



Padres Press Clips

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Article	Source	Author	Pg.
Inbox: What's path for Paddock to Majors?	MLB.com	Cassavell	2
Giving back essential to Grant's holidays	MLB.com	Cassavell	5
Padres roster review: Eric Lauer	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	7
Padres roster review: Dinelson Lamet	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	9
Padres offseason: Fernando Tatis Jr. homer happy in the DR	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	11
Padres roster review: Ian Kinsler	SD Union Tribune	Sanders	13
Alex Dickerson among those invited to Padres spring training	SD Union Tribune	Acee	15
Ian Kinsler's decline against the fastball could add insult to injury for the Padres	The Athletic	Palmateer	16
Enberg remembered a year after his passing	Padres.com	Center	19
#PadresOnDeck: Young Infielders Almanzar, Barley, Lopez still Promising Prospects	FriarWire	Center	20
Fernando Tatis Jr. Off to Fast Start in Dominican Republic Playoffs	FriarWire	Center	22
Hunter Renfro, Franmil Reyes Create a Crowd for the Padres in Right Field	FriarWire	Center	24
#PadresOnDeck: RHPs Mason Thompson, Reggie Lawson, Lake Bachar Progress Steadily from 2016 Draft	FriarWire	Center	27

Inbox: What's path for Paddack to Majors?

Beat reporter AJ Cassavell fields offseason questions from fans

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

7:57 AM PST

SAN DIEGO -- It's the holiday season. That means one final Padres Inbox for 2018.

Some important questions linger as the New Year awaits, most of them revolving around the trajectories of some top prospects.

Is Chris Paddack on the same path to the bigs as Eric Lauer and Joey Lucchesi? -- Michael H., Albuquerque, N.M.

Yes. And no. Paddack, like Lauer and Lucchesi, is on the fast track to the Majors, and he'll probably arrive sooner than we all expect. There are openings in the rotation, and the 22-year-old right-hander has some of the best stuff in the entire system. He's ranked as the club's **No. 5 prospect** by MLB Pipeline.

But once he's there, I wouldn't expect Paddack to be treated the same way as Lauer and Lucchesi were last season. Paddack had Tommy John surgery in 2016 and is still building his innings count. He threw only 90 last season before he was shut down early.

When Paddack arrives, he's probably not going to work deep into September. I'd expect a cycle where he receives a few starts, then he's optioned back to Triple-A, so his workload can be limited. The Padres expect big things from Paddack, but there's no reason to push him too hard in 2019.

Which Padres outfielder has drawn the most interest from other clubs? Who is in the Majors first from among Paddack, Logan Allen and Cal Quantrill, and do any make the team out of spring? -- @MeeorxMox

Sneaky. A two-part question. First, let's stay on the topic of the rotation.

I'd be surprised if anyone beats left-hander Logan Allen to the big leagues. He's proven himself at every level of the Minors, and he's built up innings-wise. If anyone's on the April callup path of Lauer and Lucchesi, it's Allen. He's going to have every opportunity to make the rotation in camp, though he's probably currently on the outside looking in.

As for the outfield, I don't think there's a singular answer. Different teams are interested in different guys. **Hunter Renfroe**'s been sought-after. So has **Wil Myers**, but it seems like San Diego values him a bit more than some other clubs right now. But for all the talk of the Padres' desire to trade from their corner-outfield depth, it's worth noting that teams have called to discuss **Manuel Margot** as well.

Margot is 24 and has a high ceiling as a center fielder with elite speed and defense. It's going to take a lot to pry him from San Diego. But his upside could make him a nice piece to include in a trade for a top-tier starter like, say, **Noah Syndergaard**.

How can you tell if Andy Green is good at what he does? I mean, really, how can we know?

-- John S., San Diego

I've wrestled with this question for the entirety of Green's tenure as skipper. I think he does a lot of good things, but I honestly can't give an overall assessment until we've seen him with a roster that's capable of making a push toward the playoffs. In three years, he hasn't had that yet -- and he probably won't in 2019 either.

For instance, I think Green does a very good job of managing his bullpen. His relievers, it seems, are never put in position to fail. (Their numbers reflect that.) But he's also managed three teams with 90-plus losses. How would his bullpen tactics hold up in a pennant race, where some of his pitchers would be prone to overuse? I can't answer that.

Right now, the benchmark for Green as a manager is progress. It felt like the Padres made progress in 2017 before taking a significant step back last season. In that regard, '19 feels like an incredibly important year -- for the organization as a whole and for Green. If he can direct the Padres toward .500, while helping a handful of prospects acclimate to the big leagues, the club could be poised for a run at contention in 2020. Then, we'd finally get a feel for how Green's game strategy and clubhouse management would play in a pennant-race environment.

Who's the Opening Day shortstop?

-- William L., Katy, Texas

Could Ty France be the Opening Day third baseman?

-- Josh, Escondido

Two questions in one: Who's starting on the left side of the infield? A few Inboxes ago, I gave **Opening Day shortstop odds**, but those have changed. With the addition of **Ian Kinsler**, there's a better than 50 percent chance that **Luis Urias** slides to short to start the season, with Kinsler at second.

That's not written in stone. The Padres are still looking for another infielder. If they add a shortstop, Urias could stay at second with Kinsler sliding to third base. Kinsler is going to get reps at third in Spring Training, no matter what.

As for France, he seems like the fallback option at third if the club can't find another infielder. (And if Myers is moved back to the outfield full time or traded). In that case, it might be safe to expect a platoon between the righty-hitting France and one of the club's lefty-hitting infield options. **Greg Garcia**, for example, has been dreadful against lefties but owns some solid career splits against right-handers. Envision this for an April infield plan, while the club awaits the arrival of top prospect **Fernando Tatis Jr.**:

Vs. RHP: Urias 2B; Garcia SS, Kinsler (or LHH **Jason Vosler** or LHH **Esteban Quiroz**) 3B

Vs. LHP: Kinsler 2B, Urias SS, France 3B

This, of course, is only a short-term solution to bridge the gap to Tatis, and it might be the best way to ease the burden on Urias, giving him time at both second and short.

