

Talkin' Padres Baseball with Mark Grant Padres360 – April 12, 2016

Wayne McBrayer: Here we are on Padres360. This is @TheCasualFan1 and today we are talking with the legendary, iconic, Mr. Mark Grant. Mark, it is a pleasure to talk to you. How's everything going on the road?

Mark Grant: Everything's going great guys, and thank you so much for having me. It's like anything else. You have a long off-season and the season starts and then it's like getting into that groove. I know it's always one road trip early on where it's a bad packed road trip. You forget something. You forget a pair of pants. You forget a favorite sweater. You forget a belt to match your shoes. It's always something, so I'm still in that travel mode trying to get into that groove but hey, all said it's going okay. It's going pretty well, thank you.

Wayne McBrayer: Coming out of spring training with the Padres, what are some of the things that you observed that you really liked about the ball club?

Mark Grant: I think the defense really sticks out, the one thing. With Alexei Ramírez at short stop, the acquisition there. I mean let's face it, last year that was one of the negatives for the Padres. Center field, Jon Jay, that'll get a chance to put Melvin up and Junior in the outfield. You know Matt Kemp still, you know he's a little long in the tooth and not really the best right fielder but he's going out there to try the best he can. Obviously hopefully his bat makes up for some runs if in fact there are some runs given up in the outfield. But with the way Matt Kemp is swinging the bat, that doesn't seem to be an issue right now as far as the defense.

You know, the defense is the one thing that really had to be addressed. That was a big issue last year and hopefully have towards the top defensively or at least in the middle of the pack this year because they need to tighten it up so they can help that pitching staff.

Wayne McBrayer: Well that's one of the things that actually I wanted to get into with you is going over the infield here. Definitely Ramirez was an awesome pick-up. What do you think of the combination of Spangenberg/Ramirez up the middle?

Mark Grant: I like it and you know that's a good question because Cory being a rookie last year and getting a taste of the big leagues, and then full spring training this year, pretty much the job was his to lose. I think Cory is going to be really, really solid at second base. Is he going to win the gold glove? Probably not. Is he probably going to be one of the top five second basemen? You know, lose some weight and see type thing. But I think he's a good enough athlete and I think he is the type of player, and also Alexei Ramírez, to where the talent isn't up to where it's not going to take that long to get used to one another up the middle. We know how important it is to be solid up the middle. I'm sure they've done a lot of talking, a lot of time in spring training working on infield and throws to second base, covering the backs for double plays, and Cory is just that type of player to where he can adapt quickly. I think he's holding his own at second base.

Wayne McBrayer: Going over, you mentioned the outfield because it definitely was changes with bringing Jay over here. What do you think of the outfield compared to last season? Offensively and defensively?

Mark Grant: Well defensively I think a little bit more speed. As I mentioned, Matt Kemp, hopefully he can offensively start hot and he swung the bat well in Denver. Hopefully that carries over enough to where there's enough runs scored to where late in the game they can put in the defensive replacement like Travis Jankowski did. He filled in recently for late innings when Matt was taken out of the game. Sometimes you know, each team has their liability. Each team kind of has their negatives which they try to get better at. They definitely got better in the outfield. Center field, Jon Jay, I think it's a plus because he can cover some ground in right center field that Matt Kemp won't be able to.

From an offensive standpoint? I think Jon Jay being a left handed batter at the top of the line up, I think that helps. You know he's a six year veteran to where he knows how to work a count. I know it's a different dynamic in St. Louis with their line up as opposed to the Padres' line up, but when we have a player like a Jon Jay who knows how to work the count, once and a while he can turn on one and hit the ball out of the ballpark. He's a gap type guy whose got some speed from the top of the line up.

I think they've been upgrades. I don't think it's 180 degree as far as defense and offense but it's definitely on the up tick, the upswing, when you talk offensively in the outfield and defensively.

Wayne McBrayer: One of the other big changes that I've seen in the team for this off season has definitely been the bullpen. The Padres have always had this sort of set amount of people in the bullpen. Which one our relievers do you think will have the most positive impact coming out of the pen this year?

Mark Grant: I really like Brandon Maurer. I like his arm. I like his stuff. It's overpowering. He's the type of reliever that can come in in the 8th inning, set up for Fernando Rodney, and really make a difference in having a quick 8th inning. Hopefully they have plenty of leads to where he can go out there and shut them down and make a little bit of a mistake to where it's not really going to hurt the team. Kevin Quackenbush has proven himself. Fernando Rodney, the closer, last year was definitely an up and down year for him. I think there's some inconsistencies there with Rodney. That's just his track record. But like anybody else guys, going out there and getting a good couple outings under your belt, like recently the last two guys I mentioned, Maurer and Rodney, to win on the road is tough. It's going to be tough to win on the road. It's going to be a challenge but if these guys go out there for quality strikes like we know they can, I think the back end of the bullpen should be just fine.

Wayne McBrayer: The biggest change of course in the off-season was the hiring of Andy Green. There were a lot of positive notes on Andy coming out during spring training. How well is he matching up with the good vibes now that the season's underway?

