



Most Influential: Kevin Faulconer ... And the rest of the list



Our City is ending our list of San Diego's 20 Most Influential people with new Mayor Kevin Faulconer.

He has become San Diego's Most Influential person.

When we began compiling this list back at the end of 2013, the race to replace disgraced former Mayor Bob Filner was ongoing and it was unknown who would be leading the city.

Now, of course, we know. Faulconer won easily over his opponent, freshman Council member David Alvarez.

Faulconer won, but the honor brings its share of hurdles. First is continuing the work that interim Mayor Todd Gloria started, which is to bring stability and honor back to the office.

Secondly, it is to lead the nation's eighth largest city at a time when many challenges face it, such as infrastructure woes, homelessness, a shortage of affordable housing, income inequality ...

Faulconer has stepped quickly into his new role. He's already spearheaded a number of initiatives to improve San Diego's neighborhoods, increase library and rec center hours and beef up public safety.

He named Shelley Zimmerman as police chief, the first woman in San Diego to hold that post.

When the recent wildfires hit, he offered a calm and measured presence.

His influence may well go beyond San Diego as well. He's the only Republican mayor of a major U.S. city. Other Republican politicians may look to his rise as a blueprint to achieve similar success.

He did so by taking a moderate approach on social issues. He supports abortion rights and gay marriage, for instance.

Yet he remains convinced that business flourishes best when unburdened by government, and so he doesn't support such populist initiatives as raising the minimum wage.

He still comes under attack by progressives who question his commitment to neighborhoods and remain convinced he's more beholden to big-moneyed developers who support big-ticket items aimed for downtown.

His true test comes in 2016 when he runs again. That's a presidential year, which normally brings out Democratic voters in force. The city is mostly Democratic, and Faulconer will have to make certain he doesn't alienate the more moderate ones with his governance.

He could very well face tough competition, either from Alvarez, who will be three years older and won't be as dogged by charges of inexperience, or Gloria, the council president who served ably as interim mayor.

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Hi Mom, I'm home. (Again!)

Either would be tempted, given the Democratic voter swell that comes during presidential elections.

Faulconer needs to wield his influence carefully and effectively as he moves forward.

However, no one has more influence than Faulconer going forward.

Our City's 20 Most Influential list was markedly different than the one we put together in the beginning of 2013, when it was led by one Bob Filner.

Kevin Faulconer? He wasn't even on that list. He was a lame duck council member, about to be termed out.

Influence?

As we discovered in this process ... well, it is weird. It's unpredictable. It's slippery. It can be in your hands one moment, gone the next.

In 2013, that was proved in spades.

Filner went from mayor to house arrest.

Faulconer, from afterthought to mayor.

And how about Nathan Fletcher? In a two-month span, he went from confident and charming mayoral front-runner to downcast and defeated private citizen, vowing never to run again.

For others, the opposite happened. Donna Frye seemed ready and content to dial it down. It had been years since she held public office. She quit the Filner administration after only a few months on the job. We had her on last year's list but we wondered if she still belonged.

But then she organized a little press conference, calling on Filner to give up his post, after hearing of women accuse Filner of sexually harassing them.

Indeed, a good number are those who were involved in bringing about Filner's resignation made this year's list. After all, it's not every year that a mayor ends the year wearing a GPS ankle bracelet. But the list also includes other people of influence, such as business leaders and a craft brewer.

It was not an easy list to put together. That's because even people with supposedly great influence can fail in their ability to influence. Qualcomm co-founder Irwin Jacobs saw his plan to remove cars from Balboa Park's Plaza de Panama implode under public pressure and an unfavorable court ruling last year. He and other Jacob family members also supported Fletcher for mayor, only to see his candidacy fail.

So where do you start?

Our City decided to start the list with **Frye** ...

For us, it seemed the easy choice. Not only did she have the gumption — powered by her sense of right and wrong — to demand the resignation of a sitting mayor of the nation's eighth largest city, she did so against a man she strongly supported politically and had worked for.



When it comes to fires, are we better? Or luckier?