Anyway, back to the original question: France as the Opening Day third baseman? Well, France posted an .861 OPS against lefties last season, and the Padres are expected to face **Madison Bumgarner** on March 28 at Petco Park. So don't rule it out.

Giving back essential to Grant's holidays

Padres broadcaster grateful to take part in 'Shop with a Jock'

By AJ Cassavell MLB.com @AJCassavell

Dec. 21st, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- Beloved Padres broadcaster and former pitcher Mark Grant recently spent time at the Junior Seau Foundation's Shop with a Jock event, where players and former players shopped for Christmas gifts alongside underprivileged children from the San Diego Boys & Girls Club.

It's one of more than a dozen events the Padres take part in, as part of their annual holiday giving tour. After the event, Grant took some time to speak with MLB.com about the team's efforts in the community, his own holiday plans and his wish list for the Padres in 2019.

MLB.com: This team has always been very active in the community, especially in November and December around the holidays. What's so special about the relationship between this organization and the community?

Grant: It's something that I always felt I needed to do, and I think athletes in the community should feel the need to do -- to give back. Everywhere I've played, people look up to you and see what you do. During the offseason, there's time, and that's your time to go out and give back to the community. Playing here, I got involved. When I stopped playing, I stayed involved. It's part of our duty as someone in the public eye. And with the Padres, it's something they've done so well for so many years. The gratification that I get out of it is seeing the response of the people who are involved that are receiving from the Padres. Whether it's an appearance from a player or giving out gifts at a school, the joy that you see in these kids from all around the county, it's incredible.

MLB.com: Can you describe the Shop with a Jock event and what that meant to you?

Grant: It's such a cool event, where we go shopping with these kids. What it meant to me was seeing the elation and the kids' faces, being able to go shopping with them. And they weren't just shopping for themselves, but shopping for their families. You just see how much fun it is for them to get out and spread the holiday cheer for them and their families. Being around the kids, hearing how excited they get before they go shopping and get to see these athletes, but you also see how much fun these athletes have doing it. You leave with a sense of gratification that, even though it was only an hour or two, you probably made a difference in this kid's life.

MLB.com: Switching gears a little bit, what are your holiday plans for this year? How does Mark Grant spend the holidays?

Grant: Usually we go to Lake Tahoe for a little bit. We have a cabin up in Lake Tahoe, and we've been doing that for, man, the last 30 years. But this year we're going to stay home here in Alpine. Sometimes traveling can be stressful. We'll stay here in San Diego and enjoy it. It'll be our family -- me, my wife, my three kids. And we'll just kind of lay low.

MLB.com: What are some Christmas or holiday traditions that you have every year?

Grant: Sitting around the house, eating, kicking my feet up and having no plans at all other than spending time with my family. Other than that, there's nothing really special. I don't get dressed up as Santa or anything like that. But I still do believe in Santa. And anyone who doesn't -- they've got a problem.

MLB.com: Any favorite memories of Christmastime as a kid?

Grant: Just the anticipation probably, like any other kid. Going to bed on Christmas Eve and waking up before anybody else. Then getting the permission to go to the presents under the tree and just rip those things open. For me, personally, it was about my mom and dad always being there, not just for Christmas but everything they did for us as a kid. My mom and dad didn't have a lot of money growing up, but we were always happy, always satisfied and always had a good time. Just waking up and knowing my mom and dad were going to be there, that they cared and they loved us. It sounds so simple but it went such a long way, that's for sure.

MLB.com: Last thing: What's on your Padres Christmas wish list?

Max Scherzer, Mike Trout ... You see where I'm going. No, I'm being facetious. But, hey, how about a World Series championship? That'd be a nice Christmas present.

Padres roster review: Eric Lauer

Jeff Sanders

Sizing up the *Padres'* 40-man roster, from A to Z, heading into the 2019 season:

ERIC LAUER

- **Position(s):** Left-handed starting pitcher
- **2019 Opening Day age:** 23
- **Bats/throws:** R / L
- **Height/weight:** 6-foot-3 / 203 pounds
- **Acquired:** First round (25th overall) in 2016 (Kent State University)
- **Contract status:** Made [MLB](#) debut in 2018 (league minimum was \$545,000); will not be arbitration-eligible until 2021 at the earliest.
- **Key stats:** 6-7, 4.34 ERA, 100 strikeouts, 46 walks, 1.55 WHIP, .285 opponent average (23 starts, 112 innings)

STAT TO NOTE

- **1.07** – Lauer's ERA in his final 25 1/3 innings after month-long stay on the disabled list. The stretch included five no-hit innings in his return to action, 25 strikeouts against nine walks and a 0.987 WHIP. The Padres won five of the six starts.

TRENDING

- **Up** – No pitcher in the majors picked off more runners than Lauer, who paired his smarts, awareness and years of honing the craft in recording 10 extra outs for himself. Those weren't the only highlights of one of many MLB debuts this year. The second pitcher from the 2016 draft class to force his way to the majors (minor league roommate and teammate **Joey Lucchesi** was the first), Lauer made three starts at Triple-A El Paso to start the year (3.00 ERA) before he was pressed into action in San Diego. After a forgettable debut in Colorado (3 IP, 6 ER) and a so-so effort in San Francisco (5 IP, 3 ER), Lauer blanked the Dodgers over six innings in Mexico City for his first big league win in early May and the first of three wins over his new rivals. The best was a July gem at Petco Park in which he came within an out of a complete game shutout. **Max Muncy's** two-out, solo homer in the ninth spoiled the milestone. After a month-long stay on the DL (forearm strain), Lauer returned with a vengeance to team up with Lucchesi to become the first Padres rookie pitchers to both reach 100 strikeouts since **Bob Shirley** and **Bob Owchinko** in 1977.

