of a teammate's ribbing, Asuaje is rarely quiet and even more rarely not smiling. And it makes others more social.

“There aren’t many people who bring that energy,” infielder Cory Spangenberg said. “The baseball season is so long and such a grind, to have somebody who is always so upbeat is nice.”

Extra bases

- Padres players rehabbing long-term injuries do so at the team’s complex in Peoria, just up the freeway from Phoenix. So when the team is in town, those players come to be evaluated by the major league staff and spend time with teammates. Pitcher Dinelson Lamet and outfielder Alex Dickerson, both working back from Tommy John surgery, were at Chase Field Thursday. So, too, was outfielder Franchy Cordero, who had surgery to remove bone spurs from his right elbow on Tuesday.
- [Jordan Lyles](#) could be a couple days from throwing off a mound for the first time since going on the disabled list with elbow inflammation on May 24.
- [Wil Myers](#) has hit .325 in 120 career at-bats at Chase Field, an average that includes nine doubles, a triple and five home runs. As an aside to answering a question about Myers’ success here, Green noted the large batter’s eye and said: “I’m probably the only person who didn’t hit the ball well here.” Green, whose major league career consisted of 265 plate appearances over three seasons for the Diamondbacks, hit .198 at home and .202 on the road.

Padres prospect Chris Paddack promoted to San Antonio

Jeff Sanders

Texan Chris Paddack is headed to the Texas League.

The [Padres'](#) 22-year-old right-hander – 10 starts into his return from Tommy John surgery – has been promoted to Double-A San Antonio and will start Saturday for the Missions.

His performance dictated the bump up from the California League, where he was an All-Star while fashioning an unimaginable 83-to-4 strikeout-to-walk ratio over 52 1/3 innings.

In that span, the 6-foot-4 Paddack helped opposing hitters to a .223 average, posted a 2.24 ERA and allowed three home runs while going 4-1.

The eye-opening return has pushed Paddack to No. 8 in the Padres' system, as ranked by MLB.com.

He was acquired before the 2016 trade deadline from the Marlins for closer [Fernando Rodney](#) and made three starts for low Single-A Fort Wayne (0.64 ERA) before requiring season-ending Tommy John surgery.

Paddack missed all of 2017 and roughly the first month this season, which was supposed to be about getting innings instead of returning to the fast track.

Paddack's performance altered those plans, although the Padres have shied away from placing a specific number on the innings they'll allow him to throw in his first year back from elbow reconstruction.

"I think our expectation for Chris this year," Padres farm director Sam Geaney said in June, "was take the ball when it's his turn, be healthy and prepared. ... What he's doing now is unbelievable."

Padres notes: Perdomo's future; Lauer's jump into July

Kevin Acee

It was perhaps the best assessment there could be.

“I’d just call it a regular normal outing,” [Luis Perdomo](#) said.

Yes.

An outing after which his manager wasn’t implying he’d be sent down to the minors, as his previous two had been.

“I have every expectation he takes the ball again in five days,” manager Andy Green said Wednesday after the [Padres](#)’ 4-2 loss at Oakland.

That might have as much to do with [Jordan Lyles](#) having not yet thrown off a mound as he works back from elbow inflammation.

Regardless, Perdomo’s first major league start since the middle of April was, in the words of his manager, “encouraging.”

Perdomo went a season-high 5 2/3 innings, allowing two runs on four hits and four walks. Both the runs were scored by batters who walked, and Perdomo was lifted after allowing a double and hitting a batter in succession.

Perdomo gave up less hard contact and got more ground balls than he was getting in his first four starts before being demoted to Triple-A in April.

There, he worked on his mechanics, his focus and his secondary pitches.

He threw his change-up three times as much Wednesday as he had in any of his previous starts. He got a ground ball to escape a bases-loaded predicament in the third inning. He did not let the game get away from him as he has in the past, including the start preceding his demotion.

“For a first time back, we’re definitely pleased with that,” Green said. “There’s definitely stuff to grow with.”

Monday at Petco Park, Perdomo will face the team that roughed him up April 18, the day before he was optioned to El Paso. The Dodgers scored nine runs (seven earned) on 10 hits in three innings against Perdomo that night in San Diego.

Lauer's improvement

Eric Lauer allowed 25 earned runs over 29 1/3 innings in his first seven major league starts.

That gave the rookie left-hander a 7.67 ERA at the end of May.

Even after allowing three earned runs in five innings this past Friday in his final start of June, Lauer finished with a 2.76 ERA for the month.

The minus-4.91 ERA differential was the greatest among all major league pitchers who threw at least 20 innings from April to May and at least 20 innings in June. The next closest was Texas' [Mike Minor](#), who improved from 5.76 to 2.08 (minus-3.68).

Lauer will make his first start of July on Thursday night against the Diamondbacks.

Extra bases

- Carlos Asuaje had a pinch-hit single in each of the past two games and is 3-for-5 with two walks since being recalled from Triple-A on Sunday.
- Manuel Margot went 1-for-4 on Wednesday and is now 3-for-22 in the last five games he has batted lead-off. He is hitting .146/.195/.293 in 87 plate appearances in the lead-off spot and .299/.373/.441 in 143 plate appearances in the seventh and eighth spots.
- A walk by Jose Castillo in the eighth inning, which ended up becoming the winning run, was the first walk by a Padres reliever in 15 1/3 innings. Their 0.73 walks per batter faced are second fewest of any bullpen in the majors.
- [Freddy Galvis](#) went 2-for-4 to break a five-game hitless streak.

'That cutter's a weapon': Rookie pitcher Eric Lauer adds new twist to repertoire

By Dennis Lin Jul 6, 2018

PHOENIX — Before his latest major-league outing, Eric Lauer had elicited a swinging strike on just under 8 percent of his pitches. The ratio placed him in the bottom 10 percent of starters with at least 50 innings. Accordingly, questions regarding the Padres rookie's viability as something beyond a back-end starter had trailed him throughout his debut.

After Thursday night, the doubts remain. Lauer required 95 pitches to navigate five-plus innings. The left-hander yielded only one run, but notched just two strikeouts. He was lifted after a double and a walk in the bottom of the sixth. The live-wire fastball of reliever Matt Strahm prevented further damage to Lauer's final line.

But in the Padres' 6-3 victory over the Diamondbacks, Lauer introduced a new variable that could influence his future level of success. Paul Goldschmidt, Arizona's best hitter, encountered it twice during a fifth-inning at-bat that ended thusly:

"It's fun to watch a kid throw a pitch you've never seen him throw before," Padres manager Andy Green said afterward. "If I hadn't seen it, then Goldschmidt hadn't seen it either."

That pitch was an 0-2, 91-mph cutter that resulted in a whiff from Goldschmidt, who trudged away in defeat. Lauer, meanwhile, pumped his fist, having escaped an inning that included a walk of pitcher Shelby Miller (who was subsequently erased by Lauer's major league-leading eighth pickoff), a hit-by-pitch and a single that was tapped through the right side.

"I was definitely amped up a little bit," Lauer said. "I wanted that strikeout. It was a big situation, and I got it in the right spot."

With each start, Lauer, 23, offers reminders that he is learning, sometimes without immediate improvement. But this newest wrinkle had produced a swift and desired result. That it came against Goldschmidt, who had begun the game with a 1.101 OPS versus lefties, supplied further confirmation.

Lauer's slider, due to its tight break, has sometimes been described as a cutter by pitch-classification systems. Now, Lauer explained late Thursday, it has become its own distinct pitch, separate from another offering and thrown with greater velocity.