After twists and turns, City Council is almost complete



Let's do business: Some local hot spots to hold meetings



Most Influential: Philip Rivers



Most Influential: Urban planner Stacey Pennington

But even more importantly, Frye's actions also influenced women — many of them quite influential in their own right — to come forward with the harrowing and startling sexual harassment accusations against Filner.

They did not before. They said they felt alone and fearful of retribution should they make an issue of Filner's behavior. So they bottled it up. And Filner, meanwhile, was able to go along on his merry way.

That was until Frye heard about it. The accusations rocked her.

"Knowing what I knew, I could not, not do something about it," she said. "All I could see is Bob continuing to do it and hurting more women."

It took guts. Frye didn't have assurances from any of the women that they would come forward. She only had permission from one to make the allegations public and call for Filner's resignation. She hoped that would be enough.

"I guess I'm a dreamer."

This is the way she's wired, she said. She needs to take action if she feels there's an injustice. It goes back to when she was a kid. Yes, it makes her influential, but that's simply the byproduct of that trait, which she jokingly calls, a "genetic flaw."

It can be a burden, she said. Helping to advise and console the victims was wrenching. She had no idea the number of women— close to 20 — who would come forward. "It took an emotional toll."

In the end, there was nothing to celebrate, she added.

"It was not something I took pleasure in doing," she said, of bringing down a mayor. "It leaves me with a heavy heart. So many people had faith in him."

Todd Gloria

Filner didn't like him, but name another person who feels the same way.

OK, that's an exaggeration because Gloria, a Democratic, did upset some progressive members of his party for comprising with Republicans when serving as Council



President and for supporting the Jacobs' plan to remove cars from Balboa Park. However, he remains one of San Diego's more popular and engaging politicians.

As interim mayor, he's led the city ably — without a hair ever being out of place. This year, he was one of 24 elected officials named to the Aspen Institute's Rodel fellowship program, which honors up-and-coming politicians.

Gloria took Filner's best punches for his tendency to build consensuses — rather than bully — and didn't flinch. He was one of the first to call on Filner to resign. There were two obvious benefits:

A) It would be a relief to get rid of Filner, who was a pain to work with and

B) Gloria would get his office, at least for awhile.

Yes, Gloria had to step down from the interim post once the mayoral contest was settled, but his short tenure was highly praised. Gloria took quick strides to make the office responsive and transparent.

He also returns as Council President, where he will still wield considerable influence.

Jan Goldsmith

When it came to Filner and his ability to retain office, would it have made a difference if the San Diego City Attorney were a Democratic, a medical marijuana-proponent and — what the heck — a downtown-hotelier hater? In short, a Filner clone.



Frankly, no.

Every elected official in San Diego was calling for Filner to quit. Public opinion polls showed that nearly 80 percent of respondents wanted him to resign. A recall effort was under way, and it was smoking hot.

But it just so happened that Goldsmith, a Republican who clashed with Filner from the get-go, was in the position to actually squeeze Filner in case he decided to hunker down and fight the inevitable.

So Goldsmith did so.

For instance, he advised the City Council to vote to not cover Filner's legal expenses in the case of lawsuits even though Goldsmith knew the city was obligated to do so. He wanted Filner to feel the potential of some serious financial heat.

He was also looking at legal strategies — including Filner's use of public funds — to force him out of office if need be. Goldsmith has described Filner's removal as a “de facto impeachment.”

Yes, Goldsmith was mightily influential in bringing down Filner and negotiating his exit, so he makes the list. But he was also fortunate in that he was facing such a deeply flawed and spent adversary.

Marco Gonzalez

Two words: “Filner headlock.”

And two more: “Filner dance.”

That's how environmental attorney Marco Gonzalez boiled down Filner's treatment of women, noting how Filner would grab them and pull them close and demand kisses or ask them sexually charged questions.



The phrases soon became nationally recognized.

Gonzalez, who joined with Frye and attorney Cory Briggs to initially call for Filner's resignation, said he came up with phrases after victims gave him similar descriptions of Filner's behavior.

"After hearing one woman say 'It was like being put in a headlock' and then hearing another say 'He put his arm around my neck and pulled me close,' it just made sense to come up with a common description," he said.