2019 OUTLOOK

- As impressive as Lauer was on his best days, he averaged just under five innings and a little more than pitches per start, numbers he'll need to improve upon immediately if the Padres are going to lean on him in 2019. Of course, that's not a given even with **Clayton Richard's** departure signaling the continuation of a youth movement in 2019. Lucchesi and Lauer enter camp with a leg up in a free-for-all for the rotation, a competition that could very well include at least one more veteran before the end of the offseason. On the other end of the spectrum, the Padres' farm system is teeming with arms with considerable more upside than Lauer (think **MacKenzie Gore**, **Chris Paddack** and **Adrian Morejon**). To ward off suitors for his spot, Lauer will need more pitch efficiency and more effectiveness with his repertoire as hitters slugged .917 against the change-up, .487 against the cutter and .456 against his four-seam fastball.

PADRES POWER RANKINGS

(Currently 40 players on the 40-man roster)

1. [Eric Hosmer](#)
2. [Austin Hedges](#)
3. [Franchy Cordero](#)
4. [Ian Kinsler](#)
5. [Eric Lauer](#)
6. [Dinelson Lamet](#)
7. [Jose Castillo](#)
8. [Anderson Espinoza](#)
9. [Travis Jankowski](#)
10. [Robbie Erlin](#)
11. [Miguel Diaz](#)
12. [Greg Garcia](#)
13. [Austin Allen](#)
14. [Pedro Avila](#)
15. [Brett Kennedy](#)
16. [Ty France](#)
17. [Javy Guerra](#)

Removed from the roster

- [Carlos Asuaje](#) (claimed by the [Rangers](#))

Padres roster review: Dinelson Lamet

Jeff Sanders

Sizing up the Padres' 40-man roster, from A to Z, heading into the 2019 season:

DINELSON LAMET

- **Position(s):** Right-handed starting pitcher
- **2019 Opening Day age:** 26
- **Bats/throws:** R / R
- **Height/weight:** 6-foot-4 / 187 pounds
- **Acquired:** Signed as an international free agent in June 2014
- **Contract status:** Earned \$555,700 in 2018; will not be arbitration-eligible until 2021 at the earliest.
- **Key stats:** Did not pitch in 2018

STAT TO NOTE

- **0** – Number of pitches thrown in 2018. Lamet missed the entire season after undergoing Tommy John surgery in April.

TRENDING

- **Down** – The Padres finished 2018 with the NL's worst rotation (5.09 ERA), a development that had at least *something* to do with Lamet's elbow barking before departing spring training. His star, after all, appeared to be pointing in the right direction after finishing 2017 with a 4.57 ERA, 139 strikeouts in 114 innings and the fourth-best strikeout rate for a rookie (10.94 per nine innings) of all-time. He was impressing in spring training, too, when he left his final Cactus League start with elbow pain. A second opinion revealed a tear significant enough to require surgery, wiping away all of 2018, a good chunk of 2019 and the steps Lamet was taking to develop another usable off-speed to pair with a high-90s fastball and wipeout slider. Opposing hitters had .137 batting average against his slider in 2017, .200 against his sinker, .263 against his four-seam fastball and .333 against his change-up. They slugged .236 against the slider, .400 against the sinker, .558 against the four-seamer and .611 against the change-up.

2019 OUTLOOK

- A late bloomer, Lamet ranked as high as No. 9 in the Padres system after 2016 season and was in line to be the ace of the 2018 staff. His injury opened the door for LHP **Joey Lucchesi** to make his MLB debut (and plenty others after that) and more pitching

prospects are on the way. Pre-surgery, Lamet's stuff stacks up with the best arms in the system. Who he is after his elbow construction will be a storyline as his rehab schedule approaches the all-star break, generally a target return date for any pitcher who had Tommy John surgery the previous season. Even then, it's a good bet that Lamet will be eased back into action as a reliever.

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Padres offseason: Fernando Tatis Jr. homer happy in the DR

Jeff Sanders

The calls for **Fernando Tatis Jr.** to open 2019 as the [Padres](#)' shortstop won't quiet any time soon.

Not at this rate.

The top prospect homered in back-to-back playoff games in the Dominican winter league over the weekend, including a mammoth solo shot off former Padres closer **Fernando Rodney** on Friday night in the 11th inning of Estrellas' 4-2 win over Escogido.

The blast was something to behold.

See for yourself from two different angles.

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

Tatis followed Friday's extra-inning blast with a three-run shot Saturday off Cesar Valdez in an 8-1 win over Licey, improving Estrallas to 2-1 in the round-robin playoffs.

Tatis is 3-for-12 with the two homers and a double in three playoff games. In his first action after a thumb injury ended his campaign at Double-A San Antonio, Tatis finished the regular winter season with a .263/.379/.488 batting line, three homers, eight RBI and seven steals.

ROUNDUP

Dominican winter league

- **C Francisco Mejia** (San Diego) is hitting .250 for Estrellas in the playoffs. He went 1-for-3 with a run scored and a walk in Saturday's win and finished the regular season with a .258/.271/.273 batting line, one double and eight RBIs in 19 games.

Australian winter league

- OF **Michael Gettys** (San Antonio) has one homer in his last 10 games with Adelaide and is one off the league lead with six this winter. Gettys is hitting .299/.386/.609 with 22 RBIs in 24 games in his bid to start 2019 at Triple-A El Paso.
- SS **Jarryd Dale** (AZL) is hitting .136/.200/.169 through 22 games with Melbourne.

Venezuelan winter league

- C **Luis Torrens** (Lake Elsinore) collected three hits Sunday, lifting his batting line to .320/.342/.387 through 23 games with Magallanes. Torrens has five doubles and 14 RBIs.