"Recently, I had changed my slider to more of a true slider, so I started using a different grip on that," Lauer said. "The cutter, it allowed me to just rip it more, so I think that's why it was a little harder today.

"I had been working on it this week, a new slider grip, and I started putting it in play today. It helped define the two different pitches and gave me a different weapon."

Lauer deployed the harder cutter on a few other occasions, also with encouraging results. The pitch, Padres catcher Austin Hedges said, complemented the rest of his repertoire, including a four-seam fastball that averaged 91.9 mph.

“It was awesome,” Hedges said. “He’s been working on shaping his slider a little different — which we did use too — so essentially he’s throwing three different breaking balls.

“He can change eye levels with the curveball up, the slider down, the cutter. ... There’s a lot he can do when he’s commanding and getting ahead. He’s got a lot of options, a lot of weapons.”

Hedges characterized Thursday’s outing as the “best” he had seen Lauer, which tells you the rookie still has much to learn. Through 14 starts, he has completed six innings only four times.

Yet Lauer also had to contend with bad luck across the first two innings. The Diamondbacks scraped out some early hits. Lauer succeeded in limiting the damage, though it required a total of 46 pitches.

Then came a pair of 1-2-3 frames and a gutty sequence in the fifth. Earlier in the season, Lauer had regularly succumbed to the big inning.

That did not happen Thursday, and in yet another positive sign, the heart of the opposing order — Goldschmidt, A.J. Pollock and Steven Souza Jr., all lefty killers — managed one hit off Lauer.

Since his ERA soared to 7.67 at the end of May, Lauer has recorded a 2.63 ERA over seven starts. Going deeper into games remains a challenge.

Lauer’s quest, though, may have gained a boost. At minimum, the pitch he used to vanquish a five-time All-Star is one to watch.

“That cutter’s a weapon,” Hedges said.

Asuaje provides spark in win over D-backs
Padres second baseman scores twice, logs RBI single
By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell
Jul. 5th, 2018

PHOENIX -- When [Carlos Asuaje](#) earned his callup to the Padres earlier this week, manager Andy Green indicated his performance would dictate his playing time.

Sure seems like Asuaje is going to keep playing.

[View Full Game Coverage](#)

The second-year second baseman has been on a tear all week, having reached base in nine of his 11 plate appearances. On Thursday night, Asuaje reached all four times, sparking a much-needed offensive breakout and a 6-3 victory over the D-backs at Chase Field.

"I just feel comfortable at the plate now," Asuaje said. "Ultimately, I'm just here to help the team win games. Whether it's as a role player or starting, I'm not too concerned with that."

Asuaje tripled and scored in the first inning. He walked in his next two at-bats, including a sixth-inning free pass that came after an 11-pitch battle with D-backs starter [Shelby Miller](#).

[Wil Myers](#) followed with a stand-up triple, plating Asuaje, and the flood-gates opened. Two more runs scored in the frame -- on an error by D-backs shortstop [Nick Ahmed](#) and an RBI single from [Freddy Galvis](#).

"That wears a pitcher down when you're throwing good pitch after good pitch after good pitch, and you can't end an at-bat," Green said. "... That sets the tone for the whole inning."

The offensive outburst made a winner out of [Eric Lauer](#), who pitched five innings of one-run ball. The rookie left-hander navigated a tricky D-backs lineup loaded with right-handed bats. He allowed seven hits, but just one run.

"We had some opportunities," manager Torey Lovullo said. "I just felt like when runners got on base, he got a little bit tougher."

In the seventh, Asuaje tacked on an RBI single to put the Padres on top by five. It was the 27th pitch he saw on Thursday night. None resulted in an out.

Plate discipline has always been Asuaje's defining offensive characteristic, and it's never been better than it was on Thursday. Asuaje, who batted second and filled that role perfectly, is certainly making a case for further playing time at second base.

"It's pretty fun hitting behind him right now," said Myers, who went 2-for-4, driving in Asuaje with both hits.

Padres left-hander **Matt Strahm** worked 2 2/3 effective innings of relief, despite allowing a two-run homer to **Ketel Marte**. **Brad Hand** slammed the door in the ninth for his 24th save, dropping the D-backs into a tie with the Dodgers atop the National League West.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Austin power: Padres catcher **Austin Hedges** missed eight weeks with tendinitis in his right elbow earlier this year. He's spent the rest of the season mired in an ugly slump at the plate and he hadn't homered since April 10, until Hedges put a charge into a 2-0 fastball from Miller and sent it into the left-field seats. It served as a reminder of the power potential within Hedges, who went deep 18 times last season. It also gave the Padres a 2-1 lead in the fifth.

Hand it to him: Hand found himself (and potentially his trade value) in a bit of a rut, having allowed runs in four of his last six games. He made that stretch look like ancient history on Thursday night. Hand's trademark slider was filthy as ever, as he struck out **Jon Jay** and **Ahmed** for the first two outs of the inning. Then, he blew a 97-mph fastball by **Paul Goldschmidt** to end the ballgame.

SOUND SMART

For most of the season, Lauer had gotten by with a hybrid slider/cutter as his primary offspeed offering. Now, they're two distinct pitches. The change began to take shape during his recent bullpen sessions, and he finally put it into action on Thursday.

Lauer unveiled a new grip for his slider, and the pitch now has noticeably more depth. His cutter, meanwhile, has seen a small uptick in velocity. He showed it off in the fifth inning when he found himself in a first-and-third jam with Goldschmidt at the plate. Lauer dialed up a 90-mph cutter and blew it by Goldschmidt on the inside corner.

"I was definitely amped up a little bit," Lauer said. "I wanted that strikeout. It was a big situation, and I got it in the right spot."

PICKOFF PARTY

Another game, another pickoff for Lauer. With one out in the fifth, the rookie southpaw put himself in some trouble when he walked Miller. Moments later, Miller was toast at first base -- the latest victim of Lauer's other-worldly pickoff move.

Lauer has picked eight runners this season, easily the most in the Majors. He's five shy of Bob Shirley's franchise record in 1977. Lauer's move features the perfect mix of speed and deception.

HE SAID IT

"It wears down a pitcher to the point where he might make a mistake or two over the middle of the plate. It doesn't mean you're going to get a good pitch to hit. But it wears him down where the mistakes might be there a little more often." -- Myers, on Asuaje's 11-pitch plate appearance in the sixth

UP NEXT

Padres left-hander [Joey Lucchesi](#) will square off against D-backs right-hander [Zack Godley](#) at 6:40 p.m. PT on Friday at Chase Field. Lucchesi returned from the disabled list two weeks ago, but the Padres have yet to take the reins off. He's been limited in each of his first three starts back from his right-hip strain, but he won't be on Friday night.

Hoffman's 600th save came as a Brewer
But the event was also celebrated at Petco Park
By Bill Center San Diego Padres
9:04 AM PDT

Although Trevor Hoffman had 552 saves as a Padre, his milestone 600th save came as a member of the Milwaukee Brewers -- near the end of the 2010 season and the closer's storied career.

"It took me a while to get the 600th," Hoffman said recently. "But the Brewers wanted it to happen, too."

Sadly, as every Padre fan knows, Hoffman was not allowed to finish his career as a Padre. When he became a free agent after the 2008 season, the Milwaukee Brewers signed Hoffman after then Padres management let the future Hall of Famer walk.

Hoffman had a stellar season with the Brewers in 2009, posting the second-lowest earned run average of his career (1.83) while recording 37 saves to move to within nine of becoming the first closer to reach the milestone "600" saves figure.

But Hoffman, who was 42 at the time, struggled at the start of the 2010 season and lost his closing job to [John Axford](#) with the Brewers.