Mark Grant: I think he's doing great. I did not know Andy Green before the season started. I just knew him as the third base coach for the Arizona Diamondbacks. Of course I did some research on him, talked about his minor league days with him recently at spring training. I talked about his managing days with them in the minor leagues and he's got a pretty good track record. The more and more I get to talk to Andy Green the more and more I like him. He's prepared. He knows exactly what he's doing. He has a great relationship with his coaching staff. Each coach has his own responsibility and each coach knows what that responsibility is, to report to Andy and let him know what's going on. Andy knows how to work a scorecard. We know certainly he likes to know how to work the defensive shifts, no doubt about that because he's going to shift quite a bit. We've seen that early on in the season. I think it's a good fit. He's a young manager. I think that bodes well for the young players and I think he has earned the respect of the veteran players as well.

Wayne McBrayer: That's definitely great to hear. What are your thoughts on the last season that you're going to be working with Dr. Enberg?

Mark Grant: The professor. You know what-

Wayne McBrayer: Yep, and I had to refer to him as the doctor because you co-author with a doctor here. Dr. Rebecca Herman.

Mark Grant: Well yes, I'm very honored to be with the good doctor. You know what, I could talk all day about Dick. He's just a pleasure to work with. I go back to my childhood days because I not only love baseball but I just like watch sports in general. I like to watch football. I like to watch tennis. You know, college basketball and it seemed like every time I turned on the TV, you know back then there was no ESPN. There was no 24 hour sports. There was no MLB Network and the big events, it seemed like Dick was always doing the play-by-plays. He was the voice of my childhood as a kid and then all the sudden next thing you know I'm sitting next to him and he's had a great run. He's had a really good run and an illustrious career. To sit next to him has been a pleasure. It's been an honor. Time goes by so quickly and I think he kind of sits back and just kind of thinks "Boy, it's happened so quickly and now it's going to be the last one with the Padres."

You know, he's going to be around after. He'll do some stuff for us, I think. He just loves the game of baseball. I admire his passion. It's been a good run.

Wayne McBrayer: He's a good man. Both Rebecca and I have been fans and really enjoyed him.

Here's the last question for you Mark and once again I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to us-

Mark Grant: Oh no worries.

Wayne McBrayer: ... and let other Padres fan hear your thoughts and your passions about the club.

If you could only watch one movie for the rest of your life, which one would you pick? CaddyShack, Airplane, or The Jerk?

Mark Grant: Caddyshack. Oh okay. Oh wow that's good. It's an A, B, C question, huh? Airplane, Caddyshack, or the Jerk? Oh my gosh, that's a nice trifecta of movies right there.

Wayne McBrayer: And I had by the way, the privilege of seeing Caddyshack and Airplane at the same time. They were back to back movies years ago and I got to see both movies in one night.

Mark Grant: You know what Wayne and Rebecca, I've got to go Caddyshack. I got to stay true to myself. I got to go straight from the heart. Caddyshack is just ... There's just too many good lines in that movie that are dropped everyday. I'm not just talking me. Friends of mine, players, it seems like Caddyshack lines are part of the everyday vernacular in everybody's life.

Wayne McBrayer: It's in the hole!

Mark Grant: It's in the hole! Freeze gopher! You know there are just so many things about Caddyshack that just make you laugh. It's in our everyday life. I like to incorporate some in the game. You know, that might be on my homework. Hopefully it's a Padres win tonight and we're having a good time, it's a good game, and I can incorporate some Caddyshack tonight possibly.

Wayne McBryer: That will be awesome and if you can, also break out the shillelagh at some point because I was thinking last night about stuff and we haven't had the shillelagh all that much I think recently and it'd be really cool if you brought back the old shillelagh and maybe give one to Dick to go ahead and put up during the game as well.

Mark Grant: I think that's a good call. It has kind of gone by the wayside a little bit. I got to find that thing or I got to find an Irish shop that has all that stuff to go buy one and break it out during the games because you know, the Padres offense, it's kind of been up and down recently. So maybe it can bring us some luck but I think that's a good call, we should break it out.

Wayne McBryer: Awesome. Mark, I want to thank you so much for your time and we'd love to talk to you again in the fall and maybe talk about your entire career and go over your time with the Padres.

Mark Grant: Absolutely. Wayne and Rebecca I want to say something. I really appreciate you guys' passion. You guys love the Padres. It shows. You know from my standpoint, I just want to say thank you for all you guys do because you guys are true fans thick and thin and it's nice to have fans like you, seeing you at the ballpark and seeing that passion everyday. I appreciate you guys.

Wayne McBryer: Thank you so much Mark. You have a great day.

Mark Grant: All right, it's in the hole!

Wayne McBryer: It's in the hole!

Mark Grant: Cannonball!

Wayne McBryer: Cannonball's coming!

Mark Grant: Cannonball's coming! Cannonball.

Wayne McBryer: Cannonball's coming!