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San Francisco Chronicle

Giants, Madison Bumgarner lose late lead, fall to Rockies

Henry Schulman

DENVER — Bruce Bochy shook his head for any number of reasons when Madison Bumgarner's hand was broken in that last spring training start. The manager kept coming back to how dominant Bumgarner looked in March and how great a season the Big Fella could have had.

Bochy's vision is coming true, not under the damp, fickle skies of April but in the heat (and sometimes fog) of June and July.

Bumgarner did not win at Coors Field on Monday night. In fact, he and the Giants took a 5-2 loss that seemed to burn the left-hander more than most because he took a 2-0 lead into the seventh, and, by gum, that's a game he needs to win.

The manner of defeat was maddening, too — two scratch hits, a rookie reliever who could not throw strikes and a throwing error from Gold Glove shortstop Brandon Crawford.

Nevertheless, another superb effort supplied more evidence that this could be the Summer of Bumgarner that Bochy expected.

Bumgarner's mood after the Giants' first loss on their trip matched the 92-degree heat at Coors Field. Before he allowed three runs in the seventh, all scoring after Bochy pulled him, Bumgarner had extended his scoreless streak to a career-best 22 innings, but he made it abundantly clear how little he cared.

Bumgarner's quote, cleaned up for a genteel audience: "I don't give two damns about any streak. It's about winning games. This was a tough loss. Everything was going our way. It didn't go our way later."

The Giants had led from the game's first pitch, a Kyle Freeland fastball that Gorkys Hernandez propelled into the right-field bleachers for his 11th home run. Buster Posey hit an RBI double in the third for a 2-0 lead that stood until the seventh.

The Rockies knocked Bumgarner out of the game with three singles. Pinch-hitter Pat Valaika hit a mistake to start the inning, DJ LeMahieu flared a ball to right and Charlie Blackmon dribbled an infield hit.

Bochy decided Bumgarner was done after 89 pitches in the heat with Nolan Arenado due up after reaching base three times already.

"He had gone far enough," Bochy said. "He was at that point. I know Bum pretty good. Three hits in a row, and it was hot out there. It's a little different at Coors Field when it's hot. He did his job. He did a nice job."

Bumgarner was not happy. He rarely is when he comes out.

"I could always understand the manager's point of view. I'm on his team," he said. "I'm not trying to go against him. That doesn't mean it's what I wanted to do."

Bochy entrusted Reyes Moronta with facing Arenado with the bases loaded and nobody out. Moronta walked him to halve the Giants' lead. The bases were still full.

Moronta seemed to avert disaster even as the Rockies tied the game when he got Trevor Story to ground into a double play and then induced an Ian Desmond one-hopper to short for what should have been the third out and a 2-2 tie. Moronta nearly gloved the ball himself, which could have prevented the run. Crawford fielded it and sailed his throw high and wide for an error that got Blackmon home for a 3-2 lead.

Crawford said the throw "cut" because he threw it at 80 percent, a mistake "because I had time to give a better throw than 80 percent."

The lead grew to 5-2 against Ty Blach and Sam Dyson in the eighth.

Freeland won a rematch of Wednesday night's Bumgarner-fueled 1-0 Giants win at AT&T Park. Freeland is becoming the Rockies' Clayton Kershaw, the dominating lefty the Giants never seem to miss. Freeland has faced them four times this season, Colorado winning three.

Monday's loss was the Giants' 12th in their past 14 games at Coors.

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants sign second-ranked international prospect, marco Luciano

Henry Schulman

DENVER — The Giants, finally free of the international-signing shackles they chose to don over the past two seasons, made a splash on the first day of the 2018-19 signing period Monday.

The Giants announced they have signed 16-year-old Dominican shortstop **Marco Luciano** for a signing bonus that a club source confirmed was \$2.6 million. Baseball America and MLB.com each listed Luciano as the second-ranked prospect in this year's international class.

His signing was long-rumored. The Giants have scouted the 6-foot-2 teenager extensively.

"In a year that lacks a consensus top 16-year-old international prospect, Luciano has an exciting combination of offensive upside and athleticism, with a compact, explosive swing that produces effortless power," according to Baseball America's scouting report.

Although Luciano has played some outfield in Dominican developmental leagues, he has been mainly a shortstop.

The Giants announced 11 international signings: three infielders, three outfielders, four pitchers and one catcher.

All are from the Dominican Republic or Venezuela except for Cuban outfielder **Jairo Pomares**, who is ranked 11th by Baseball America, which reported his bonus at \$975,000.

Another top signing is Venezuelan outfielder **Luis Matos** (\$725,000), ranked 27th by MLB.com and 37th by Baseball America.

Over the past two years, the Giants could not sign any international prospect for more than \$300,000 each because they overspent their slot in 2015 when they signed Bahamian shortstop **Lucius Fox** for \$6 million.

Among the Giants' \$300,000 signings was Dominican center fielder **Alex Canario**, signed in 2016. Last year, he was the Most Valuable Player in the Dominican Summer League All-Star Game. Now 18, Canario just began playing in the Arizona Rookie League.

Now free from that penalty, the Giants can spend their allotted \$4,983,500 any way they choose. They still have some of their slot remaining for players who might become more appealing before next July 2, general manager **Bobby Evans** said.

Rotation plans: Manager **Bruce Bochy** said that on Tuesday he might announce the plan for incorporating **Johnny Cueto** and **Jeff Samardzija** into the rotation. In what Bochy called a “big day” at Triple-A Sacramento, Samardzija (shoulder inflammation) gave up two solo homers over six innings against Fresno in what was scheduled to be his fourth and final rehab start. Cueto (elbow sprain) threw a bullpen three days after his second minor-league game. Bochy said it went well.

San Jose Mercury News

Giants awaiting more results from big day away from Coors Field

Kerry Crowley

DENVER—The Giants will send ace Madison Bumgarner to the mound at Coors Field Monday, but a big day for the franchise in different parts of the world is continuing back in California.

Veteran starters Johnny Cueto (elbow sprain) and Jeff Samardzija (shoulder tightness) are both pitching in Sacramento as Cueto is expected to throw a bullpen while Samardzija is making his fourth rehab start for the Triple-A River Cats.

“It’s a fairly big day in Sacramento with Cueto’s bullpen and Shark’s outing today,” manager Bruce Bochy said. “We don’t have anything for you yet but we will soon.”

Both pitchers could rejoin the Giants’ rotation when the team returns home to face the St. Louis Cardinals for a four-game set this weekend, but Bochy said the club won’t make any decisions until Tuesday.

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The Giants are hopeful Samardzija pitches at least five innings after his third rehab outing was cut short due to a high pitch count through four innings.

With young starters Andrew Suárez and Dereck Rodríguez holding their own in the rotation, the Giants don’t need to rush Cueto back into action. However, after back-to-back scoreless outings in his first two rehab starts, Cueto may have done enough to convince the Giants he’s ready to return against St. Louis.

A busy day for the franchise will continue at Coors Field in Denver and at Raley Field in Sacramento, but it started in the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Venezuela.

The Giants announced the signings of 11 international free agent prospects, including *Baseball America's* No. 2 prospect, 16-year-old Marco Luciano. Luciano is a power-hitting shortstop and the Giants plan to give him every opportunity to stick at that position as he progresses through the organization.

Luciano was one of four players to sign from the Dominican Republic, while six others including highly-touted outfielder Luis Matos signed from Venezuela. Center field prospect Jairo Pomares was the club's lone acquisition from Cuba.

The organization is thrilled with its haul, especially after spending rules limited the Giants to having a \$300,000 bonus pool to sign international prospects in each of the last two years.

Hanson out, Sandoval in

Bochy indicated Sunday he planned to give third baseman Pablo Sandoval a day of rest for the Giants' series opener against the Rockies at Coors Field, but Sandoval will start and hit seventh against Rockies lefty Kyle Freeland.

Sandoval left Sunday's contest after being hit by a pitch in the right elbow, but Bochy said the infielder was healthy and ready to go Monday.

Alen Hanson was expected to fill in for Sandoval, but Hanson is dealing with a sore left shoulder that impacts his ability to swing pain-free from the left side of the plate. Hanson's injury isn't considered serious and he could be back in the starting lineup as soon as Tuesday.

San Jose Mercury News

Giants lose another late lead, fail to provide run support for Bumgarner

Kerry Crowley

DENVER—It isn't easy to beat the Giants these days, and it's become even more difficult for an opponent to score off of Madison Bumgarner.

The Rockies accomplished both of those feats in a 5-2 defeat of the Giants Monday, even if they did their damage when Bumgarner finally came off the mound.