He realized they could be "powerful tools" to describe what the women went through, but he had no idea they would resonate so widely.

Gonzalez went out of his comfort zone on the mission to oust Filner. A progressive, he supported the mayor during his election campaign. But Gonzalez is also known for making waves, including his controversial efforts to kill fireworks during the Fourth of July. They harm the environment, he argued.

He also wanted the city of San Diego to pay him more than \$750,000 in legal fees over the spat. Um, that went over really well ...

However, his creative and memorable terms helped fueled the backlash against Filner and may have even sped his inevitable resignation.

Cory Briggs

Yes, he was also one of the first to champion Filner's resignation, but Cory Briggs' influence goes beyond that.

Some wish it wouldn't. He's a pain to the establishment.

A lawyer, he's filed a number of lawsuits against big targets, including solar projects, Walmart, the San Diego Convention Center expansion and the City of San Diego (for a number of alleged ills).



If you Google "Cory Briggs" and "lawsuit," you get more than 5 million hits — a surprisingly low number.

One of his more notable suits is against the city for levying a two percent charge on hotel bills, money that goes to the Tourism Marketing District, in part, to promote San Diego. Briggs claims it's an illegal tax.

Bob Filner, when mayor, wanted assurances from the hotels that they would refund the money spent should Briggs be successful. Many wouldn't agree, which caused all sorts of funding problems for the San Diego Tourism Authority, which gets its money from the TMD.

In July of last year, it laid off 31 workers — 40 percent of its staff.

Darren Pudgil, the Tourism Authority's spokesman and one of those let go, Tweeted that day: "@briggs due to your pending frivolous lawsuit challenging the TMD, the Tourism Authority just laid off 31 employees – moms and dads..."

Briggs responded to Pudgil's Tweet, "Every defendant's definition of 'frivolous lawsuit' = a lawsuit that might succeed."

Yes, he's influential. And, yes, some might very well have voodoo dolls of him because of it.

Bill Lynch, Mickey Kasparian and Doug Manchester — the Fletcher Killers

In a September 2013 poll, Nathan Fletcher led all of the major mayoral candidates — and it wasn't even close. His support was at 30 percent.



The closest rival, Kevin Faulconer, had 22 percent. David Alvarez had 17 percent.

And then ...

Bombs away ...

The pro-business Lincoln Club, led by Bill Lynch, sent out seething mailers, attacking Fletcher for quitting the Republican Party, becoming an independent and then joining the Democrats. It also questioned whether his job at Qualcomm was a sham. His voting record while he was with the state Assembly? You bet, it came under fire.

The U-T San Diego, owned by Doug Manchester, also dogged Fletcher in editorials for his party switch and other supposed slights, such as not releasing his college transcripts.

But those are Republican power brokers who were miffed over Fletcher's snub. And it was a commonly held theory they also didn't want a Republican candidate to face the charismatic Fletcher in a run-off and lose the chance to gain the mayor's office back.

So, bombs away.

Kasparian is a different story. A Democrat, he's the leader of the United Food and Commercial Workers and president of the Labor Council. While Fletcher had the support of many powerful Democrats, Kasparian wasn't buying. He told the Voice of San Diego he didn't think Fletcher had served in the Democratic party long enough to win his endorsement.

So he backed Alvarez. And out came more seething mailers against Fletcher, this time from unions.

Lynch and Manchester supported Faulconer, the lone major Republican candidate, but never bothered to attack Alvarez. It was all Fletcher, all the time.

He was getting hit by the right, by the left and by the region's most powerful publication.

And ...

On Election Day — which was held less than two months after that September poll — it was Faulconer with 42 percent of the vote, Alvarez with 25 and Fletcher with 24.

A weary Fletcher announced the next day he was through with running for public office.

The bizarre love triangle helped Faulconer win office because he was able to easily defeat Alvarez, a freshman councilman who stuck to his progressive guns throughout the campaign to the run-off.

Kasparian also stuck to his guns, saying he'd rather support a candidate whom he believed in than back someone he didn't feel right about.

They're all influential, obviously.

And they're hardly gunshy about wielding that influence as they see fit.