"I felt it coming in May of 2010," said Hoffman. "Every player faces the end, it's the part of the game."

After losing Milwaukee's closer job to Axford, Hoffman pitched in a setup role. He picked up his fifth save of the season on May 7. But he also had five blown saves at the time and his ERA was an un-Hoffman-like over five. He didn't record his sixth save of the season - and No. 597 of his career -- until Aug. 7.

But as the final days of Hoffman's career counted down, the Brewers and manager Ken Macha were well aware of the No. 600. Hoffman was returned to sharing the closer's role.

He got his 598th save on Aug. 18 and No. 599 on Aug. 29.

The milestone fell to Hoffman Sept. 7, 2016, in a 4-2 win over the Cardinals at Miller Park in Milwaukee. [Colby Rasmus](#) opened the top of the ninth with a single. But St. Louis pinch-hitter Randy Winn grounded into a doubleplay. Then pinch-hitter Aaron Miles grounded out to shortstop Craig Counsell.

No. 600 was in the books at 9:57 p.m. in Milwaukee. Hoffman's Milwaukee teammates carried him off the field.

Unbeknownst to Hoffman, the feat was also celebrated at Petco Park, where the Padres were playing the Dodgers. Video of Hoffman's 600th save was shown on the video board. The flames went off. Fans rose to applaud an achievement accomplished 1,750 miles away.

"That is pretty cool to know that," said Hoffman, who recorded the 601st and final save of his career on Sept. 29, 2010.

Padres give Margot green light on basepaths
Speedy outfielder working on mechanics to steal more bases
By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell
Jul. 5th, 2018

PHOENIX -- [Manuel Margot](#) is one of the fastest players in baseball. He's one of the Padres' best all-around athletes and a tireless worker.

It should follow, then, that the speedy center fielder would be a serviceable basestealer. He's been anything but.

Margot had attempted 13 steals this season entering Thursday's series opener against the D-backs, and he'd been thrown out seven times -- the lowest success rate for any player with at least 10 attempts. Nonetheless, manager Andy Green continues to give Margot the green light, asking him to work out the kinks in real time.

"Being a basestealer is not just speed," said first-base coach Skip Schumaker who has worked extensively with Margot. "It's tough to get reps, real game-setting reps. There's nothing like the game when it speeds up. His speed is elite. The more he's on base, the more comfortable he'll get."

The Padres believe they've pinpointed three necessary areas of improvement for Margot. The first is instinctual. Margot needs to better understand when to run and when not to run. That should come with time and reps, Schumaker said.

The other two are much more technical.

"One is my slide and where I slide -- not sliding so far away from the base because that slows me down," Margot said through a team interpreter. "... I also need to maintain a good path to the base. Sometimes when I break, I end up getting in a different path or a different line that isn't so efficient. We're also working on that."

Indeed, Margot's early slides have cost the Padres multiple outs this season. There's evidence that can be fixed. [Travis Jankowski](#) once had a similar issue. The coaching staff merely asked him to take one extra step before sliding. Entering Thursday, Jankowski was 13-for-16 in steal attempts.

As for Margot's path, that's a bit more perplexing. It's a straight line from first to second, after all. But Margot hasn't always followed that straight line. He's developed a tendency to break ever-so-slightly toward the outfield before over-correcting mid-steal. Those are precious split seconds being lost.

"The routes he's been taking aren't ideal," Schumaker said. "He's aware of it. He knows. He's working on it. He's just losing a lot of time if he has to change his direction even a little bit."

Margot has been thrown out at some inopportune times this season. On Tuesday in Oakland, he was nailed in the first inning with one out, Jankowski on third base and [Wil Myers](#) at the plate.

After the game, Green lamented a caught stealing in that spot -- running the Padres out of a big inning.

But Green quickly added that he won't rob Margot of his green light any time soon. The best path for Margot's improvement, Green said, is to keep turning him loose.

"He's letting him work through some stuff," Schumaker said. "That's very important, so he's not tentative, he's not scared to run. He's getting a foundation and learning. As soon as you put the brakes on him, you've taken away all the aggressiveness."

Margot knows he needs to improve his routes, and he knows he needs better slides. The key is making those changes second-nature, so that when he breaks, he isn't consciously telling himself as much.

"Once he figures all of that out, he should be one of the great basestealers," Schumaker said.

Accordingly, Margot has set his goals high.

"I think I could be someone who steals 40 bases," Margot said. "If I'm healthy and my legs are good and I maintain my speed, that's not an unrealistic goal or something too far-fetched."

Cordero undergoes surgery

As expected, outfielder [Franchy Cordero](#) underwent surgery to remove a bone spur in his right elbow. The operation took place earlier this week, and Cordero met up with the Padres in Arizona.

Cordero is unlikely to play again this season, though there's a small chance he could return in late September. The slugging outfielder was hitting .237/.307/.439 when he landed on the disabled list in late May.

Guilbe, Thwaits sign

When the Padres finalized their deal with first-round Draft pick Ryan Weathers, they had officially locked up all of their picks from the first 10 rounds. They did so with about \$500,000 left over to spend on any bonus worth more than \$125,000 outside the top 10 rounds.

They chose to spend that extra cash on right-hander Nick Thwaits and infielder Sean Guilbe. Per MLB Pipeline's Jim Callis, Thwaits - a 15th-rounder and a Kent State commit -- agreed to a \$450,000 bonus. Guilbe -- committed to Tennessee before he was picked in the 12th round -- inked a \$300,000 deal.

Paddack to Double-A

Righty prospect [Chris Paddack](#) has been rewarded for his brilliant start to the 2018 campaign. Paddack, the Padres' fast-rising No. 8 prospect, as ranked by MLB Pipeline, was promoted to Double-A San Antonio on Thursday.

Ranked as the [No. 96 prospect](#) in all of baseball, Paddack owns a 2.24 ERA in 10 starts this season, and he's posted an absurd 83 strikeouts to just four walks over his 52 1/3 innings. Paddack's first start with San Antonio is slated for Saturday.

NL West: Who's buying, who's selling?
By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell
Jul. 5th, 2018

The first quarter of the season brought chaos to the National League West. The second quarter brought a small bit of clarity to that chaos.

But make no mistake: the division remains entirely up for grabs. Here's a quick look at what we learned from each NL West team in the season's second quarter and how that might affect its plans for the upcoming Trade Deadline.

D-BACKS

What we've learned

After a rough May, the D-backs bounced back to go 19-9 in June, but they are still a hard team to figure out. Are they the April/June version that could easily win a division title? Are they the May version that struggled in every facet? In reality, they're probably somewhere in between.

But where exactly? Arizona's offense picked up after the sluggish May, but as of Tuesday, the D-backs were still last in the NL in batting average.

What they'll be hoping to accomplish in the trade market

General manager Mike Hazen said recently he wanted to see what the offense looked like when outfielders [A.J. Pollock](#) and [Steven Souza Jr.](#) returned from injury before he determined whether to pursue a bat or an arm. Arizona is in the mix for [Manny Machado](#), but it might decide instead upon bullpen or rotation help.

Stock watch

Definitely buyers. The D-backs know their window to compete is closing with Pollock and [Patrick Corbin](#) approaching free agency this offseason and [Paul Goldschmidt](#) one year behind them.

DODGERS

What we've learned

The offense's revival -- and the emergence of [Max Muncy](#) -- shows that the Dodgers don't necessarily need Machado. But they do need relievers. More than one. They have four bullpen arms on the disabled list ([Josh Fields](#), [Tony Cingrani](#), [Pedro Baez](#) and [Tom Koehler](#)), another on the Triple-A DL ([Adam Liberatore](#)) and another active but sore ([Erik Goeddel](#)).