Puerto Rican winter league

- OF **Aldemar Burgos** (Fort Wayne) homered, doubled and drove in three runs on three hits Saturday for Carolina. He is hitting .280/.333/.439 with two homers and 11 RBIs in 24 games this winter.

Padres roster review: Ian Kinsler

Jeff Sanders

Sizing up the Padres' 40-man roster, from A to Z, heading into the 2019 season:

IAN KINSLER

- **Position(s):** Second baseman
- **2019 Opening Day age:** 36
- **Bats/throws:** R / R
- **Height/weight:** 6-foot / 200 pounds
- **Acquired:** Signed as a free agent in December 2018
- **Contract status:** Two-year deal will pay him \$3.75 million in 2019 and in 2020; Padres have a \$500,000 buyout against a \$3.5 million option for 2021.
- **Key stats:** .240 avg., .301 OBP, .380 SLG, 14 HRs, 48 RBIs, 66 runs, 16 steals, 40 walks, 64 strikeouts (128 games, 487 at-bats)

STAT TO NOTE

- **87** – Kinsler's wRC+ (weighted runs created plus), the lowest of his 13-year career in the majors. The metric attempts to quantify a player's total offensive value in runs. Kinsler, to date, has averaged 107 wRC+ per season, peaking at 133 in 2008 in his first all-star campaign. Over the last three seasons, Kinsler has dipped from 124 wRC+ in 2016 to 93 in 2017 to 87 last year.

TRENDING

- **Down** – A four-time All-Star, Kinsler was in the last year of a five-year, \$75 million extension when the [Angels](#) acquired him from the Tigers in December 2017 (Detroit originally got Kinsler from the Rangers in a swap for **Prince Fielder**). When the Angels' plan to build a contender around **Mike Trout** and **Shohei Ohtani** crumbled, Kinsler was flipped again to Boston, where he won his first World Series title. Statistically speaking, however, Kinsler's 2018 was a prime example of an aging player in decline. His OPS, once a good bet for at least .750 (he peaked at .892 in 2008), slipped from .831 in 2016 in Detroit to .725 in 2017 to a career-low .681 in 128 games split between the Angels and Red Sox. Kinsler has logged 10 or more homers in eight straight seasons, but managed just one in 37 games after joining the Red Sox, although that stint was interrupted early by a hamstring strain. Kinsler also hit just .206/229/.294 with 14 strikeouts against one walk in 11 postseason games and made a costly error in Game 3 of the World Series, which went on to become the longest game in Fall Classic history. Kinsler, of course, is generally considered a plus in the defense department. He won a

second [Gold Glove](#) in 2018 and has logged 118 defensive runs saved in his career, including a career-high 20 in 2014.

2019 OUTLOOK

- Kinsler has played all but one of his 1,756 games in the field at second base, but is expected to move between second and third base in San Diego, which is expected to phase both **Luis Urias** and **Fernando Tatis Jr.** into the middle of their infield over the next two years. Both prospects could be regulars as soon as this summer, setting the stage for Kinsler's transition into a part-time role as his career comes to a close. As a second baseman with 30-30 history, Kinsler could prove a fitting role model as Tatis and Urias begin their big league careers. In the meantime, Kinsler will provide a steady presence on the infield even if his bat continues to trend in the wrong direction.

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Alex Dickerson among those invited to Padres spring training

Kevin Acee

The [Padres](#) on Friday announced eight players who will join them in [spring training](#) as non-roster invitees.

The group includes first baseman [Allen Craig](#) and outfielder [Alex Dickerson](#), who were already with the organization. Craig spent last season in Triple-A, and Dickerson spent the season rehabbing following Tommy John surgery.

Also invited after being signed to minor league contracts are left-handed pitchers [Ryan Bollinger](#) and Dietrich Enn, right-hander Tyler Higgins, infielders Seth Mejias-Brean and Aderlin Rodriguez and outfielder Jacob Scavuzzo.

None of the six players new to the organization have played in the majors.

Later this month, the Padres will also extend invites to several of their top minor league prospects.

Pitchers and catchers report to spring training Feb. 13. The first full-squad workout is Feb. 18.

Ian Kinsler's decline against the fastball could add insult to injury for the Padres

By Dustin Palmateer Dec 21, 2018

The Padres and Ian Kinsler finalized a 2-year, \$8 million dollar deal on Thursday, which gives San Diego a defense-oriented second baseman with a long-standing track record of average-or-better overall production.

But sometime over the summer, the American League found a hole in Kinsler's repertoire: he could no longer hit the fastball.

Over the heart of his career, Kinsler had long been a good fastball hitter. In 2011, in one of his finest seasons, he ranked a career-best [20th in the league](#) (among 145 qualifiers) on a per-pitch basis against four-seamers, one spot behind the then-mighty Albert Pujols. From 2007 through 2016, Kinsler produced above-average numbers against heaters in seven out of 10 seasons. Since, like most hitters, he's fed four-seam fastballs more than any other pitch, his success versus the offering went a long way toward cementing his status as one of baseball's best all-around second basemen throughout his peak.

Then, in 2017, Kinsler stopped hitting the cheese.

Time Frame	wFB	All other pitches
2007-2016	4.4	6.4
2017-2018	-11.8	1.7

The numbers in the above table are [Pitch Type Linear Weights](#). On each pitch faced, the batter either notches a credit for doing something good (like hitting a home run or taking a ball) or a debit for doing something less than good (like swinging through a pitch or grounding out). Adding up all the credits and debits for a season leaves us with a decent estimation of how a hitter performed against specific pitch types.

In the 10-year stretch from 2007 through 2016, Kinsler was 4.4 runs better than average on fastballs per season. He was also above-average on all other pitches, which I've simply grouped into one bucket here. Look at what has happened over the last two seasons, though. While he's remained a tick above-average on soft stuff (and fastball variants, like sinkers), his performance against four-seamers has tanked. Since 2017, Kinsler's [accrued more negative value](#) on the pitch than any other hitter, with Pujols — coincidentally enough — just behind him.