The Giants have won 11 of their last 15 games, but all four of their losses have come in games in which they've allowed at least three runs after the sixth inning.

After snapping off 22 straight scoreless innings, Bumgarner opened the bottom of the seventh by allowing three straight singles including an infield dribbler off the bat of Charlie Blackmon to load the bases.

With Rockies slugger Nolan Arenado at the plate, Bruce Bochy strolled to the mound and took the ball out of Bumgarner's hands and turned the game over to his bullpen with a 2-0 lead.

The wheels fell off and Colorado stopped San Francisco in its tracks.

A bases loaded walk by reliever Reyes Moronta plated Colorado's first run and the Rockies tied the game on a double play ball. Moronta nearly escaped the inning after inducing a groundball, but Giants shortstop Brandon Crawford threw the ball away from first baseman Brandon Belt and the Rockies broke the tie.

The Giants began their six-game road trip with a miserable 16-26 record away from AT&T Park this season, but a combination of stellar pitching performances and timely hits led to a series sweep of the first-place Arizona Diamondbacks. San Francisco beat one of the National League's toughest pitchers, Patrick Corbin, to open the weekend, but didn't need Bumgarner to improve to a season-best five games over .500.

Bumgarner entered Monday's start coming off back-to-back scoreless outings against the Padres and Rockies, having pitched both of those games in the pitcher-friendly confines of AT&T Park. While he allowed a combined five hits in 15 innings, the Giants ace had yet to showcase the type of fastball velocity the Giants have come to expect from him.

In 32 1/3 innings in June, Bumgarner threw just two pitches faster than 92 miles per hour. His velocity was back Monday, as he ramped his two-seamer up to 92.7 miles per hour and threw 44 fastballs at an average of 91.9 miles per hour.

Though the Rockies didn't score when Bumgarner was pitching, the left-hander was charged with two earned runs as the Giants fell to 45-41.

In their last outing against Rockies starter Kyle Freeland, the Giants were held scoreless through seven innings as they failed to provide Bumgarner with a single run of support. They waited until the ninth to draw first blood, but Brandon Crawford's walkoff home run off left-hander

Harrison Musgrave was also the only run they needed to secure a 1-0 win.

This time around, Freeland's evening began in decidedly different fashion.

Giants center fielder Gorkys Hernández swung at Freeland's first pitch and clobbered a 359-foot opposite field home run that sailed through the thin mountain air. It was the Giants' second leadoff homer of the year and their first since Gregor Blanco deposited a ball over the right field fence in Philadelphia in a 6-3 loss on May 10.

Hernández's 11th homer of the year was also his fifth against the Rockies in 11 games, but it was one of just five hits the Giants recorded all night.

San Francisco added on in the third on a hit where the size of the Coors Field outfield helped net the Giants a run they likely wouldn't have scored in a smaller park. With Belt at first, catcher Buster Posey worked a nine-pitch at-bat and sent a hard one-hopper past the glove of Trevor Story at shortstop.

The ball continued to skip into the left center field alleyway, allowing Belt to race home and Posey to reach second with his 17th double of the year.

The Rockies threatened to answer against Bumgarner early on, but rookie left fielder Austin Slater provided outstanding defensive support to aid his starter. Slater caught a routine flyball in foul territory to help Bumgarner escape a bases loaded jam in the first, but he saved his best work for the next two innings.

In the second, Slater took away extra bases from left fielder Noel Cuevas with a headfirst dive and in the third, he snagged a rocket off the bat of Chris Iannetta to rob the Rockies of another scoring opportunity with the bases loaded.

Giants announce international signings

The international signing period began Monday and the Giants wasted little time making a splash.

The club announced the signings of 11 international prospects including 16-year-old shortstop Marco Luciano, ranked as the No. 2 free agent signee in this year's class.

Six of the 11 signees hailed from Venezuela, with Luciano among four players the Giants agreed

to deals with from the Dominican Republic. 17-year-old outfielder Jairo Pomares was the lone prospect to sign with the Giants from Cuba.

MLB.com

Giants squander late lead, drop opener tom Rox Chris Haft

DENVER -- Seeing either **Madison Bumgarner** or **Brandon Crawford** endure misfortune is tough enough to take for the Giants. Weathering lapses by both stalwarts, and in the same inning no less, is virtually impossible, as San Francisco's 5-2 loss to the Rockies on Monday demonstrated.

The Giants nursed a 2-0 lead into the seventh, when Colorado scored three runs. The reversal began with Bumgarner yielding three soft singles to load the bases with nobody out. The inning included Crawford, the National League's likely **All-Star Game starter** at shortstop and winner of the last three Gold Glove Awards, committing a throwing error that scored the Rockies' final run of the frame.

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Bumgarner's 22-inning scoreless streak ended, along with San Francisco's three-game winning streak. The left-hander plainly stated which item concerned him most.

"I don't give two [expletives] about any kind of streak," Bumgarner said. "It's about winning games while we're out there. That was a tough loss. Everything was going our way early on and didn't go our way late."

In fact, none of the Rockies' runs in their big seventh crossed home plate as the result of a hit.

Pinch-hitter **Pat Valaika** and **DJ LeMahieu** singled to open the inning. So did **Charlie Blackmon**, who got jammed and beat out a roller to the left side for an infield single that loaded the bases.

Giants manager Bruce Bochy removed Bumgarner, who threw 61 strikes in 89 pitches, for **Reyes Moronta**. Though Bumgarner's shutout remained intact, the switch prompted no second-guessing. On an evening when the first-pitch temperature was 92 degrees, Bumgarner had done enough.

"I think I know Bum pretty well by now," Bochy said.

Moronta had retired all but one of the previous 18 hitters he faced. But his luck didn't last as he walked **Nolan Arenado** to force in a run. LeMahieu scored while **Trevor Story** grounded into a

double play. Blackmon advanced to third. Then **Ian Desmond** slapped a grounder to Crawford, who threw high and wide to first base. First baseman **Brandon Belt** tried to keep his foot on the bag to preserve a chance for the inning-ending out but couldn't, enabling Blackmon to score the go-ahead run.

Crawford denied that the ball slipped out of his hands, though he admitted that he didn't unleash his throw with full force.

"It cut," he said. "I didn't throw it 100 percent. I gave it about an 80 percent throw."

SOUND

SMART

Buster Posey doubled home a third-inning run to increase his career RBI total against Colorado to 94, fifth-most among active players.

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

Colorado experienced a prolonged second-inning rally when a force-out call at second base on Story was overturned after a replay review. That loaded the bases with two outs before Bumgarner coaxed a harmless foul flyout from **Chris Iannetta**. **UP NEXT**

Chris Stratton will test his 4-3 road record at Coors Field on Tuesday in the Giants' 5:10 p.m. PT game against the Rockies. The right-hander owns a 3.00 ERA in his last three road outings, spanning 18 innings. Stratton will oppose Rockies right-hander **Antonio Senzatela**.

MLB.com

Slater makes great plays in consecutive innings

Chris Haft

DENVER -- **Austin Slater** is playing left field as if he wants to stay there a while. Recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on June 23, Slater made two noteworthy catches during the **Giants' 5-2 loss** Monday to the Rockies.

In the second inning, Slater ranged toward the left-field line to backhand **Noel Cuevas'** line drive for the inning's second out. **Statcast™** appraised Slater's play as having a 51 percent catch probability. He needed to cover 35 feet to make the play (he actually covered 37) and did so in three seconds of "opportunity time."

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Slater outdid himself one inning later, charging forward to corral **Chris Iannetta's** bid for a hit and leave a pair of runners stranded. The catch probability on this one was 62 percent. It

required Slater to span 23 feet (he actually covered 25) in a "catch opportunity" time of 2.7 seconds.

Slater received the ultimate compliment: praise from starting pitcher **Madison Bumgarner**, the beneficiary of both grabs.

Asked if Slater showed him something with his defense, Bumgarner said, "He hasn't had to show me anything. I really like his game."

Said Slater: "He's one of the ultimate competitors, not only on our team but in the whole league, and to have that kind of encouragement means a lot, especially coming from a player of his caliber."

Slater explained that the catches were more similar than they looked.

"Both of them were kind of top-spinners, and I happened to get a good break and I had a chance to lay out, and at the very least knock it down and keep it in front of me," he said. "Those are, for the most part, reaction plays and just thinking off the bat that I'm gonna catch this ball."

Slater, who can play all three outfield positions, acknowledged that he'd like to feel a little more settled on the field.

"Hopefully, you get to a point where you don't have to think at all and everything just comes naturally," he said. "We talk about natural players and what comes with experience, and I think I'm getting better at this."