Ideally, Los Angeles would like to pull off a trade similar to the ones it made last season that helped the club land Cingrani and [Tony Watson](#).

What they'll be hoping to accomplish in the trade market

The Dodgers don't have as many tradeable prospects as has been widely speculated. They also aren't going to exceed the luxury tax threshold. That's why the rumors of a deal for a Miami reliever (or two) seems more apt than the Machado speculation -- even as Machado has drawn the headlines.

Stock watch

Buyers. They're the Dodgers. Even when they're not buyers, they're still buyers.

GIANTS

What we've learned

The Giants have more pitching depth than even they probably imagined when the season began. Rookie starters [Dereck Rodriguez](#) and [Andrew Suarez](#) could help the organization for years to come, even if both are candidates to return to Triple-A when [Jeff Samardzija](#) and [Johnny Cueto](#) return from their respective injuries.

That probably makes it less likely that San Francisco will look to add pitching this month. If the Giants can get healthy, they'll have a nice mix of proven commodities and young talent.

What they'll be hoping to accomplish in the trade market

The Giants would love to get a big outfield bat. But they're so concerned with staying below the luxury tax that they might not make any moves. Under the current front office, that would qualify as something of a major surprise. In recent years, San Francisco has been one of the most active players at the Deadline.

Stock watch

Neither buyers nor sellers. If the Giants are going to make a postseason push, this is probably the squad they're going to do it with.

PADRES

What we've learned

The long-term offense is still an enigma. [Eric Hosmer](#) should anchor the middle of the lineup for a while. But there are question marks surrounding just about everyone else, including outfielder [Wil Myers](#), who has missed time with three injuries this season.

The Padres have plenty of depth in the Minors, but it skews toward pitching. Come trade season, general manager A.J. Preller will look to add a young bat -- ideally one that's big league ready, or at least close.

What they'll be hoping to accomplish in the trade market

San Diego is looking to add value. The Padres have a number of trade chips, but most of them - - namely [Brad Hand](#), [Kirby Yates](#) and [Travis Jankowski](#) -- are under team control well into the future. Preller values his pieces highly, and he'll set his prices accordingly. There isn't an immediate need for any of them to be moved.

Stock watch

Sellers. Deadline deals have netted San Diego a number of its top prospects, including [Fernando Tatis Jr.](#), the team's presumed shortstop of the future. This July, the Padres will be looking to add to an already loaded system.

ROCKIES

What we've learned

The season's second stanza bridged the gap between the Rockies' offense and their pitching.

Things began to balance out. The rotation regressed and the bullpen struggled to hold leads, but they've shown some dramatic improvement of late.

Meanwhile, the slow-starting offense has turned a corner. Nolan Arenado has established himself as a certifiable NL MVP Award candidate. Several other key contributors -- namely DJ LeMahieu, Carlos Gonzalez, Gerardo Parra and Chris Iannetta -- began to find success.

What they'll be hoping to accomplish in the trade market
Teams have begun sniffing around Colorado's roster, hoping it might part with LeMahieu, Gonzalez, Parra and maybe a reliever or two. But the Rockies are wondering why those scavengers are buzzing. For the time being, they're not selling.

Stock watch

TBD -- could be buyers, could be sellers. Colorado is hovering around .500 and, thus, hovering around contention. The next couple of weeks should push general manager Jeff Bridich in one direction or another.

Lauer, Hedges help Padres beat slumping Diamondbacks 6-3

11:13 PM PT

Associated Press

PHOENIX -- By two percentage points, the [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) are no longer in the lead in the NL West.

Losing six of seven at home will do that.

[Eric Lauer](#) limited Arizona to a run over five-plus innings, [Austin Hedges](#) homered for the first time since April 10 and the [San Diego Padres](#) opened a four-game series in the desert with a 6-3 victory over the slumping Diamondbacks on Thursday night.

The Diamondbacks fell to 1-6 in what will be a 10-game homestand and dropped into a virtual tie with the idle [Los Angeles Dodgers](#) for first place in the NL West. Arizona had been alone in first since June 8.

"We know that we are in a pennant race, if you want to call it that right now at the halfway point of the season," Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said. "I think we enjoy that part of the game. We know it is going to be a dogfight for the rest of the year."

[Wil Myers](#) drove in two runs with a triple and single, and [Carlos Asuaje](#) reached base four times -- a triple, RBI single and two walks -- for the last-place Padres, winners for only the fourth time in 17 games.

"Offensively, I think Carlos Asuaje is probably the story of the day for us," San Diego manager Andy Green said.

[Shelby Miller](#) (0-3) was better in his third start coming off Tommy John surgery, but still got the loss, allowing five runs -- three earned -- and five hits in 5 1/3 innings. He struck out seven and walked two.

"I feel good," Miller said. "I think today the command was a little bit better. I would have liked to go out there and finish the sixth, put up a zero out there and get out of the game. Have us in a little better situation, 2-1 instead of 5-1, leaving that inning but we kind of beat ourselves that inning a little bit."

Arizona's [Ketel Marte](#) hit a two-run homer off [Matt Strahm](#) in the eighth. Lauer, a 23-year-old left-hander, gave up seven hits -- mostly to soft contact -- walked two and hit a batter, but only one of those baserunners managed to score in his first win in four starts.

[Brad Hand](#) gave up an infield single, then struck out the next three in the ninth for his 24th save in 28 opportunities.

Miller, who had allowed 11 runs and 15 hits in 8 2/3 innings during his first two starts back from the surgery, got off to a rocky start in the first inning when the second batter, Asuaje, tripled to deep center and scored on Myers' single.

But the Arizona right-hander settled down, blanking the Padres for three innings before Hedges' line shot into the left-field seats put San Diego up 2-1 in the fifth. Hedges missed 41 games with right elbow tendinitis before being reinstated on June 24.

An error by usually sure-handed shortstop [Nick Ahmed](#) led to two unearned runs in San Diego's three-run sixth. Asuaje led off with an 11-pitch walk and scored when Myers tripled to deep right-center.

Ahmed muffed [Eric Hosmer](#)'s hard one-bouncer to allow Myers to score. [Freddy Galvis](#)' two-out single off reliever [Andrew Chafin](#) brought home Hosmer and the Padres led 5-1.

BIG PITCH

With runners at first and third and two outs in the fifth, Lauer struck out [Paul Goldschmidt](#) with a pitch that Green never had seen the pitcher throw: a cutter.

"It's fun to watch a kid throw a pitch that you've never seen him throw before," Green said. "I haven't seen the 90 mph cutter out of him before. If I haven't seen it, Goldschmidt hasn't seen it, either."

Lauer said he has been working on the cutter as his slider evolved and was "amped up" when he threw it to Goldschmidt.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Diamondbacks: OF [Steven Souza Jr.](#) (right pectoral strain) was activated from the 10-day DL and OF [Jarrod Dyson](#) was placed on the DL with a strained right groin. Souza started in right field and went 0 for 3 at the plate with a walk in just his 15th game of the season. Dyson was injured in Arizona's loss to St. Louis Wednesday night.

UP NEXT

Padres LHP [Joey Lucchesi](#) (4-3, 3.26 ERA) makes his fourth start since coming off the disabled list (right hip strain) and the Diamondbacks counter with RHP [Zack Godley](#) (9-6, 5.07) in the second game of the four-game series.

This Day in Padres History— July 6

By Bill Center

July 6, 1872—The first local baseball boxscore is published in The San Diego Union newspaper.