The league didn't seem to notice at first. After his worst year against the fastball in 2017, Kinsler saw the heater at just a 34.5 percent clip during his stint with the Angels to start 2018. Over a full season, that would have marked a career-low in fastballs seen. For context, the average hitter gets a four-seam fastball around 37 percent of the time, which is the same rate at which Kinsler has been thrown them throughout his career.

Opposing pitchers finally caught wind that Kinsler's kryptonite was the four-seamer when he was dealt to Boston, although Jay Jaffe picked up the trend in an [article at FanGraphs](#) back in June. After getting traded to the Red Sox at the deadline, Kinsler received 143 plate appearances in the regular season, and pitchers treated him like a different animal.

Team	Four-seam FB%	Other FB%	Breaking Ball%	Changeup%
Angels	34.5	29.8	25.7	9.6
Red Sox	46.7	19.9	26.8	6.4

While hurlers mostly traded sinkers and cutters for straight heaters when squaring off against Kinsler, the emphasis was clear: pepper the 36-year-old with hard stuff. Not only did Kinsler face more four-seamers than ever before, but he also faced speedier ones. The average fastball dealt to Kinsler registered at 94.2 mph during his brief regular-season run in Boston, 0.8 mph faster than what he faced in 2017 and a whopping 1.7 mph harder than the fastballs he was thrown way back in 2011.

In turn, Kinsler scuffled. After posting a slash line close to the league average with the Angels, he hit just .242/.296/.311 down the stretch with the Red Sox. Further, his strikeout rate jumped from 10.2 percent to 16.8 percent, and his ISO fell nearly 100 points to a punchless .068.

Undeterred, the Red Sox made Kinsler an important part of their postseason roster, with their new second baseman starting eight of Boston's 14 playoff games. The trends continued, though, both in the way pitchers attacked Kinsler and in his subsequent performance.

PAs	Four-seam FB%	Four-seam FB mph	BB%	K%	OPS
35	45.5	94.1	8.6	40	.523

In the Red Sox first postseason game, the Yankees' J.A. Happ and Chad Green started Kinsler out with 10 straight fastballs over his first two at-bats. In the first AB, against Happ, Kinsler fouled off a 2-1 fastball:

and then swung through a 3-2 heater:

Later in the playoffs, against Astros' lefty Tony Sipp, Kinsler's vulnerability to the fastball was on display again. In the first pitch of the at-bat, Kinsler fouled off a 92.5 mph fastball on the outer edge. Here's the second pitch:

It's another four-seamer, at 92.7 mph, and Kinsler weakly fouls it down the right-field line. The back-to-back foul balls were harmless, in one sense, as the at-bat continued to a third pitch. In another, however, they put Kinsler in an 0-2 hole, and Sipp took advantage by getting him to chase a splitter in the dirt to end things. The 0-1 pitch, in particular, was served up right down Broadway. With the bat speed he once had, Kinsler might have lined it up one of the alleys for extra bases, avoiding the splitter altogether. Instead, it helped set up an eventual whiff.

Kinsler's situation is not particularly unique, of course. As he's aged into his mid-30s, the game's continued to become more and more reliant on velocity. Chase Utley, a second baseman with a similar career arc to Kinsler, has met a similar fate. An expert fastball hitter in his prime, the now-retired Utley posted his two worst seasons against four-seamers in 2017 and 2018. Like with Kinsler, pitchers took note and fired fastballs to Utley at a career-high 46.6 percent clip this past season.

To make matters worse, Kinsler's joining a team that *really* struggles against the fastball. In each of the past two seasons, the Padres have ranked last in baseball against the four-seam fastball; since 2016, they're [last in the league](#) in wFA by a whopping — almost *unthinkable* — 61 runs. Some of San Diego's worst fastball hitters — like Jose Pirela and Travis Jankowski — are unlikely to get many opportunities going forward, but Kinsler will join a group of below-average fastball hitters that still includes Manuel Margot and Austin Hedges.

In defense of the Kinsler signing, the Padres would likely point to the second baseman's positive attributes. Despite the offensive nosedive, Kinsler has remained an above-average defensive second baseman by any measure of glove work. Over the last three seasons, Kinsler's finished first in baseball in

UZR and second in DRS, just one run behind DJ LeMahieu. Plus, a full rebound from lingering hamstring issues could impact all factors of his game.

Installing Kinsler's plus glove at second base will allow the Padres to immediately fill the shortstop hole by moving Luis Urías there, which will give them plenty of time to evaluate Fernando Tatis Jr. at Triple-A El Paso. Further, like last year's big addition, Eric Hosmer, Kinsler boasts a recent World Series title and years of big-game experience, the kind of intangible factors that are tough to quantify.

On the other hand, hope for an offensive revival looks dim. While Kinsler has posted decent peripherals even in his down seasons, his susceptibility to baseball's most popular pitch — plus the fact that pitchers have focused on the weak point — could make it tough for him to recapture average or better production with the bat.

In a complementary role, he could work as a role player and defensive caddy. But if the Padres are forced to play Kinsler in a more regular role, they might not like the results.

Enberg remembered a year after his passing

By Bill Center San Diego Padres

Dec. 21st, 2018

The news surprised the world of sports.

It was a shocker.

A year ago Friday, Hall of Fame broadcaster Dick Enberg died of a heart attack at his La Jolla, Calif., home. Enberg retired after seven seasons as the television voice of the Padres at the end of the 2016 season. But the voice of countless major sports events was far from silenced. Enberg had launched yet another chapter in his storied career as the host/producer of podcasts featuring the legends of sport.

Enberg not only knew who they were, he had covered most of them during a six-decade career that featured his voice and expertise covering major events in Major League Baseball, the National Football League, NCAA basketball and football, tennis, golf and boxing.