MLB.com

Posey inducted into Arizona Fall League HOF

Chris Haft

DENVER -- Giants catcher **Buster Posey** joined umpires Ted Barrett and Jeff Nelson in the newest class of the Arizona Fall League Hall of Fame, it was announced Monday.

Posey played 19 games for Scottsdale in 2009, posting a .225/.345/.338 slash line. He also hit two home runs and collected 12 RBIs. Though those weren't remarkable statistics, the experience helped Posey become the Giants' starting catcher the following season when they

captured the first of their three San Francisco-era World Series titles.

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Posey said he was flattered by the honor and expressed pride in joining a list of players he grew up admiring. Posey preferred not to name any out of reluctance to omit anyone. But, he said, "I followed these guys as a fan for a long time."

MLB.com

Giants agree with No. 2 int'l prospect Luciano

Chris Haft

SAN FRANCISCO - The San Francisco Giants announced the signings of 11 International prospects on Monday, including 16-year-old shortstop Marco Luciano. Baseball America and MLB.com have both ranked the 6-foot-3 power hitter from the Dominican Republic as the **No. 2 International prospect** in this year's class. Jairo Pomares, a center fielder from Cuba, is ranked as Baseball America's No. 11 International prospect. Luis Matos, a right fielder from Venezuela, has been recognized by MLB.com as their No. 27 International prospect and as the No. 37 International prospect by Baseball America.

The club confirmed the deals late Monday, along with eight other signings: right-handers Melvin Marte and Odué Civada, left-handers Aaron Peniche and Anthony Torres, shortstop Roberto Monegro, center fielder Victor Bericoto, catcher Eduardo Jaramillo and second baseman Yeiver Torrealba.

Luciano's hitting ability and his power -- both projected to be above average -- are what separate him from similar players in the class. Some scouts believe he is the best overall player. The teenager is athletic enough to play shortstop and center field, but he might end up at one of the corner outfield spots because of his overall skillset.

Matos is a polished player with a solid hit tool, plus-plus makeup and a successful track record on Venezuela's junior national teams. He also projects to have a plus arm.

Pomarez has also showed a good feel for hitting and has a balanced approach at the plate. He should develop more power as he gets stronger.

According to the rules established by the Collective Bargaining Agreement, clubs that received a Competitive Balance Pick in Round B of the MLB Draft received a pool of \$6,025,400, while clubs that received a Competitive Balance Pick in Round A of the Draft received \$5,504,500. All other clubs, including the Giants, received \$4,983,500.

Teams are allowed to trade as much of their international pool money as they would like, but can only acquire 75 percent of a team's initial pool amount. Additionally, signing bonuses of \$10,000 or less do not count toward a club's bonus pool, and foreign professional players who are at least 25 and have played in a foreign league for at least six seasons are also exempt.

NBCsportsbayarea.com

Giants fall apart in seventh inning as winning streak comes to an end vs Rockies

Alex Pavlovic

SAN FRANCISCO -- There are many ways to lose a game at Coors Field, where breaking balls don't break, pop-ups land in the seats, and the vast outfield encourages doubles and triples. A Brandon Crawford error was not the way the Giants expected to fall behind in the first of three games against the Rockies, though.

Crawford's throwing error gave the Rockies a one-run lead in the seventh and they held on for a 5-2 win. The Giants managed just a couple of early runs a day after getting 16 hits at Chase Field. They also wasted a strong performance from Madison Bumgarner. Here are the details ...

--- Bumgarner entered the game with an average fastball velocity of 90.6 mph this season. It was 91.9 mph on 44 fastballs he threw Monday, with a season-high of 92.7 mph on one pitch. The thin air certainly helped, but still, it's clear that his arm strength is coming back start by start. It'll be interesting to see how much room there is left for growth.

--- Bumgarner left Reyes Moronta in a hell of a pickle. The rookie entered with the bases loaded in the seventh, no outs, and Nolan Arenado at the plate. He walked Arenado to cut the lead to 2-1 and a double play tied it, but also helped avoid a catastrophe. The error ended up bringing a third run across.

--- The best way to guarantee you'll be in the lineup every day is to win over the starting staff, and Austin Slater certainly won Bumgarner over in his third start of the road trip. Slater made two impressive catches early on, including a diving stop of a liner with the bases loaded in the third. That one had a catch probability of just 62 percent and saved a pair of runs.

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NBCsportsbayarea.com

Giants sign top outfield prospect from the Dominican Republic for \$2.6 million

Alex Pavlovic

UPDATE (1:45pm PT on Monday: The Giants announced the signing of 11 international prospects, including #2 rated prospect Marco Luciano.

Name	Pos.	DOB	Hometown	Born	Ht.	Wt.	B/T	Scout
Pomares, Jairo	CF	8/4/2000	Trinidad, Sancti Spiritus	Cuba	6'1	186	L/R	Bautista /Elias
Luciano, Marco	SS	9/10/2001	Pimentel, Duarte	D.R.	6'3	180	R/R	Bautista
Marte, Melvin	RHP	7/15/2000	San Francisco, Duarte	D.R.	6'0	165	R/R	Polonia Jr.
Monegro, Roberto	SS	11/15/2001	San Pedro, San Pedro	D.R.	5'10	145	R/R	Abreu
Peniche, Aaron	LHP	8/30/1999	San Isidro, Santo Domingo	D.R.	6'1	166	L/L	Elias
Bericoto, Victor	CF	12/3/2001	Maracay, Aragua	Ven.	6'1	155	R/R	Morillo
Civada, Odue	RHP	4/5/2002	San Francisco, Zulia	Ven.	6'1	165	R/R	Villalobos Jr.
Jaramillo,	C	3/26/2002	Barcelona,	Ven.	5'11	160	R/R	Marquez

Eduardo Anzoategui

Matos, Luis RF 1/28/2002 Bobures, Zulia Ven. 6'0 170 R/R Fernandez

Torrealba, Maracay,
Yeiver 2B 10/26/2001 Aragua Ven. 5'11 145 R/R Morillo

Torres, Barquisimeto,
Anthony LHP 11/25/2001 Lara Ven. 6'1 165 L/L Morillo

SAN FRANCISCO — The Giants didn't waste any time getting back into the top of the international market.

After two years of mandated reduced spending because of the signing of Lucius Fox, the Giants once again scooped up one of the best teenage prospects available on July 2, the sport's international signing day. **According to Jesse Sanchez of MLB.com**, the Giants signed Marco Luciano, a 16-year-old outfielder from the Dominican Republic ranked No. 2 on MLB.com's list of available international prospects. Luciano will get \$2.6 million, per Sanchez.

A right-handed hitter, Luciano is listed at 6-2, 178 pounds, and is known as potentially the best hitter available in this year's class.

MLB.com's scouting report says his hit tool and power project to be above average. "The athletic Luciano is known for his bat speed and all-around quick twitch ability," per the report. "He hits line drives into the gaps and can also hit the ball over the fence with authority. Luciano is not the prototypical swing-and-miss power hitter and projects to be a solid middle-of-the-lineup hitter."

The Giants have had little success in the international market over the years, and Fox, who was supposed to change all that, was sent to Tampa Bay in the Matt Moore trade. But the organization has an impressive new facility in the Dominican Republic and vice president of baseball operations Brian Sabean has talked repeatedly over the past year about the importance of finding players internationally.

In addition to Luciano, Sanchez reported that the Giants gave No. 27 prospect Luis Matos \$725,000 and also gave \$975,000 to Cuban prospect Jairo Pomarez. Both are outfielders.

The Athletic

For love of country: Giants sign Marco Luciano, but it's six other international signees that most encourage two Giants players

Andrew Baggarly

DENVER – Giants center fielder Gorkys Hernández scrolled through his Instagram feed and had to chuckle. It was snapshot after snapshot of bright-faced teenagers, new major league jerseys draped over coat-hanger shoulders, ears poking out of new major league hats, putting pen to paper or shaking hands in front of a crooked backdrop.

The international signing date arrived on Monday, and for the Giants, it was long awaited. It's been months upon months since they took the plunge and came to a lucrative understanding with 16-year-old Dominican shortstop Marco Luciano. But they had to wait until July 2 to hear the splash. Luciano, whom Baseball America ranked as the second-best talent among this signing class, will receive a bonus of \$2.6 million.

The Giants had spent the previous two years in the penalty box, unable to offer more than \$300,000 to any international free agent because their \$6 million signing of Bahamian shortstop Lucius Fox in 2015 had exceeded the spending limits back when there was a soft cap on bonuses.