July 6, 1969—Left-hander **Dick Kelley** throws the first one-hitter in Padres history in the second game of a doubleheader at San Diego Stadium. The only hit is a second-inning single by Houston's **Denis Menke**. Kelley allows the one hit with five walks and four strikeouts in a complete-game 1–0 shutout win.

July 6, 1999—Outfielder **Eric Owens** goes 1-for-4 to extend his hitting streak to 18 straight games in a 10–9 loss to the Giants at Qualcomm Stadium.

July 6, 2015—Third baseman **Yangervis Solarte** homers and drives in a career-high five runs and second baseman **Ryan Schimpf** hits two homers in the Padres' 13–6 win at Arizona.

#PadresOnDeck: Gore Turns in Best Performance; Urías, Barley Have 4 Hits Apiece

By Bill Center

Left-hander **MacKenzie Gore** turned in the best start of his professional career Wednesday night while [top-30 prospects Luis Urías](#) and **Jordy Barley** had four-hit games in the Padres' farm system.

Gore, 19, the [Padres' second-ranked prospect by MLB Pipeline](#), allowed four hits and two walks with six strikeouts over six scoreless innings for Single-A Fort Wayne. The 6-foot-3 Gore, who was the Padres' first-round pick (third overall) in the 2017 draft, threw 86 pitches (52 strikes) while lowering his earned run average to 4.25 and picking up his first win of the season.

Urías, 21, the [Padres' No. 3 prospect](#), was 4-for-5 with a triple, a walk, two RBIs and three runs scored for Triple-A El Paso. He had a triple with a RBI and a run scored in the Chihuahuas' game-winning, two-run rally in the top of the 11th.

Barley, 18, who was recently added to the Padres' Top-30 list at [No. 30](#), was 4-for-5 with the Padres-2 in the Arizona Rookie League. Barley (.222) had a homer, two doubles, a stolen base, three RBIs and three runs scored.

There were two other four-hit games in the Padres' system Wednesday:

— **Nick Gatewood**, the Padres' 11th-round pick in June, was 4-for-5 with a double to raise his batting average to .321 for the Padres-1 in the ARL.

— Catcher **Matias Polanco** (.316) was 4-for-5 with three RBIs for the Dominican Summer League Padres.

Other top games by [Padres' Top-30 prospects](#).

— Third baseman **Hudson Potts**, 19, the [Padres' No. 15 prospect](#), was 3-for-5 with a walk-off, RBI hit for Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore.

— Third baseman **Luis Almanzar**, 18, the [Padres' No. 25 prospect](#), was 2-for-4 with two runs scored to raise his average to .181 for Fort Wayne.

There were two other notable pitching performances:

— Right-hander **Ronald Bolaños** (4.88 ERA) allowed no runs on two hits and a walk with five strikeouts over six innings for Lake Elsinore.

— Right-hander **Efrain Contreras**, 17, allowed a run on two hits and no walks with seven strikeouts. The native of Chihuahua, Mexico, has a 1.13 ERA.

Around the Farm:

TRIPLE-A EL PASO (46–40): Chihuahuas 11, SALT LAKE 10 (11 innings)—CF **Forrest Allday** (.271) backed Urías, going 3-for-5 with his second homer in as many games, a double, two RBIs and three runs scored. CF **Auston Bousfield** (.277) was 3-for-5 with a RBI and a run scored. RF **Franmil Reyes** (.330) was 2-for-4 with a double, two walks, two RBIs and a run scored. 1B **Allen Craig** (.298) had a two-run double in five at-bats. 2B **Dusty Coleman** (.172) was 1-for-4 with a stolen base and a run scored. Starting RHP **Walker Lockett** (5.20 ERA) allowed five runs on seven hits and two walks with five strikeouts in five innings. LHP **Kyle McGrath** (3.74) allowed three runs on three hits with a strikeout in an inning. RHP **Trey Wingenter** (3.75) allowed a hit and a walk with a strikeout in two scoreless innings. RHP **Rowan Wick** (1–0, 0.00) allowed an unearned run on two hits and a walk with four strikeouts in two innings. RHP **Colton Brewer** (4.38) allowed an unearned run with a strikeout to pick up his second save on the same day he was optioned back to El Paso by the Padres.

DOUBLE-A SAN ANTONIO (6–6, 48–34): The Missions were rained out Wednesday. They will play a doubleheader against Northwest Arkansas in San Antonio Thursday.

ADVANCED SINGLE-A LAKE ELSINORE (5–9, 39–45): STORM 3, Visalia 2 (11 innings)—LF **Nate Easley** (.256) backed Potts, going 2-for-3 with a walk, two stolen bases, a RBI and a run scored. 1B **Brad Zunica** (.246) was 2-for-4. SS **Chris Baker** (.208) was 1-for-3 with a RBI. CF **Edward Olivares** (.276) was 1-for-5. LHP **Cody Tyler** allowed a run on two hits with a strikeout over two innings in his professional debut. RHP **Carter Capps** (2.45 ERA) allowed an unearned run on a hit and a walk with a strikeout in two innings. RHP **Blake Rogers** (3–2, 2.93) issued a walk with two strikeouts in an otherwise perfect inning to get the win.

SINGLE-A FORT WAYNE (10–4, 42–41): TIN CAPS 7, Great Lakes 0—LHP **Ben Sheckler** (3.31 ERA) followed Gore and allowed a hit and a walk in two scoreless innings. LHP **Fred Schlichtholz** (4.66) had a strikeout in a perfect inning. LF **Robbie Podorsky** (.351) backed Potts, going 2-for-4 with a triple and a stolen base with three RBIs. 2B **Justin Lopez** (.224) homered in four at-bats. DH **Esteury Ruiz** (.259) was 1-for-2 with a walk, two stolen bases (30 on the season) and a run scored. 1B **Jalen Washington** (.243) had a double in three at-bats with a walk, a RBI and a run scored. RF **Tirso Ornelas** (.253) was 1-for-4 with a

run scored. SS **Gabe Arias** (.217) was 1-for-4 with a RBI. C **Luis Campusano** (.288) was 1-for-4.

SHORT-SEASON SINGLE-A TRI-CITY (9–11): SPOKANE 5, Dust Devils 2—RF **Aldemar Burgos** (.306) hit a two-run homer in three at-bats with a walk. CF **Grant Little** (.400) was 2-for-4 with a stolen base. DH **Michael Curry** was 1-for-4 with a double. SS **Reinaldo Ibarra** was 1-for-4. Starting RHP **Adrian Martinez** (0–1, 7.90 ERA) allowed three runs on four hits and two walks in just two-thirds of an inning. RHP **Nick Kuzia** (4.50) allowed an unearned run on a hit with a strikeout in 2 1/3 innings. RHP **Steven Wilson** (1.80) allowed a run on two hits in two innings. RHP **Joe Galindo** (4.26) struck out two in a perfect inning. LHP **Dan Dallas** (0.71) struck out five in two perfect innings.

DOMINICAN SUMMER LEAGUE PADRES (16–12): Padres 8, BLUE JAYS 7—SS **Yeison Santana** (.258) backed Polanco, going 2-for-3 with three walks, a stolen base and two runs scored. 2B **Bryan Torres** (.173) was 2-for-6 with a stolen base, a RBI and a run scored. Starting RHP **Jesus Cisernos** (5.87 ERA) allowed five runs (three earned) on six hits and three walks with two strikeouts in three innings. RHP **Jorge Leo** (2–1, 0.00) struck out two in two perfect innings to get the win.