In addition to his sports broadcasting, Enberg was an award-winning author. He also hosted television game shows and appeared in movies, often representing himself.

Born in Mount Clemens, Mich., on Jan. 9, 1935, Enberg graduated from Central Michigan University in 1957 and moved to California four years later to become the assistant baseball coach and an instructor at what was then San Fernando Valley State College. He launched his broadcast career in the 1960s as a sports anchor at KTLA -- from where he began broadcasting UCLA basketball and California Angels baseball games.

Enberg's voice and class lines such as "Oh my" went national in the 1970s with NBC covering Major League Baseball, the NFL and the Rose Bowl and Wimbledon and the U.S. Open in tennis. He later served at CBS and ESPN before joining the Padres before the 2010 season. Enberg was honored by the National Baseball Hall of Fame as the winner of the Ford C. Frick Award in '15. Enberg is also a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the Basketball Hall of Fame.

He won 12 Emmy Awards as well, including a Lifetime Achievement Emmy. When Enberg was named the Padres' television play-by-play announcer in December of 2009, he said: "Baseball has been in my DNA from the time I was in diapers."

#PadresOnDeck: Young Infielders Almanzar, Barley, Lopez still Promising Prospects

FriarWire

Dec 26

By Bill Center

As we were discussing last week, the progress of prospects is not always linear.

Young players go through valleys en route to peaks. That is particularly true of teenaged prospects who are new to the United States as well as professional baseball.

Three young Padres' middle infield prospects fall into this category.

Luis Almanzar, Jordy Barley and **Justin Lopez** were all members of the Padres' heralded 2016 international signing class. All three struggled as professional sophomores in 2018 after stronger 2017 showings. But all three will still be teenagers when the 2019 season opens.

A look at the three high-ceiling prospects in order of age.

— Luis Almanzar is the old man of the group. The Dominican Republic native turned 19 this past Nov. 1.

Almanzar was ranked the No. 2 international prospect available in 2016 by Baseball America. And the 5-foot-10, 186-pound shortstop made an immediate impact when he debuted in 2017 with Short-Season Single-A Tri City in the Northwest League.

In 67 games with the Dust Devils in the summer of 2017, then 17-year-old Almanzar ranked among the offensive leaders with the Dust Devils. He hit .230 with 25 walks for a .299 on-base percentage. He also had 10 doubles, a triple, two homers and 10 stolen bases. Plus, Almanzar was nearly four years younger than the average age in the Northwest League. He capped his first professional season by playing in the Padres Futures Game at Petco Park.

Almanzar opened his second professional season with Single-A Fort Wayne while being nearly 3 1/2 years younger than the average age for a player in the Midwest League. And he struggled.

Almanzar hit .176 in 63 games with the TinCaps with a .257 on-base percentage and a .249 slugging percentage for a .506 OPS. He had 10 doubles and two homers for 16 RBIs and 27 runs scored before being sent to the Arizona Rookie League, where he hit .211 with a .270 on-base percentage in 15 games.

Shortly after signing with the Padres on July 2, 2016, Almanzar was ranked among the [Padres' Top-30 prospects](#).

— Jordy Barley turned 19 this past Dec. 3. Like Almanzar, Barley is a native of the Dominican Republic. The 6-foot, 175-pound, right-handed hitter is also a shortstop who signed on July 2, 2016.

While Almanzar was debuting at Tri-City as a 17-year-old in 2017, Barley was making his professional start at the same age in the Arizona Rookie League. He played 49 games with the Padres-2, batting .242 with a .292 on-base percentage, a .434 slugging percentage and a .726 OPS. He also had 11 doubles, six triples, four homers, seven steals 28 RBIs and 34 runs scored while being almost three years younger than the average player in the league.

Barley returned to Arizona in 2018 and his numbers slipped. In 54 games, he had a .200 batting average (39-for-195) with a .271 on-base percentage and a .328 slugging percentage for a .599 OPS. He had nine doubles, two triples and four homers with 20 RBIs and 30 runs scored.

— Justin Lopez, meanwhile, opened the 2018 season as the youngest player in the Midwest League as an 18-year-old. On Opening Day, he was nearly four years younger than the average player in the Single-A League.

Like Almanzar and Barley, Lopez struggled as one of the youngest players in his new league as well as on his team. In 68 games before his season ended early due to injury, Lopez hit .224 with the TinCaps with a .280 on-base percentage and a .358 slugging percentage for a .638 OPS. He had nine doubles, three triples, six homers, 25 RBIs and 23 runs scored in 246 at-bats.

Lopez is a 6-foot-2, 170-pound, switch-hitter from Venezuela who plays both short and second base.

He made his American debut with Tri-City in 2017 just a month after his 17th birthday on May 9. In 66 games with the Dust Devils, Lopez hit .246 with 16 doubles, two homers and 22 RBIs. He had a .291 on-base percentage and a .324 slugging percentage for a .616 while being four years younger than the typical Northwest League player—who was a product of a college program in the U.S.

Fernando Tatis Jr. Off to Fast Start in Dominican Republic Playoffs

FriarWire

Dec 25

By Bill Center

Fernando Tatis Jr., the Padres prized shortstop prospect, has hit decisive homers for Estrellas in two of his first three playoff games in the Dominican Republic Winter League.

After three games, the 19-year-old Tatis Jr. is 3-for-12 with a double, the two homers, four RBIs, three runs scored and a walk for a slash line of .250/.308/.833/1.141.

His first homer off **Fernando Rodney** was an 11th-inning tiebreaker. He followed with a three-run homer the next night as Estrellas jumped off to a 2–1 record at the start of the round-robin portion of the Dominican Republic playoffs.