Liberated from that penalty, the Giants did not hold back on Monday. Their 11-player haul included two more top-ranked talents: 17-year-old Cuban center fielder Jairo Pomares (who signed for \$950,000) and 16-year-old Venezuelan right fielder Luis Matos (\$750,000).

Hernández smiled as he sat at his locker at Coors Field and looked through the pictures. He also shook his head, but in disbelief, not disapproval.

"I signed at 10 a.m., no jersey, no hat," he said. "I signed the paper and went home. No party, just the family. They told me to be ready to go to the Dominican in 15 days. I didn't have a passport."

That is how his professional life began for Hernández at 17 years old, with a \$19,000 bonus from the Detroit Tigers that was not his to keep. He had to give \$9,000 to the buscone who housed him in an academy with 18 to 20 other teenage hopefuls – a group that included future big leaguer Jose Tabata. The rest went to Hernández's mother, Norelis Lugo.

"She did everything for me," Hernández said. "I owe her everything."

He still does. He is trying to get a visa for her to leave Venezuela and come to the United States.

For all the uncertainty and strife in Venezuela, all the crime and economic upheaval, and for all a Bolivar will buy you when a million of them are worth \$10, Monday's signing day gave

Hernández a reason to smile. At a time when several major league organizations are limiting operations in his troubled home country, or pulling out entirely due to safety concerns, six of the 11 players the Giants signed on Monday are Venezuelan.

“That is good to hear, really good to hear,” said Hernández, who hit a leadoff home run in the Giants’ 5-2 loss at Coors Field on Monday. “Now these guys have to work to take care of their families and their career. Enjoy what you do, be a good teammate and be a good professional.”

Going back a decade, the Giants have received scant return and heaps of disappointment on their high-profile international signings. (Lots more on that from this comprehensive look in March.) But they have made a few successful inroads in Venezuela, going back to Francisco Liriano and Pablo Sandoval, and their longest tenured scout there, Ciro Villalobos, has a way of connecting with young players.

Sandoval said he signed with the Giants over offers from the Rangers, Yankees and Mariners, mostly because Villalobos showed the most consistent interest and built a relationship with his family.

Sandoval was 16 and signed on July 2, 2003, for a bonus he wouldn’t divulge except to say it was in the low six figures. He gave 20 percent to his agent. There were six or seven other players in the same group with his sponsor. All of them signed a contract. Sandoval was the only one to reach the major leagues.

It’s so much different now, beyond the jerseys and the photo ops. Agents and buscones still sponsor players and train them, but the process has become much more expensive in Venezuela – and not only because of rampant inflation and a scarcity of goods to purchase. Because some teams are no longer staffing the country, young players must travel to the Dominican Republic, Panama, Curaçao or Colombia to participate in showcases and international leagues. All of that costs money. And buscones are less likely to spend that money on players of more modest ability or who represent a lesser return on their investment.

If you are a young baseball player with big dreams in Venezuela today, you had better not be a late bloomer – and yes, there is such a thing as being a late bloomer at 18 or 20.

Dominican right-hander Reyes Moronta was one. He showed up to a workout one day as a 20-year-old, threw hard and the Giants signed him on the spot for \$20,000. Now he is in a major league bullpen. He has thrown 122 pitches at 97 mph or harder. Nobody else on the team has thrown more than 18.

If Moronta were a 20-year-old in Venezuela today, there’s a good chance he would fall through the cracks.

“It’s the guy who doesn’t have the money to go out of the country that will have a problem,” Sandoval said.

The Giants have not retreated from Venezuela or limited their interest to the top players who appear on the international showcase circuit. They maintain a staff of seven area scouts and send three crosscheckers on a regular basis. Joe Salermo, the club's director of international operations, travels to Venezuela once a month.

"We're very proud of that because we feel there's a lot of quality players in the country," Salermo said by phone from Santo Domingo. "If another team doesn't go there, it's an advantage to us. We're proud to have an established presence there.

"And it really does make a difference. The agents take the players to the Dominican, Aruba, Panama, but you're seeing them one or two times. You might be seeing a kid on a bad day. We're able to key on the ones we like."

There has to be a level of trust, though, because top brass – scouting director John Barr, GM Bobby Evans and executive vice president Brian Sabean – cannot drop in to personally follow players in Venezuela.

But Salermo ensured that every top decision maker in the organization had a chance to travel to the Dominican Republic to evaluate Luciano once it became clear it would take a significant investment to sign him.

"They liked what they saw," said Salermo, who has been tracking Luciano for more than two years. "Even (farm director) David Bell came to see him and was like, wow, he's incredibly advanced for his age."

Industry evaluations on Luciano do not differ on his offensive upside, but there are doubts about whether the right-handed hitter will be able to stay at shortstop as he adds bulk to his 6 foot-3 frame.

"Obviously he'll get bigger, but right now, we believe he's a shortstop," Salermo said. "He has quick hands and plus power, a plus bat. He has the hands and arm strength for shortstop.

"The bat is going to dictate (his development) because he's an offensive guy. But I tell you what, he's been improving at shortstop. You think, 'Well he could move to third base or the outfield,' but he has the arm and the footwork and he's adapted really well."

Luciano and the other 10 prospects signed 2017 contracts, so they cannot begin playing in any organized games this year. But Luciano and several others will take part in instructional league in Scottsdale, Ariz., beginning in late September. Although most teenage free agents begin playing their first games in the Dominican Summer League, Salermo said Luciano is advanced enough that the Giants are likely to start him in the rookie-level Arizona League next year.

Pomares turns 18 in August and profiles as a speed threat in center field – he ran a 60-yard dash in 6.6 seconds – with the potential for gap power. The Giants saw him play for Cuba's

under-15 international team before he defected to the Dominican and established residency there.

“We love his bat,” Salermo said. “He really has an efficient approach and we project a plus bat with average power. He’s a center fielder who plays under control. He’s mature. You can tell he’s seen the world.”

Matos, the top Venezuelan signing of the bunch, is from Sandoval’s hometown of Valencia.

“He has tools and he’s a good makeup guy,” Salermo said. “There’s power to come and a plus arm. We believe he can be a very good right fielder. In our park, you’ve got to have an athletic right fielder and we believe Matos can be that kind of player.”


Sandoval’s face brightened when he heard that Matos was from his hometown. He often wears an undershirt with the Venezuelan colors down both sleeves. Whenever the Giants play the Rockies, he makes sure to visit with outfielder Gerardo Parra. They have been playing against each other since they were 12-year-olds.

“It’s exciting to see the guys from my country come to this team,” Sandoval said. “It’s just a signing, but you take a step to be a professional baseball player. It’s an opportunity. You respect the game and keep working hard to get here.”

But maybe enjoy a day to celebrate. That’s more than Giants first base coach Jose Alguacil did when he signed for \$5000 out of Venezuela.

“Two million?” Alguacil said with a laugh. “I’ll celebrate all year with that kind of money.”

“But no doubt about it, this is a moment that changes their life. It changes their family’s life. It’s really tough, the situation now. It makes me feel good because it means people are still thinking of our country and the talent that is there. These kids will get an opportunity to be a big league player and continue their dream.”



Madison Bumgarner took a career-best 22-inning scoreless streak into the seventh and the Giants held a 2-0 lead when the Rockies pinch hit for lefty nemesis Kyle Freeland. The Giants were all set to carry over the momentum from their sweep in Arizona.

Then Bumgarner gave up three singles to start the seventh, each one softer than the one that preceded it, and Moronta ran into more misfortune as all three inherited runners scored in a loss on a hot night in Denver.

Bumgarner was upset, but not about the streak.

“I mean, I don’t give two shits about any kind of streak,” he said, with cameras on him. “I’m just trying to win. Everything was going our way and it didn’t go our way late.”

The Giants built their 2-0 lead on Hernández's 11th homer to start the game and Buster Posey's ground ball up the middle in the third that turned into a Coors Field double because center fielder Charlie Blackmon was playing so deep. The hit came on the ninth pitch of an at-bat that, while brilliant, had consequences for Brandon Belt. He ran with the pitch on three foul balls, and then had to burn even more alveoli while scoring from first base after a smart send home from Ron Wotus.

Bumgarner was not his sharpest while issuing three walks and receiving two doses of absolution from left fielder Austin Slater. The rookie made one diving play down the line in the second inning and then saved at least one run when he slid on his stomach to catch a sinking liner with the bases loaded in the third.

Did Slater show Bumgarner something?

"He didn't have to show me," Bumgarner said. "I really like his game and how he plays. I'm excited we got him here and I'm excited every time we run him out there."

(Yes, it would seem the clubhouse sentiment is the same as the popular one: Slater should be playing every day.)