ARIZONA ROOKIE PADRES:

PADRES-1 (5–8): Royals 5, PADRES 1—1B Greg Lambert (.400) backed Gatewood, going 2-for-5 with a double and a run scored. LHP **Jose Cabrera** (2.45 ERA) followed Contreras and allowed an unearned run on three hits with three strikeouts in 1 2/3 innings.

PADRES-2 (6–7): DODGERS 9, Padres 8—RF **Yordi Francisco** (.341) backed Barley, going 2-for-5 with two RBIs and a run scored. 1B **Jason Pineda** (.400) was 2-for-5 with a walk, a RBI and a run scored. 2B **Tucupita Marciano** (.375) was 2-for-6. Starting RHP **Michel Miliano** (10.00 ERA) allowed a run on three hits with a strikeout in four innings.

Padres seek 2nd win in a row in Arizona

STATS Jul 6, 2018 at 10:56a ET

PHOENIX — For the first time this season, the [Arizona Diamondbacks](#) had their projected big four in the lineup Thursday, although that did not keep the [San Diego Padres](#) from winning the first contest of a four-game series.

Right fielder [Steven Souza Jr.](#) was activated from the disabled list after missing the majority of the season with a pectoral injury suffered the final week of spring training, at last joining first baseman [Paul Goldschmidt](#), center fielder [A.J. Pollock](#) and third baseman [Jake Lamb](#) in the same lineup.

Lamb and Pollock also were on the disabled list at times in the early season, keeping the foursome apart.

“When we traded for Steven, there was a lot of excitement, hoping we could get all of these guys on one lineup card,” Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said. “It means that we are getting healthy, and it means the good things are on the way.”

Although Pollock had two of Arizona’s 11 hits and lefty-hitting Lamb had an RBI single off San Diego left-hander [Eric Lauer](#), the Padres took a 6-3 victory at Chase Field.

Arizona right-hander [Zack Godley](#) is scheduled to face Padres lefty [Joey Lucchesi](#) in the second game of the series Friday.

Without their full complement, the Diamondbacks have not produced at expected levels this season, although the installation of a humidifier as well as health could play into it.

They have 381 runs, two more than the league average, but are hitting a league-low .230 and have a .699 OPS, 12th in the league and ahead of only the Mets, Miami and San Diego. The Diamondbacks worked through a 2-15 stretch in May to regain the NL West lead in June, although they fell into a virtual tie with the Dodgers with their loss Thursday.

“We’ve been two different teams in two different months,” Lovullo said. “It’s been crazy. But now that everybody is healthy, we are hoping that there is a little lineup continuity and we start to do the things that we were projected as a team that we could do.”

“We’re winning games. We’re doing OK in that regard. But I feel like offensively with this group of guys on the field at one time, we could do some pretty special things. I know that these guys are anxious to get going and play together.”

The return to full health will give Arizona a chance to assess its full roster as the July 31 trade deadline approaches.

“Projecting the things we want to offensively with this group, it will give us a snapshot of what we really are,” Lovullo said. “I know we already are a good team. If guys perform, and we are talking about some good players coming back, if guys perform up to their abilities, we are going to be even better.”

San Diego, meanwhile, found hitting support from [Wil Myers](#) and [Carlos Asuaje](#) in winning Thursday, and oft-rumored trade chip [Brad Hand](#) struck out the side in the ninth inning after a leadoff infield single for his 24th save.

Nos. 2-3 hitters Asuaje and Myers had two hits and a triple apiece, and Myers drove in two runs. Asuaje, who also walked, scored twice. Asuaje has hit safely in all four games back after spending the previous six weeks in the minors because of the Padres’ glut of middle infielders.

“He’s had good at-bats,” Padres manager Andy Green said. “He’s put himself in position to earn more playing time. Whatever he makes of that opportunity is up to him.”

Godley is 9-6 with a 5.07 ERA and a 1.60 WHIP. He had a four-game winning streak broken in his last appearance, when he gave up seven runs and nine hits in a 9-6 loss to San Francisco on Sunday.

He beat the Padres in his only start against them this season, giving up two runs in a 6-2 victory on April 21. Golden has pitched well at home, going 4-2 with a 4.14 ERA in seven starts. He is 2-3 with a 5.23 ERA in 10 career appearances (seven starts) against the Padres.

Rookie Lucchesi, 4-3 with a 3.26 ERA, is to make his fourth start since returning from the disabled list with a right hip strain that kept him out for a month. He gave up four runs and five hits in his lone appearance against Arizona, a 4-2 loss April 22.

Included in Lucchesi’s repertoire is a combination changeup/curveball that has been dubbed a “churve.” He grips the pitch like a changeup but the pitch has the opposite break, down and in to a right-handed hitter instead of the true changeup movement of down and away. He also throws a true curve, which he has used more than the “churve” since his return.

Ups and downs of minor league bullpens

Ray Glier, Special for USA TODAY

Published 7:01 p.m. ET July 5, 2018

The end comes again and again for minor league pitchers in their fourth, fifth or sixth seasons in pro ball. They are throwing “the rock” downhill off the mound, but really isn’t it like rolling a large rock uphill trying to get to the big leagues? Sometimes, the minor league pitcher has had enough, like Adam Cimber, who became exasperated with the grind in 2017. After five seasons in the minors, the San Diego Padres told him to stay behind for extended spring training. They would not assign him to a team.

“I thought my career was probably over,” says Cimber, a right-handed submarine pitcher. “I had been to San Antonio Double A two years in a row, I thought I might be going back or to Triple A. I was devastated. I asked myself, ‘Am I going to give up on this?’ ”

Cimber made it a momentary distraction. “I just focused on getting a new strategy, changed my perspective a little bit, and here I am,” he said.

Cimber learned how to better get lefties out, spent another year in the minors, and then made the Padres’ big league roster out of spring training this past March. In his first 33 appearances this season, Cimber had 45 strikeouts in 40 innings and allowed 15 earned runs and is a solid contributor in relief.

Many of the 653 pitchers taken in the June Major League Baseball draft will have their own watershed moment where the end seems nigh. Here is the good news for draftees. The bullpen is full of opportunity.

The Colorado Rockies dished out \$106 million in contracts to relievers in the offseason. The Athletics, Marlins, Yankees, Padres, Mets, and Rays are paying their bullpens more than their starters. Pitching staffs are firmly at 13, no longer at 12.

The data has declared that high-leverage outs can be in the sixth, as well as the ninth, and organizations are starting to covet relievers accordingly. High-leverage can even be in the first inning, which is what happened when the Rays created “The Opener” with career reliever Sergio Romo, who pitched the first inning against the Angels in back-to-back games.

“You see what the Rockies did in the offseason, paying relievers like that,” says Atlanta reliever Luke Jackson, who still has hopes of being a starter someday. “The bullpen, it’s not so bad.”

He smiles that you-know-what-I-mean smile.

“These guys that got drafted shouldn’t get discouraged by anything that happens in their minor league career,” Cimber says. “Work hard, keep trusting, keep attacking.”

It's good advice because major league teams cycle through relievers every season. The up-and-down existence of the reliever — warm up one half inning, then sit again — can burn out arms. Organizations replenish frequently on the fly.

“We made a T-shirt in El Paso last year,” Cimber says. “ ‘Relievers are people, too.’ ”

So how do all these drafted pitchers get sorted as starters and relievers and become the next Cimber or Jackson, or perhaps San Diego reliever Kirby Yates, who wasn't even drafted out of high school? It is not as simple as pouring them down the development funnel and waiting for the robust arms and iron wills to squeeze their way into the big leagues.