Catcher **Francisco Mejía** is 2-for-8 with a double, a walk and two runs scored after two starts for Estrellas in the playoffs. Outfielder **Franchy Cordero** is 2-for-8 with a triple, a walk, a run scored and a RBI after two playoff games for Escogido in the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican Republic is the only league to have started its playoffs.

Play in the Dominican Republic resumes Dec. 27 after the four-day Christmas break. Play in the regular seasons in Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Venezuela and Panama resumes Dec. 26 and Mexico resumes Christmas Day after a one-day break.

Venezuela's regular season ends Dec. 29 while the regular seasons in Puerto Rico and Mexico end on Dec. 30. The playoffs in all three leagues begin Jan. 2. The Caribbean Series begins on Feb. 2 and ends on Feb. 8.

In Venezuela, Padres' catching prospect **Luis Torrens**, 22, is hitting .320 with five doubles and 14 RBIs in 23 games for league-leading Magallanes. Torrens was 3-for-6 with a RBI and a run scored Sunday. He is the only Padres prospect currently competing in Venezuela.

Second baseman **Esteban Quiroz** is hitting .263 for Los Mochis in Mexico after going 2-for-4 Sunday with a walk, two RBIs and a run scored. He is the lone Padres prospect currently playing in Mexico.

Center fielder **Aldemar Burgos**, 21, is hitting .280 with a .333 on-base percentage and a .772 OPS after going 3-for-4 with a homer, a double and three RBIs in his most recent start for Carolina in Puerto Rico. He is the last active Padre in Puerto Rico.

Meanwhile, play continues for Padres prospects in Panama and Australia.

Right fielder **Michael Gettys**, 23, is hitting .299 with five doubles, two triples, six homers, 22 RBIs and 17 runs scored in 87 at-bats over 24 games with Adelaide in Australia. He has a .386 on-base percentage and a .609 slugging percentage for a .995 OPS.

Middle infielders **Kelvin Melean** and **Justin Lopez** are hitting .203 and .173, respectively, for Canberra while second baseman **Jarryd Dale** is hitting .136 for Melbourne.

Shortstop **Allen Córdoba** is hitting .260 with a double and three RBIs after 14 games and 50 at-bats for West in Panama. He has a .383 on-base percentage thanks to a team-leading seven walks. **Javy Guerra**, who is playing third for West, is hitting .193 with three doubles and eight RBIs in 57 at-bats for West.

Hunter Renfroe, Franmil Reyes Create a Crowd for the Padres in Right Field

FriarWire

Dec 24

By Bill Center

Something has to give when it comes to the Padres' corner outfield positions in 2019.

If **Wil Myers** is a healthy Padre in 2019, it figures he'll be the frontrunner as the starting left fielder. He is better suited to playing left than right while both Renfroe and Reyes have the majority of experience in right.

That means **Hunter Renfroe** will see more time in right, where **Franmil Reyes** made the most starts in 2018. Between them, Renfroe and Reyes combined to hit 42 homers last season with 99 RBIs in 664 at-bats.

The corner outfield slots do not project as a platoon situation. Myers, Renfroe and Reyes are all right-handed hitters. The only left-handers in a possible mix are **Franchy Cordero** and **Travis Jankowski**.

Here's a Christmas Eve look at the possibilities in right field starting with Renfroe and Reyes and extending into the Padres top, right-field prospects.

— Hunter Renfroe made 94 starts in the outfield last season with 53 coming in left after the arrival of Reyes. The 6-foot-2, 230-pound slugger doesn't turn 27 until Jan. 28. The native of Crystal Springs, Miss., was the Padres first pick (13th overall) in the 2013 draft out of Mississippi State.

In addition to the power bat, Renfroe has the arm that plays well in right. His defense is ahead of Reyes', although both have room for improvement.

For the second straight season, Renfroe hit 26 homers in 2018. He finished the season with a .248 average, a .302 on-base percentage and a .504 slugging percentage for a .807 OPS. All those marks were improvements over his 2017 totals, although Renfroe still suffers from a high strikeout rate (109 in 403 at-bats in 2018) and a low walk rate (30).

But the second half to Renfroe's 2018 season boosted the slugger's profile. In his 54 games after the All-Star Game, Renfroe hit .253 with 19 homers and 43 RBIs in 229 at-bats. His on-base percentage did slip to a subpar .291 mark, but his slugging percentage soared to .541 for a .833 OPS. He hit nine homers in each of the final two months of the season.

— Franmil Reyes was the surprise newcomer of the 2018 season. The 23-year-old, who signed with the Padres as a 16-year-old, international free agent out of the Dominican Republic in 2011, hit .280 in 87 games with the Padres in 2018 with a .340 on-base percentage and a .498 slugging percentage for a .838 OPS in 261 games.

The 6-foot-5, 275-pound Reyes is not a complete package. There is work to do on his defense. But he is fast for a player of his size and had proven to be a quick learner.

Although he hit 25 homers in 2017 with Double-A San Antonio and was on the Padres' radar entering spring training, Reyes' production surprised everyone. For example, Reyes had never been listed on the [Padres' Top-30 prospect list](#) despite hitting .268 with a .331 on-base percentage, a .458 slugging percentage and 41 home runs in his two previous minor league seasons.

Reyes opened the 2018 season with Triple-A El Paso, where he hit .324 in 58 games with 11 doubles, a triple and 16 homers with 52 RBIs in just 250 at-bats. He had a .428 on-base percentage and a .614 slugging percentage for a 1.042 OPS for the Chihuahuas before being promoted to the Padres on May 14.

When he arrived with the Padres, Reyes played right and Renfroe shifted to left because Reyes had never played an outfield position other than right field.

Although he became a regular in right, Reyes regularly left games early for Travis Jankowski as a defensive replacement.

Reyes had surgery late last month to repair a torn meniscus in his left knee but is expected to be ready for spring training. Reyes suffered the injury while playing winter ball with Escogido in the Dominican Republic, where he had a slash line of .444/.510/.689/1.199 with three homers after 45 at-bats.