Bumgarner had thrown 89 pitches, he hadn't retired Nolan Arenado in three prior confrontations (walk, single, double) and the combination of hair-dryer heat and altitude made for an energy-draining environment. Bochy considered all of that. But mostly, he trusted his eyes.

"Oh, he had gone far enough, no question," Bochy said. "He was at that point. I think I know Bum pretty good. Three hits in a row, it was hot out there. It's different here at Coors Field, no question, especially when it comes to letting guys go."

Bumgarner, asked for his opinion, blended diplomacy with sincerity.

"Yeah, I can always understand the manager's point of view," he said. "I'm on his team. I'm not going against him. It doesn't mean that's what I wanted, though."

Moronta was understandably overthrowing as he entered the bases-loaded, no-out situation while facing perhaps the National League's most dangerous hitter. He pumped 98 mph and his five-pitch walk was not the worst result in the world, all things considered.

Then came a chopper from Trevor Story that barely got past Moronta's glove. The Giants still turned a double play out of the deal, but it didn't involve a throw to the plate as the tying run scored. Then the Rockies went ahead when shortstop Brandon Crawford fielded Ian Desmond's grounder and babied a throw that got away for an error.

"Just didn't throw it 100 percent," Crawford said. "A one-hopper. I had time. I probably gave it an 80 percent throw and in Colorado, that stuff happens. It'll cut on you."

The Rockies tacked on from there with some more seeing-eye contact, and Bochy lamented some of the misfortune. Then again, Slater's catches more than offset those bad breaks in the late innings. The Giants simply need to score more, especially when it's 92 degrees with 11 percent humidity at 4,000 feet.

“Bottom line, bats were quiet,” Bochy said. “You score a couple runs here, you’ll probably have a hard time winning.”

Jeff Samardzija threw six innings and 90 pitches for Sacramento on Monday in what should be a final minor league rehab start before returning to the Giants rotation over the weekend against the St. Louis Cardinals.

Samardzija gave up two runs, both on solo shots. He allowed five hits, struck out three and walked one.

Also, Johnny Cueto’s side session went well. The Giants will announce the next step for him on Tuesday.

The Athletic

What chips can the A’s and Giants offer if they are buyers at the trade deadline?

Melissa Lockard

The beginning of July marks the countdown to the non-waiver trade deadline, always a defining moment in any MLB season. How the A’s and Giants play over the next three weeks will determine whether the Bay Area teams are buyers or sellers, but at the moment both teams can make solid arguments for pushing for a playoff spot.

How well positioned are the A’s and Giants to make a move at the deadline? Let’s take a look at what both teams might be willing to offer in a trade.

(Note: players who were just selected in the MLB Draft are not eligible to be traded until after the World Series.)

A’s

The A’s are in the beginning of a rebuilding phase but may be arriving ahead of schedule. Although they are playing as well as any team in baseball right now, the A’s don’t have a clear path to the playoffs with the Astros running away with the division and the Red Sox and Mariners posting better than .600 winning percentages ahead of the A’s in the wild-card race.

Still, the A’s have made up bigger deficits before and a few more good weeks in July could push the front office into buy-mode. Thanks to a deep farm system, if the A’s want to make a move, they should have the horses to pull it off.

Billy Beane and David Forst proved that no prospect can ever be considered untouchable when they traded Addison Russell in July 2014 (in the Jeff Samardzija deal), but that deal was made as a perceived window of competitiveness for the A's was closing rather than just opening — as it appears to be now.

While perhaps no prospect is untouchable, it would be shocking if the A's moved left-hander Jesus Luzardo or catcher Sean Murphy. The A's system is thin on starting pitching to begin with, and given that fellow top pitching prospects A.J. Puk, Daulton Jefferies and James Kaprielian are all recovering from Tommy John surgeries, Luzardo is the A's top healthy pitching prospect. His development track has him on the radar to join the A's rotation as soon as next season. With the A's starting rotation far from settled for even next season, dealing Luzardo wouldn't make a lot of sense.

The same can be said about Murphy, who has developed into one of the top two-way catching prospects in baseball. Already considered one of the top defensive backstops in minor league baseball heading into this season, Murphy's bat has caught up with his glove at Double-A Midland. In 61 games through Sunday, Murphy is batting .298/.352/.521 with eight home runs. He recently won the Texas League's Home Run Derby during the All-Star break.

Beyond Luzardo and Murphy, the A's are likely to at least listen on the rest of their farm system. They won't make trades lightly, but Beane and Forst have not been shy about moving top-20 prospects in deals to make the big league team better.

If the A's are looking to deal from an area of strength, position players in the middle of the diamond would be in play. The A's have several high-upside minor league middle infielders and center fielders who should draw interest from other clubs, including resurgent former first-round pick Richie Martin, elite runners Jorge Mateo and Kevin Merrell, defensive wiz Nick Allen, and Low-A speed-power prospects Lazaro Armenteros and Austin Beck. All of the aforementioned prospects have a high enough ceiling that they could net a significant big leaguer (especially in a rental situation) in return.

Catcher Jonah Heim has impressed behind the plate and in the batter's box with High-A Stockton this season and could be a consolation prize for a team that tried targeting Murphy in a deal. Short-season middle infielders Marcos Brito, Yerdel Vargas and Alexander Campos are dynamic talents that scouts are high on, as well.

Third baseman Sheldon Neuse is another prospect who could draw interest. He is in the middle of a down season with Triple-A Nashville, but the versatile infielder had a solid June and was one of the top breakout prospects in all of baseball last season.

Right fielder Greg Deichmann has lost much of his season to a wrist injury, but scouts were high on the A's third pick from the 2017 draft before the injury and he's back on the field, rehabbing with the AZL A's.

Aside from Luzardo, the A's don't have as much to offer teams on the mound, unless another team wants to take a risk on one of the A's injured arms. Right-handers Logan Shore, Norge Ruiz, Parker Dunshee and Brian Howard don't light up the radar gun, but all four know how to pitch and could pique the interest of teams looking for potential backend rotation help in a year or two.

Low-A Beloit starter Wyatt Marks will intrigue analytically-driven teams thanks to his spin rate and high strikeout numbers. The A's also have a several intriguing high-ceiling but raw arms in the lower levels — including Abdiel Mendoza, Angello Infante and Wandisson Charles.

Teams looking for relief prospects may call the A's about Triple-A right-hander Bobby Wahl. Wahl was considered the A's closer of the future as recently as last May, but when he had surgery to correct thoracic outlet syndrome, the A's removed him from the 40-man roster and he went unclaimed in the waivers process. All Wahl has done since then is post an All-Star season with the Sounds, putting up a 2.73 ERA and a 13.91 K/9 and hitting the upper-90s with his fastball.

Recently promoted right-hander Miguel Romero may also draw interest for teams looking for upper-level relief prospects. Romero went through an adjustment period last season in his first year pitching in the U.S., but the native of Cuba has used his fastball-slider-changeup repertoire much more effectively this season, throwing quality strikes to the corners rather than grooving everything down Broadway. He had a 1.84 ERA and a 33:5 K:BB while converting 13 saves for the Ports. He's struggled a bit since moving up to Midland just before the All-Star break, but scouts that saw Romero hit 96 with a plus changeup and swing-and-miss slider with the Ports will have positive reports on him.

Giants

The Giants are in a different position than the A's, in that they were built to win this year and are trying to keep open a window of competitiveness that looked on the verge of closing at the end of last season. It's been an up-and-down season for the Giants, but after an excellent June they sit in solid position to make a run for the postseason as the calendar moves to July.

Unlike the A's, the Giants don't have a particularly deep farm system. Their 2018 draft class has infused the system with some exciting talent, but, as I mentioned earlier, none of those players are eligible to be traded this season. The Giants are also working with unique payroll constraints. They need to keep their payroll below the competitive balance tax penalty level, which may limit the pool of players they can target in trades. It also means they are likely to overpay in terms of prospects to teams that are willing to pay a big portion of the contract in exchange for more talent in return.

If the Giants are in true win-now mode, no player in their system will be off-limits, but it would

be surprising to see the Giants take calls on dynamic Low-A outfielder Heliot Ramos. Ramos is having an up-and-down year with Augusta and has dropped on some of the national prospect rankings, but he is still very highly regarded and is only 18. It's easy to envision a future Giants lineup built around 2018 top pick Joey Bart and Ramos, so it would have to be a very special trade for the Giants to deal Ramos.