‘Why not the bullpen?’

USA TODAY asked a minor league pitching coach, a minor league pitching coordinator, a minor league pitcher, major league pitchers and college pitchers the ins and outs of the up-and-down life of the relief pitcher.

Here is what they had to say:

- Two-pitch guys are usually easy to sort. They go to the bullpen. To be a starter these days starters must have the third and fourth pitch to work through a lineup a third time. There are exceptions, like Houston's Lance McCullers (who relies primarily on a fastball and curveball), but that is usually the rule.

“You might have a 95 (mph) guy and he has never thrown a changeup and you teach him, and he still can't do it,” said Dave Chavarria, the pitching coach for the Biloxi (Miss.) Shuckers, the Milwaukee Brewers' Class AA team. “The organization pretty much knows he is going to be a two-pitch mix guy, a bullpen guy. Then maybe you have a guy throwing 92-93 and you show him the changeup and gets it and you go, hey this kid's got a chance as a starter with the third pitch.

“The days of Randy Johnson and Kevin Brown and just throwing two pitches are pretty much done. So you have to have that conversation with the pitcher about the bullpen. You are trying to put players in the right situation and the bullpen might be the best situation. Nowadays team are spending a huge amount of money on the back end of the bullpen, so why not the bullpen?”

- Some pitchers' roles are upside-down in college from where they think they will be in the pros.

Michael Byrne was the closer for 2017 national champion Florida, which was eliminated at the College World Series this season. His fastball sits at 90-91, which is modest by today's bullpen standards. The Reds drafted him in the 14th round, and he knows his stuff plays as a starter. Byrne is a junior and that conversation as starter/reliever is something he'll have to have with the Reds, if he signs.

“I'm not defined yet,” Byrne says. “I want to start, but they needed me here (Florida) as a closer. Hey, it's not so bad; we won a national title.”

- The ninjas with funky deliveries and deception, who can be a change of pace in the middle of the game, like the submarining Cimber, can grab a chair in the pen.

Calvin Coker, a senior right-hander at Auburn, was taken in the 15th round of the 2018 draft by Oakland. The A's told him they liked his deception, and his arm angle.

Coker is a sidearm thrower. He is also 6-foot-3 and just 174 pounds. His fastball is a modest 87 to 90 mph, but with more weight and directional work on his mechanics, he could be a 92-93 sidewinder. But with sidearmers, velocity doesn't matter as much because the ball is hard to pick up.

- The left-handed pitchers who throw a modest 91-92 and have two pitches will be in the bullpen, too.

Jon Olczak, a lefty with Class AA Biloxi, was taken in the 21st round in 2015 out of North Carolina State. He is just 6 feet tall and his fastball is 90-92, but lefties who command their fastball and have a solid second pitch are valuable. The task is surviving the minor league grind and the uneven workload.

"You play catch every day just to get a feel for pitches, and I throw off the mound every other day," Olczak says. "I throw little touch-and-feels and I am always using my arm and keeping it ready."

Olczak and his bullpen mates see what is going on in the big leagues with relievers being responsible for getting 12 to 14 outs per game.

"I like the emphasis on the bullpen that's going on right now," Olczak says. "They're throwing every night, sometimes every game. They're in the game sometimes more than starters. They should get paid."

Many organizations just sit back the first month after the draft and watch. They lord over pitch counts with high school and college pitchers alike, but they also let the pitcher do what got him drafted in the first place.

"We are watching them to see how they do. Everything is so new to them we are going to let them go out and compete," says Chris Michalak, the Florida Marlins' minor league pitching coordinator. "After a month watching, if there are adjustments to be made, we'll make some adjustments."

Michalak said the Marlins' priority is to develop starting pitching. The prospects with two pitches, or a different delivery, or who throw in the high-90s and might be closers, come from that first look as a starter. The Marlins preach fastball command, but they also preach that young pitchers have to extend themselves and test their resolve.

"We want starting pitchers to get deep into games in the minor leagues because that's where they are going to learn the most about themselves when maybe they are facing the lineup the third time, now I have to figure a way to get this guy out, and I'm on the end of my gas tank," Michalak says. "Those pitches toward the end of the outing are probably some of the more valuable because of that type of competing. The seventh, eighth, ninth is a different kind of animal."

Tim Peterson, a 27-year-old Mets relief pitcher, chuckles when he remembers the last start of his professional career. It was not the end, it was the beginning.

On Sept. 1, 2014, Peterson was called up to the Binghamton (New York) Mets of the Class AA Eastern League for a spot start after the B-Mets (now Rumble Ponies) had clinched first place in the regular season. He got one out in the first inning, and gave up four runs and was yanked. His ERA shows as 108.00.

“I stayed up there for the playoffs and we went on and won the league championship and I didn’t pitch in the playoffs,” Peterson said. “Pitched that one inning in the spot start and snaked a ring out of it.”

It was the start of his career as a reliever. Peterson made it to the big leagues this season and is enjoying better riches than a minor league ring. He is making about \$550,000 out of the pen for the Mets.

Do young pitchers still need to be rattled by the words, “You’re going to the bullpen?” The vagueness and lack of status of middle relief — the unwelcome career detour — may be haunts of the past.

“I was watching MLB TV the other day and they kept saying every out is important, every out is important,” says Dan Winkler, an Atlanta reliever. “It is showing in today’s game, the seventh inning is just as important as the ninth inning. That’s where the market is going. If you have enough in the back of the bullpen it helps you win more ballgames.”

San Diego Padres trade deadline primer: The case to buy and the case to sell

John Horvath FOX Sports San Diego Jul 6, 2018 at 7:15a ET

At 38-51 and in the cellar of the NL West, all eyes are on the future in San Diego. Eyes are also on the upcoming July 31 trading deadline; where baseball fans across the globe will be glued to Twitter and their televisions to get the latest on trade news and rumors.

For the Padres, this deadline is shaping up to be a very interesting one. San Diego is at an important part of their rebuild, and General Manager A.J. Preller and the Padres front office will have important decisions to make. Should they look to buy, acquiring a key player with years of control that will help them in 2019 and beyond? Should they sell their soon-to-be free agents and much-desired bullpen pieces? Should they do a combination of both? Sit it out entirely?

These are questions that will be addressed as July carries on.

The case to buy

The Padres have been connected to 3B [Maikel Franco](#), SS [Manny Machado](#), and SP [Michael Fulmer](#) in recent weeks. This has raised the eyebrows of some, especially given the fact that the team is 10.5 games back in the NL West. The Maikel Franco news is understandable, as San Diego has a need at the hot corner and their strength (bullpen) matches up well with Philadelphia's needs.

The other two players mentioned, though, would likely require a haul of prospects.

Why would the front office of a rebuilding team pursue such a thing? Well, they might believe that they are closer to contention than people think... and it is not *too* hard to see why. Two franchise cornerstones (Fernando Tatis Jr., Luis Urias) are set to be up with the big league club in 2019 at the latest, waves of pitching talent from the minors should be starting to arrive soon, and the team does not want to waste [Eric Hosmer](#) in his prime. 2019 will also begin a sharp ascension in the contract of [Wil Myers](#), who will receive \$3 million before earning \$20 million in 2020, '21, and '22.

There are also rumblings out there that the Padres will at least be somewhat aggressive in free agency this offseason, whether it be to acquire a starting pitcher or perhaps a third baseman.