Two of the [Padres' Top-30 prospects](#) at the start of last season are right fielders, although the Padres didn't have a top right field prospect at either El Paso or San Antonio once Reyes was promoted to the Major Leagues. A look at the Padres right field prospects in the minor leagues.

— **Tirso Ornelas** could be called a homegrown player. The 6-foot-3, 200-pound 18-year-old is a native of Tijuana. The left-handed hitter is ranked the [No. 16 prospect in the Padres' system](#). As a teenager, Ornelas was hitting .252 with a .341 on-base percentage and a .732 OPS with Single-A Fort Wayne in 2018 when his season was cut short by injury. He had 13 doubles, three triples,

eight homers and 40 walks in 350 plate appearances. He figures to start the 2019 season at Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore where he will be four years below the league average age.

— **Jorge Oña** is the most advanced right fielder in the Padres minor league system. Oña, who turns 22 on Dec. 31, signed with the Padres in 2016 out of Cuba as the eighth-ranked player in that rich international class. The 6-foot-, 220-pound right-handed hitter was among the [Padres' Top-30 prospects](#) entering the 2018 season and was as high as No. 13 on the list following the 2016 season. Although he hit only .239 with a .312 on-base percentage and a .380 slugging percentage for a .693 OPS with Lake Elsinore in 2018, Oña could be headed for Double-A Amarillo in 2019.

— **Agustin Ruiz** is one of the more interesting young prospects in the Padres' minor league system. The 19-year-old native of Villahermosa, Mexico, signed with the Padres as a member of the 2016 international class. In 2018, the 6-foot-2, 175-pound, left-handed hitter played at three levels in 2018, advancing from the Arizona Rookie League to Single-A Fort Wayne, where he hit two homers in the final four games of the season. In Arizona, Ruiz had a .290/.384/.466/.850 slash line with 11 doubles, 10 triples, a homer, 27 walks, 39 runs scored and 28 RBIs in 220 plate appearances.

— **Dwayna Williams-Sutton** was the Padres fifth-round pick out of East Carolina University in last June's draft. The 6-foot-2, 215-pound right-handed hitter had a slash line of .256/.320/.400/.720 in the Arizona Rookie League this summer.

#PadresOnDeck: RHPs Mason Thompson, Reggie Lawson, Lake Bachar Progress Steadily from 2016 Draft

FriarWire

Dec 21

By Bill Center

Prospects don't advance on a linear scale.

Some move quickly through the minor leagues. Others advance in spurts.

Today we're looking at three right-handed pitchers from the 2016 Draft — **Mason Thompson**, **Reggie Lawson** and **Lake Bachar** — who are advancing steadily through the Padres system.

All three were selected in the first five rounds of that strong draft topped by first-round picks pitchers **Cal Quantrill** and **Eric Lauer** and third baseman **Hudson Potts**. Thompson and Lawson have both appeared on the [Padres' Top-30 prospect list](#). We look at the trio in the order they were drafted in 2016.

— Reggie Lawson was the 71st overall player selected in the 2016 Draft as a Compensation Round B pick and the fifth player selected by the Padres behind Quantrill, Lauer, Potts and outfielder **Buddy Reed**.

The 6-foot-4, 205-pound Lawson was drafted out of California's Victor Valley High. After 2 ½ seasons in the minor leagues, he will open the 2019 season as a 21-year-old.

Lawson spent the entire 2018 season at Advanced Single-A Lake Elsinore where he was 8–5 with a 4.69 earned run average, a 1.55 WHIP and a .280 opponents' batting average in 24 appearances (22 starts). He averaged a strikeout per inning — allowing 69 runs (61 earned) on 130 hits and 51 walks with 117 strikeouts in 117 innings.

Lawson was more than three years younger than the average age of players in the California League. He has already made one appearance at Petco Park in the All-American Classic All-Star Game in the summer of 2015.

— Mason Thompson, 20, was the Padres next pick after Lawson as a third-rounder in the 2016 Draft. He was the 86th overall selection. Thompson was 18 when the Padres selected the 6-foot-7, 186-pounder out of Round Rock High in Texas.

— After debuting in the Arizona Rookie League in 2016, Thompson has spent the past two seasons with Single-A Fort Wayne working on some of the mechanics issues that go with being a 6-foot-7 pitcher.

Thompson was two years younger than the average age in the Midwest League last season when he posted a 6–8 record with a 4.94 ERA, a 1.42 WHIP and a .255 opponents' batting average in 22 appearances (20 starts).

In 93 innings with the TinCaps, Thompson allowed 61 runs (51 earned) on 95 hits and 37 walks with 97 strikeouts. That's an average of 9.4 strikeouts per nine innings and a 2.62-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

— Lake Bachar, 23, was the Padres' fifth-round pick in the 2016 Draft. Selected between Thompson and Bachar in 2016 was a left-hander named **Joey Lucchesi**, who, of course, spent the 2018 season as a rookie in the middle of the Padres rotation.

The Padres drafted Bachar, a native of Wheaton, Ill., out of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

The 6-foot-3, 210-pound Bachar advanced from Lake Elsinore to Double-A San Antonio during the 2018 season and had a 4.68 combined ERA with a 1.40 WHIP and a .264 opponents' batting average in 115 1/3 innings. He gave up 67 runs (60 earned) on 11 hits and 47 walks with 80 strikeouts.

Bachar was promoted to San Antonio after posting a 1.91 ERA, a 0.88 WHIP and a .167 opponents' batting average in seven appearances (four starts) at Lake Elsinore.

Bachar got a jump start on the 2018 season in Australia in the 2017–2018 off-season. Pitching for Canberra, Bachar was 5–1 in 10 starts with a 1.27 WHIP. He gave up 18 runs on 47 hits and 23 walks with 49 strikeouts in 55 2/3 innings.