Outside of Ramos, the Giants are likely to take calls on anyone in the system, including several players who have spent most of the season with Triple-A Sacramento. Although the Giants project outfielders Steven Duggar and Chris Shaw to fill roles in the big leagues in the near future, they could be persuaded to move those players, especially in a deal that brought back a big league outfielder under team control past this season. Austin Slater and Mac Williamson could also be in play, much like Adam Duvall was a few years ago. Former first-round pick Tyler Beede has struggled badly this season, but he still has quality stuff and a team with confidence in their pitching development program could have an interest in reviving his career.

Right-hander Shaun Anderson was the centerpiece in the Giants' return for Eduardo Núñez from the Red Sox last season. Anderson has only improved his stock as a prospect over the past year, pitching well at an advanced level with Double-A Richmond. All things being equal, the Giants would rather keep Anderson and possibly slot him into their rotation next season, but he's arguably their top trade chip on the mound.

There are a few prospects on the High-A San Jose roster who could generate calls from other teams. Second baseman Jalen Miller is having the biggest breakout season in the Giants system and he will draw interest for his quick bat and athleticism. Five-tool prospect Sandro Fabian has struggled as a 20-year-old in the California League, but he has flashed his talent on several occasions this season and a team with a long-term outlook is still likely to be high on his potential. Outfielder Heath Quinn missed time with a hamstring injury, but he has hit for power and average when healthy.

Right-handers Melvin Adon, Jason Bahr and Logan Webb are on the scouting radar for several teams. Adon can hit triple digits with his fastball, although he is still raw, and recently promoted Bahr has a deep pitch mix, deceptive delivery and arm strength. Webb has pitched very well this season on an innings limit in his first full season after Tommy John surgery.

In Augusta, crafty left-hander John Gavin is the kind of player who often slots as a solid secondary piece in a multi-player prospect package. Teams may also have an interest in 2017 second-round pick Jacob Gonzalez, 2017 third-round pick Garrett Cave and athletic outfielder Malique Ziegler.

ESPN.com

**We traded Manny Machado to every team. Here's who he helps most
Bradford Doolittle**

If the competitive landscape of the NBA determined the tilt of the North American continent, you might have noticed a bit more of a westward lean Monday morning. If you haven't heard, LeBron James announced his departure for Los Angeles, where he will try to resurrect the Lakers' on-hiatus dynasty. Just like that, with a news release, the hierarchy of an entire league was upended. There simply is no baseball equivalent. If Mike Trout were suddenly released from his Los Angeles Angels contract and decided he wanted to play for the Baltimore Orioles, the O's would be better and the Angels would be worse. But the effect would be fractional compared to James' move. It's the nature of the sport.

Keep that in mind as we set out to overanalyze the coming MLB trade season. With the non-waiver trade deadline looming at the end of this month, there could be some big names on the move. The biggest prize is Baltimore shortstop Manny Machado, who can become a free agent after the season. With the Orioles on pace to win 47 games (no, really), it seems a cinch that Machado will be playing for another team a month from now. A trade could come down any day.

Machado is an elite player who is putting up a level of production right on target with his preseason forecast. Nevertheless, the team that ends up with him won't be ensuring itself of anything. Whereas at this time yesterday, the Lakers seemed like a fringe playoff candidate in the NBA, and today they are considered a surefire postseason entrant and possibly one more big splash from title contention.

That said, Machado makes more sense for some teams than others. In an effort to put some numbers to this, I decided to inject his trade candidacy into this month's Stock Watch. In addition to the usual metrics, each team is listed with its "Machado Bump." That is: How much would the acquisition of the Orioles' star infielder boost each team's win forecast? How would it impact their chances to win it all?

To calculate this, I "traded" Machado to every team in the majors, one at a time. For each club, I integrated him into its depth chart, moving around other pieces as needed. The assumption in terms of trade return was that Baltimore would be taking back minor league prospects who don't impact the big league depth chart. This isn't perfectly realistic. For instance, a Cubs-Orioles trade involving Machado would likely also include Chicago's starting shortstop, Addison Russell. Why else would Baltimore do it?

Rather than guessing the exact trade package each team might surrender, it made for more consistency to simply introduce Machado onto each team's roster, and off that of Baltimore. After "trading" Machado to each team, I ran 10,000 simulations of the rest-of-the-season

schedule with the reconfigured rosters, giving me the revised figures for win forecast and title probability.

The Machado Bump is meaningful, if not earth-shattering. The uptick in win forecasts depends on the quality of players being uprooted, along with the remaining schedule each team faces. However, the championship forecast has a lot to do with how the possible postseason matchups stack up, which makes this exercise particularly interesting. In the American League, the Astros, Yankees and Red Sox are so tightly clustered that another elite acquisition could be a tipping point among them. The same could hold true for a whole clutch of National League teams. This plays out in the simulations.

As usual for Stock Watch for this time of the year, teams are grouped into three classes: Buyers, Holders and Sellers. Within each of these groups, the teams are ordered by the Manny Bump to its title chances, with ties broken by the bump in win forecast. And yes, every team gets a Manny Bump. There isn't a team in the majors that wouldn't be made better by his presence.

Buyers

New York Yankees

Current win forecast: 103.9 (Change from June: +1.3)

Current playoff probability: 95.6% (Up 5.6%)

Current championship probability: 16.8%

Manny Bump: 2.10% title probability | 3.4 wins (12th)

The Yankees might marshal their resources elsewhere, as the starting rotation looks like the key area for the Bombers to target this month.

The bump noted here speaks to how much could be at stake for Brian Cashman and his underlings. Those marginal wins need not come from Machado, of course. His impact in the simulations is mostly due to temperate rest-of-the-season projections for New York's young infielders -- Greg Bird, Gleyber Torres and Miguel Andujar. However, if those guys keep doing what they've done, Cashman can feel secure in going after an impact arm such as J.A. Happ, Michael Fulmer or Chris Archer.

Houston Astros

Current win forecast: 106.7 (Change from June: +5.1)

Current playoff probability: 97.4% (Up 7.5%)

Current championship probability: 27.0%

Manny Bump: 1.90% title probability | 2.3 wins (28th)

As with the Yankees, and many of these teams, the marginal win upgrade Machado provides to the Astros might be more likely found elsewhere. In Houston's case, it would be the back of the bullpen. However, it's interesting to scramble the stacked Houston depth chart to accommodate Machado. In the end, I ended up moving Alex Bregman to left field, leaving Machado to play alongside Carlos Correa and Jose Altuve in the infield. Not a bad group.

Realistically, the Astros will be targeting relievers such as Zach Britton, Brad Hand and Raisel Iglesias.

Chicago Cubs

Current win forecast: 91.2 (Change from June: -4.2)

Current playoff probability: 71.7% (Down 7.9%)

Current championship probability: 12.9%

Manny Bump: 1.10% title probability | 1.9 wins (29th)

The Machado-to-the-Cubs rumor has been a persistent one all season, with an element of that being his longtime friendship with Chicago center fielder Albert Almora Jr. For these simulations, I didn't "trade" Russell to Baltimore, but I did minimize his presence on the Cubs' depth chart, so this is a decent stab at what a Machado acquisition might look like. With Chicago rich in positional talent, the win upgrade is marginal, but the effect on Chicago's postseason fortunes is worth considering.

Atlanta Braves

Current win forecast: 89.1 (Change from June: +1.0)

Current playoff probability: 62.0% (Up 11%)

Current championship probability: 1.9%

Manny Bump: 0.84% title probability | 4.6 wins (second)

My assumption in these scenarios is that the team landing Machado would be at leisure to use him at shortstop or third base as needed, which might not be how Machado assesses the situation. But turning the hot corner over to him in Atlanta and moving Johan Camargo into a utility role had a startling effect on the Braves' win forecast. Still, another third-base option such as Mike Moustakas or Adrian Beltre might make more sense for Atlanta.

Arizona Diamondbacks

Current win forecast: 89.5 (Change from June: +7.2)

Current playoff probability: 65.8% (Up 35.5%)

Current championship probability: 2.8%

Manny Bump: 0.70% title probability | 3.3 wins (13th)

The Diamondbacks seem to have a whopping need in the middle of the infield, one that Machado would more than fill. He does boost Arizona's forecast, though frankly I expected more. However, it seems that even the considerable upgrade he provides wouldn't be enough to close the gap in baseline talent between Arizona and the other top postseason clubs.

Cleveland Indians

Current win forecast: 93.0 (Change from June: +2.6)

Current playoff probability: 92.4% (Up 13.9%)

Current championship probability: 5.9%

Manny Bump: 0.64% title probability | 2.4 wins (27th)

Cleveland needs relief pitching in the worst way, but Machado makes a lot of sense for it in a vacuum. The Indians have ranked in the bottom 10 by bWAR at second base and all three outfield spots. The second-base issue is the most pertinent here, as Machado would bump Jose

Ramirez over to the keystone, giving the Indians an Astros level of star power in the infield. Yet, Machado can plug only one hole, and even with him, Cleveland doesn't stack up with Houston, Boston or New York.