Another possible reason to buy: The Padres have many players who are Rule V eligible that must be added to the 40-man roster by December. If they are not, the organization would potentially lose them with no compensation. Second baseman

Luis Urias, starting pitchers Chris Paddack, Anderson Espinoza, Jacob Nix, Brett Kennedy, and Pedro Avila, outfielders Michael Gettys and Edward Olivares, and catcher Austin Allen are all Rule V eligible. The Padres will surely add Urias, Paddack, and Espinoza to the 40-man. The others, though, are hardly a slam dunk.

Trading a few of them and getting MLB-ready players in return is certainly an option.

With all that being said, if the Padres see a deal that fits for a controllable player, it certainly would not be too crazy for them to pursue it.

As far as a player like Machado, who will be seeking a \$300 million contract at the minimum when he becomes a free agent in the offseason, that idea might be a little far-fetched. If A.J. Preller & co. were to go that route, they probably would either have plans to recruit him for a half-season with hopes of luring him to re-sign, or flip him to another contending team once the deal is complete.

The case to sell

The Padres are in last place in their division, currently in line for the 7th pick in the draft, and likely two years away from when their window of contention truly opens up. They have plenty of attractive pitching pieces that could entice contenders, especially in the bullpen. If San Diego wanted to add more young talent to the organization, this could be their one final hurrah. Listed below are a handful of players that will likely be dangled in trade talks:

- [Tyson Ross](#)
- [Clayton Richard](#)
- [Brad Hand](#)
- [Kirby Yates](#)
- [Craig Stammen](#)
- [Freddy Galvis](#)
- [Jose Pirela](#)
- [Travis Jankowski](#)

[FanCred's Jon Heyman](#) also listed a number of players who could be available. Heyman stated that the Padres are expected to be "very active" during the deadline. For fans who are all in on 2018, it would be difficult to see the Padres to trade key members of the bullpen... however, when a team is in last place, the last thing needed is a stacked 'pen.

San Diego has already seen relievers such as [Jose Castillo](#) and [Robert Stock](#) get promotions to the big leagues, and there are more on the way. Down on the farm, there are plenty of young pieces that could get the call to replace those who are traded, such as [Brad Wieck](#), [Trey Wingenter](#), and [Phil Maton](#).

Trading relievers makes sense when it comes to future roster decisions, too. As stated before, the Padres have some decisions to make when it comes to adding players to the 40-man roster this winter. Dealing expiring contracts (Ross, Galvis) as well as bullpen pieces will not only bring back talent, but open up roster spots for the players that are coming. In theory, it is a win-win.

The case to hold

If there is one thing that we know about the A.J. Preller era, it is that if he does not get exactly what he wants in a trade, he will not make it. He holds all of his chips in high regard, as evidenced by his track record during trade deadlines. If the trade market develops into a buyers market like last season, him holding on to most (if not all) of his players could very well become a reality.

Plus, if the Padres truly believe that they can contend for a playoff spot in 2019, holding onto key members of a very good bullpen is not the worst idea. Craig Stammen, Kirby Yates, and Brad Hand are all controllable. There is an argument to be made that the Padres can *always* find more bullpen pieces, but that is a risky assumption. There are not a lot of Brad Hands or Kirby Yateses out there.

San Diego could even look to pursue a contract extension with starting pitcher Tyson Ross, who often expresses his love for the Padres organization.

Staying put might not be the most popular move, but if the value is not there in potential returns, the front office might not have a choice but to do just that.

July is an exciting month for baseball fans everywhere, from the All-Star festivities to division races taking form. The trade deadline is just the cherry on top, and it should be exciting to see what players are moved as teams focus their eyes on October.

El Paso Chihuahuas prospect: Infielder Luis Urias has eye on making MLB roster

Felix F. Chávez, El Paso Times Published 7:00 a.m. MT July 4, 2018

Baseball fans across El Paso have been fortunate this summer to see one of the top prospects in the San Diego Padres organization in second baseman Luis Urias.

The talented Urias has steadily moved up in the San Diego organization and is in his first full year with the Triple-A El Paso Chihuahuas.

Urias' play on the field has been impressive enough this season to earn a spot in the July 11, Triple-A All-Star game in Columbus, Ohio. He will be a part of the Pacific Coast League team which will take on a team of All-Stars from the International League.

"It feels good to earn this honor and I'm going to represent the San Diego organization, El Paso, my teammates, my coaches, my family the best I can," Urias said.

More: [El Paso Chihuahuas' Carlos Asuaje waiting for MLB call up to San Diego Padres](#)

Urias, who just turned 21, began his professional career in 2014 in Rookie ball. He has since moved up to Class A, Class AA and this year he's in first full year of Triple-A baseball. In 2016, he did play three games for the Chihuahuas and had four hits in nine at-bats.

"I've been fortunate enough during the past five years to play in some great cities like El Paso, San Antonio," said Urias, who signed as a free agent with San Diego. "Along the way, it's been a process. I want to help the team win badly wherever I am. I want to get better at what I do in every aspect of the game."

Urias has been strong at the plate wherever he's been. He hit .297 in his first year of professional baseball, then followed that up with a .299 average in 2015, a .333 mark in 2016 and a .297 mark last season at San Antonio, the Double-A affiliate of San Diego.

So far this season with the Chihuahuas, he's hitting .274 with a team-best 48 walks.

"I strive to be consistent all the time," Urias said. "I look to work hard every day. It's my goal to reach the major league level."

Urias is well thought of among those who follow baseball. He's among the top 100 prospects in all of baseball according to several national publications. He's ranked No. 32 by Baseball America and No. 36 by MLB Pipeline. In addition to being named a Triple-A All-Star, he's earned Texas League All-Star honors and was named the Most Valuable Player and Rookie of the Year in the California League.

Urias grew up in Magdalena de Kino, Sonora, Mexico, and began playing baseball at the age of six. His older brother, Ramon, is three years older, also a second baseman and is playing in the St. Louis Cardinals organization.

"I grew up watching my brother and learned a great deal from him," Urias said. "He is a great player and he got a head start on me in terms of professional baseball. I got to see what he went through and he was able to help me learn many things. Where we grew up in Mexico baseball is big and very important to our community."

Luis and Ramon got to spend time together recently when the Memphis Redbirds played El Paso at Southwest University Park, June 16-19.

"It was great to see him, my mom and my dad," Urias said. "It's great to have both of us playing professionally and it was good to have my family here."

Urias is a sound defensive player as well and has made several major league quality plays at second base all season long. He has also played shortstop and third base at times during his career. When he has played second base this year, his fielding percentage is near perfect at nearly 99 percent with just three errors. His defensive prowess was evident during a recent game with at home vs. Albuquerque when he made a nice backhanded grab in short right field on a defensive shift and threw out the Isotopes runner at home plate.

El Paso starting pitcher Brett Kennedy has played with Urias for the past three years in minor league baseball and has seen Urias grow tremendously as a player.'

"As a pitcher, it's great to have someone like Luis playing defense behind your," Kennedy said. "He makes so many great plays. We have him, Javy Guerra and Dusty Coleman in the middle of the infield and they do a great job. Luis works hard and he gets better each year. He has a bright future ahead of him. He swings the bat well and he just loves the game."

Urias is considered by many to be the future second baseman for the San Diego Padres, but the humble and hard-working native of Mexico, knows the hard work must continue if he wants to realize his ultimate dream.

"Nothing easy in this game," Urias said. "I can't take anything for granted, I can't stop working. Baseball is fun for me, it's been a great ride so far."

Luis Urias bio

Who: Luis Urias

What: Second baseman for the El Paso Chihuahuas

Of Note: the 5-foot-9, 185-pound Urias is one of the top prospects in the San Diego Padres organization...Turned pro in 2016...Was a Texas League All-Star in 2017 in Class AA.