Milwaukee Brewers

Current win forecast: 92.3 (Change from June: +1.3)

Current playoff probability: 76.3% (Up 11.9%)

Current championship probability: 3.0%

Manny Bump: 0.34% title probability | 3.4 wins (10th)

The Brewers' title odds don't dovetail perfectly with their win forecast because of a lingering mediocre rating of their true talent level. So while their chances to play into October are looking good, the system still sees them as underdogs if confronted by the Cubs, Nationals or Dodgers.

Machado, who could play shortstop in Milwaukee, narrows that gap. However, another addition, perhaps to the rotation, would likely be necessary to bolster the on-paper outlook. Other deadline candidates Milwaukee could look at include Jed Lowrie, Whit Merrifield and former Brewer Scooter Gennett, but none of those athletes plays short.

Seattle Mariners

Current win forecast: 92.6 (Change from June: +3.0)

Current playoff probability: 64.5% (Up 13.5%)

Current championship probability: 2.0%

Manny Bump: 0.18% title probability | 2.5 wins (24th)

Accommodating Machado wouldn't be simple for Seattle, though obviously the Mariners would make it work. It would get especially complicated when Robinson Cano returns. However, Machado would help compensate for Cano's absence in the playoffs, when Cano will be ineligible because of his PED suspension.

The Mariners are intriguing because they clearly have a talent deficit in relation to the AL's beasts, but they are a deep, well-balanced team with no glaring holes. They need a creative general manager to upgrade the roster in a non-disruptive manner. Fortunately, in Jerry DiPoto, that's exactly what Seattle has.

Boston Red Sox

Current win forecast: 102.5 (Change from June: +0.2)

Current playoff probability: 94.3% (Up 4%)

Current championship probability: 11.4%

Manny Bump: 0.10% title probability | 2.4 wins (26th)

Imagine Machado hitting angry homers for the Red Sox instead of against them. On one hand, the Red Sox's forecast going forward is to be better at all the infield spots, where they've fallen short thus far despite the team's overall impressive start. However, the projection for a solid Dustin Pedroia going forward is tenuous at best. Still, the area I see ripe for an upgrade in Boston is behind the plate, with Miami's J.T. Realmuto being a fantastic fit. But Machado is good, too.

Holdings

Los Angeles Dodgers

Current win forecast: 87.7 (Change from June: +1.0)

Current playoff probability: 57.1% (Up 3.5%)

Current championship probability: 7.8%

Manny Bump: 1.50% title probability | 2.4 wins (25th)

Yep, the Dodgers' on-going slumber has finally dropped them into the Holdings class. When you look at the Cubs' metrics above, and what's here, a Machado-to-Chicago trade looks like a worst-case scenario for the Dodgers. Los Angeles could certainly use Machado just on the face of it, not only because of the value upgrade he provides, but because of his style.

The Dodgers have a lot of similar hitters up and down the roster -- effective in the big picture but overly passive during some stretches. Machado would be a jolt in the middle of all that. Beyond this possibility, L.A. must improve its bullpen depth over the next few weeks.

Philadelphia Phillies

Current win forecast: 86.2 (Change from June: +0.3)

Current playoff probability: 44.4% (Up 3.8%)

Current championship probability: 0.4%

Manny Bump: 0.44% title probability | 3.8 wins (fourth)

The Phillies get a huge win bump from Machado, though the title chances still are faltering from my system's forecast. There's some roster-wide regression -- crucial for the calculation on true talent level -- which contributes to that. However, Philadelphia has definitely underperformed on the left side of the infield. Most of the players there are young -- Maikel Franco, J.P. Crawford, Scott Kingery -- so you don't know when, or if, they might put it together. It really depends on just how much prospect inventory the Phillies are willing to move for a rental player they might be able to sign after the season anyway.

Washington Nationals

Current win forecast: 86.4 (Change from June: -4.5)

Current playoff probability: 48.9% (Down 17.2%)

Current championship probability: 4.5%

Manny Bump: 0.40% title probability | 3.8 wins (fifth)

The Nationals need a catching upgrade, which is why they've been connected to Realmuto since spring training. Getting Machado into the Washington lineup requires some shuffling, since the biggest need is at first base. In the end, I plugged Machado in at shortstop and turned Trea Turner into a super utility player who still got an everyday level of playing time.

Anyway, the Nationals don't figure to be in on Machado. What they really need is a consistent fifth starter and regression -- in the good way -- from Bryce Harper, Daniel Murphy and Ryan

Zimmerman.

St. Louis Cardinals

Current win forecast: 83.8 (Change from June: -3.1)

Current playoff probability: 33.3% (Down 12.5%)

Current championship probability: 1.3%

Manny Bump: 0.38% title probability | 2.6 wins (23rd)

In terms of bottom-line value, Machado doesn't upgrade the Cardinals as much as you might think. For one thing, he would spur some interesting lineup choices for Mike Matheny, even more than St. Louis is already dealing with.

However, you figure Machado could bump Jedd Gyorko to second, possibly sharing time there with Matt Carpenter while Machado and Paul DeJong hold down the left side of the infield. Then Carpenter could also split time at first with Jose Martinez while Kolten Wong serves as a glove of the bench. (Though, surely, acquiring Machado would mean others are moved out.) It's quite a shuffle, but, frankly, the Cardinals need a jolt. St. Louis is one of the more underachieving clubs in the majors.

San Francisco Giants

Current win forecast: 80.8 (Change from June: 0.9)

Current playoff probability: 19.1% (Down 2.5%)

Current championship probability: 0.2%

Manny Bump: 0.30% title probability | 4.9 wins (first)

The Giants' big bump in wins is intriguing, especially considering how close San Francisco has stayed in the NL West race. Obviously, trading for Machado would obliterate the Giants' plan to stay under the tax threshold, and anyway, it's doubtful they could put together a package to win the Machado sweepstakes. So, really, this is just an intellectual exercise that involved shifting Evan Longoria to the outfield. Maybe they should move Machado to the outfield; even

with Longoria on the disabled list, the San Francisco infield has been lights-out of late.

Los Angeles Angels

Current win forecast: 81.9 (Change from June: -5.0)

Current playoff probability: 10.7% (Down 26.7%)

Current championship probability: 0.7%

Manny Bump: 0.20% title probability | 3.4 wins (11th)

Take note of the Angels' current playoff probability. The threshold for dropping into the Sellers class is anything below 10 percent. The Angels are almost there. Going after Machado would be a desperation move, but with Zack Cozart done for the season and Shohei Ohtani's mound availability up in the air, maybe these are desperate times for the Angels.

Oakland Athletics

Current win forecast: 85.6 (Change from June: +3.3)

Current playoff probability: 21.5% (Up 2.4%)

Current championship probability: 0.1%

Manny Bump: 0.18% title probability | 2.7 wins (21st)

The A's moved into the No. 10 spot in my power rankings this week. Those ratings are what fuels the simulations. Oakland is a team to watch, especially because it has climbed into the fringe of the playoff race despite dealing with a number of injuries and even though, other than Lowrie, there haven't been any particular off-the-charts individual performances.

Machado might be beyond their sights, but I'd love to see Billy Beane add to this mix at the deadline. There is nothing in my metrics that separates Oakland from Seattle beyond the Mariners' superior start to the season.

Sellers

Minnesota Twins

Current win forecast: 76.9 (Change from June: -1.6)

Current playoff probability: 8.8% (Down 11%)

Current championship probability: 0.7%

Manny Bump: 0.20% title probability | 2.8 wins (19th)

From here on out, the Machado bump is listed for entertainment purposes only. Instead, we'll focus on the assets these Sellers have that might aid someone else's cause in the postseason.

The Twins are newcomers to the Sellers class, one they had not meant to be in. But with the gap between Minnesota and Cleveland growing larger, and the one between the Twins and the top of the wild-card standings even wider, it's getting close to pull-the-plug time.

Second baseman Brian Dozier is the top trade candidate, though his less-than-stellar first half doesn't help his trade value. On the other hand, this is a classic sell-high opportunity when it comes to Eduardo Escobar, a player forecast for 0.3 WAR who is on pace for 3.9. Also of interest is reliever Ryan Pressly.

Colorado Rockies

Current win forecast: 77.7 (Change from June: -0.4)

Current playoff probability: 9.6% (Down 6.1%)

Current championship probability: 0.2%

Manny Bump: 0.16% title probability | 2.7 wins (22nd)

The Rockies haven't likely thrown in the towel, but it's not looking good. The offense has been better of late, but the starting pitching that propped up Colorado early in the season has gone missing. Opening Day starter Jon Gray was recently shipped to the minor leagues. The turnaround is so shocking that I hadn't actually included any Colorado players in my ranking of deadline trade candidates.

The obvious candidates are the guys with expiring contracts. Second baseman DJ LeMahieu is a stalwart, but the Rockies have infielder Brendan Rodgers in Triple-A. Another player who could go is reliever Adam Ottavino.

Really, though, it seems more likely that the Rockies try to hold things together and then try to build up for next year in an effort to convince Nolan Arenado that this is the place he wants to be for the long haul.

Pittsburgh Pirates

Current win forecast: 76.8 (Change from June: -1.0)

Current playoff probability: 8.1% (Down 4%)

Current championship probability: 0.2%

Manny Bump: 0.12% title probability | 3.3 wins (14th)

In the end, the Pirates' stumble after a solid start to the season is probably for the best. The front office can now proceed with clarity. There are several players on the Pittsburgh roster who could bring back a nice return and have a tangible effect on the pennant races.

That group starts with catcher Francisco Cervelli, who is enjoying a career season. He's the best deadline candidate among catchers after Realmuto. Pittsburgh also could look to sell high on Corey Dickerson, whom they landed for a song before the season. There are others, including Starling Marte, Felipe Vazquez, Ivan Nova, Jordy Mercer, Sean Rodriguez.

If Neal Huntington wants to make a deadline splash, the opportunity is certainly there. The question is if the will is there to move more familiar names in the wake of a fan backlash that has extended into the season.

Toronto Blue Jays

Current win forecast: 78.9 (Change from June: 3.2)

Current playoff probability: 4.7% (Down 0.5%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.08% title probability | 3.5 wins (ninth)

What the Jays need is better luck with their collective health, particularly when it comes to free-agent-to-be third baseman Josh Donaldson. Donaldson was projected to be right up there with

Machado as an elite trade candidate, but he just can't seem to stay healthy. If Donaldson can get back and show some of his expected production, then Toronto can offer him as an alternative to a team looking at Machado that might be unwilling to meet Baltimore's asking price. (Whatever that might be.) Toronto also is the team to watch when it comes to starting pitchers, with Happ joined by Marco Estrada as alluring targets.

Tampa Bay Rays

Current win forecast: 81.4 (Change from June: 2.7)

Current playoff probability: 8.9% (Down 2%)

Current championship probability: 0.1%

Manny Bump: 0.06% title probability | 3.1 wins (17th)

The Rays have been one of baseball's hottest teams, with its unconventional pitching staff configuration leading to one of the best run prevention units around over the past few weeks. Well, along with Blake Snell. But you know the Rays also will be willing to swap marginal short-term losses for longer-term gains. Archer is a perennial name on the rumor mill, but Matt Duffy, Wilson Ramos, Adeiny Hechavarria, Carlos Gomez and Sergio Romo are all veterans who the Rays could dangle.

New York Mets

Current win forecast: 70.3 (Change from June: -7.2)

Current playoff probability: 1.5% (Down 9.7%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.02% title probability | 3.1 wins (16th)

If the Mets did decide to blow it up, no team could offer more impactful players -- health provided, of course. It probably won't happen, but the list of possibilities is dizzying. That starts with Jacob deGrom, whom the Mets will probably keep but who also might bring back a monster return. Also on the list of possibilities: Noah Syndergaard, Asdrubal Cabrera, Yoenis Cespedes, Zack Wheeler, Jeurys Familia, Todd Frazier and Jay Bruce.

Cincinnati Reds

Current win forecast: 72.3 (Change from June: +6.5)

Current playoff probability: 2.1% (Up 1.5%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.02% title probability | 2.8 wins (20th)

Suffice to say, this is a key time in the career of Reds general manager Dick Williams. On paper, it looked as if the Reds could take a step forward this season if some of Cincinnati's young pitchers turned the corner. Instead, the Reds started 3-18 and manager Bryan Price was fired.

However, Cincinnati has been pistol-hot over the past couple of weeks and is three games over .500 since that awful start. Williams plucked reclamation project Matt Harvey from the Mets and he has been solid, seemingly getting better with every start. That makes him a real asset as the deadline approaches.

Williams has other candidates, with closer Iglesias being a key barometer. He would fetch a solid return, but if Williams believes the Reds are close, does he move him? Other candidates to go include Gennett, Billy Hamilton, David Hernandez and Jared Hughes.

Kansas City Royals

Current win forecast: 54.9 (Change from June: -7.9)

Current playoff probability: 0.0% (Down 0.7%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.00% title probability | 4.2 wins (third)

Everybody must go. Third baseman Moustakas is the one to watch. His contract is more palatable than that of Machado or Donaldson, which the Royals could leverage to get a little better quality of prospect in return. Merrifield would be a solid get for any team with an infield hole, and Danny Duffy has turned it around after a rocky beginning.

San Diego Padres

Current win forecast: 67.4 (Change from June: -6.8)

Current playoff probability: 0.2% (Down 7.4%)

Current championship probability: 0.1%

Manny Bump: 0.00% title probability | 3.8 wins (sixth)

The Padres have been behaving like a team that would prefer to turn the corner sooner than later, so it's not a given that they go into full sell mode over the next month. If they do, teams looking for bullpen help -- that is, all contenders -- will be wearing out the phone of general manager A.J. Preller. The Padres could offer back reliever Hand, but also other quality performers such as Craig Stammen, Kirby Yates and even surprise rookie Adam Cimber.

Chicago White Sox

Current win forecast: 62.0 (Change from June: 1.9)

Current playoff probability: 0.1% (Down 0.3%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.00% title probability | 3.7 wins (seventh)

Jose Abreu is Chicago's most valuable remaining trade chip, though he's not a player the White Sox have to move or might even want to. As Freddie Freeman and Nick Markakis have shown in Atlanta, there is value to hanging onto quality veterans through a rebuild.

The most likely White Sox to go are probably veteran relievers Joakim Soria and Luis Avilan. Nate Jones might have joined them, but he is on the disabled list. In any event, if the White Sox hang onto Abreu, it's not going to be a splashy deadline on the South Side.

Miami Marlins

Current win forecast: 64.3 (Change from June: +6.8)

Current playoff probability: 0.0% (Up 0%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.00% title probability | 3.5 wins (eighth)

The Marlins are clearly a team to watch as a club early in a rebuilding stage. Realmuto is the big fish, so to speak, but he's also young enough that Miami might want to hang onto him. That, in turn, could serve to only drive up the club's asking price for Realmuto.

Elsewhere, veteran Starlin Castro would clearly make sense on a more established team. Miami would probably have to eat most of his contract to get much of a return. The Marlins also have interesting bullpen pieces to offer up in Kyle Barraclough, Adam Conley, Drew Steckenrider and gas-throwing righty Tayron Guerrero.

Texas Rangers

Current win forecast: 72.7 (Change from June: +4.9)

Current playoff probability: 0.8% (Up 0.1%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.00% title probability | 3.2 wins (15th)

The Rangers have some intriguing trade candidates, headlined by veterans Cole Hamels and Beltre. But Texas also could look to move bottom-of-the-rotation options such as Bartolo Colon and Jesse Chavez, and lefty reliever Jake Diekman would attract attention, as well. And watch out for reliever Keone Kela, who has been good since moving into Texas' closer role.

Detroit Tigers

Current win forecast: 66.1 (Change from June: -6.5)

Current playoff probability: 0.1% (Down 5.9%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Bump: 0.00% title probability | 3.0 wins (18th)

Leonys Martin has played his way into trade candidacy, though he just went on the disabled list. The Tigers also could shop Nicholas Castellanos and Jose Iglesias, along with perennial deadline trade candidate Francisco Liriano. The player to watch, though, is Fulmer, who would net Al Avila his biggest return. Still, Fulmer is early enough in his career that the Tigers might well prefer to let him anchor their future rotation.

Baltimore Orioles

Current win forecast: 55.1 (Change from June: -4.9)

Current playoff probability: 0.0% (Down 0%)

Current championship probability: 0.0%

Manny Hit: 0.00% title probability | -3.5 wins (30th)

To bring this all back full circle, I'll punctuate my introductory thoughts about LeBron James by pointing you to the Baltimore Orioles. They have Machado, one of the 10 or 15 best players in the game. Yet, here they are, on pace to lose 115 games. Not even Trout is a better example of a big fish languishing in a dried-up pond. After they've traded Machado, Britton, Adam Jones and others, the Orioles could actually get those 115 losses.