KPBS

What's the "S" in KPBS stand for?

How about "Scoops?"

Not only did the local public radio and TV affiliate break the Bob Filner story, it landed exclusive interviews with many of the women accusing Filner of abuses.



According to Mark Sauer, the KPBS senior news editor who worked on Donna Frye's staff

when she was a council member, breaking the initial story was a fluke. Frye, the most prominent Filner whistleblower, came to him because she heard the station — correctly so — was investigating Filner's behavior toward women and trying to get some to go on the record.

"Frye thought it might be possible to force Filner out without having the women coming forward publicly," Sauer said. "She was working behind the scenes on that; we didn't know that at the time."

So after learning of KPBS' efforts, she agreed to an interview and the release of the letter she submitted to Filner calling for her resignation. And, as the scandal deepened, women did start to come forward.

The public radio station aired one particularly powerful piece that included accusations from four notable local women: Veronica "Ronne" Froman, a retired Navy rear-admiral; Joyce Gattas, a dean at San Diego State University; Sharon Bernie-Cloward, the head of the Port Tenants Association; and Patti Roscoe, a prominent businesswoman.

Here's but one snippet from the interview, from Roscoe:

"And on numerous occasions, he put in me what I guess now is the famous headlock; and I felt fearful, even as well as I knew him, because it was an invasion into my space. And he would come in and try to kiss me on the lips and I'd have to squirm to get away. And just as recently as a few months ago this happened. I turned and he just slobbered down my chin."

But why did the women come to KPBS?

Sauer explained: "We were going to give them the time and space on our air and web site to tell their stories fully and in their own way. Commercial stations don't do that. In interview after interview, we let these women speak at length and they trusted and respected us for that and finally felt comfortable coming forward because of it."

Bruce Coons

When it came to bucking a plan to remove cars from Plaza de Panama in Balboa Park last year, Bruce Coons was up against many of the city's biggest players. That would include then Mayor Jerry Sanders, the majority of the city council and one of the richest men in San Diego, Irwin Jacobs, the co-founder of Qualcomm.



It wasn't David versus Goliath. It was David versus Goliath and Goliath and Goliath.

But out came the slingshot. The lawsuit filed by Save Our Heritage Organisation, led by Coons, successfully killed the Jacobs' plan, which, among other features, called for a bypass road to be built at the east end of the Cabrillo Bridge.

Coons thought the project was too invasive and, hence, got into the fray.

His interests, though, go beyond preservation. First, he took a quick stab at politics by announcing a run for mayor, but he withdrew and backed David Alvarez, who eventually lost to fellow City Councilman Kevin Faulconer.

Coons is also looking to start grassroots political efforts. He has plans to create a Neighborhood Partnership PAC which aims to magnify the voices of ordinary citizens and drive them into the political process.

A mechanism needs to be in place to offset the power of lobbyists and special interest groups that have used their clout to turn elections at the expense of quality-of-life issues, Coons said.

"I believe it can be very effective and influential by raising funds that can be used to support the candidates who truly represent the residents and to oppose those who do not," he said.

Diane Takvorian

Community plans don't normally start wars. Normally community plans are about as scintillating as, well, community plans. But the one for Barrio Logan sure caused an uproar. And Diane Takvorian, the executive director of the Environmental Health Coalition, has been in the forefront of it.



She didn't expect the blowback that came from the shipbuilding industry over the one for Barrio Logan, which calls for a buffer zone to protect residential development. It says it will be a job killer.

She says baloney. "It is absurd to assert that EHC would work to eliminate jobs — our members are the ones who need them the most. Our challenge is balance good jobs with safe healthy workplaces and neighborhoods."

Even though the City Council passed it, the shipbuilding industry launched a referendum drive to put the community plan on a city-wide ballot. Takvorian's agency sued, saying the signature gathering process was "fraught with misrepresentations" particularly over job losses. A judge dismissed it and the City Council voted to place in on the June ballot.

Arguably, no one is more influential when it comes to environmental matters in San Diego. The agency she heads is now in its fourth decade. The Barrio Logan Community Plan took five years and 50 meetings for a compromise to be reached, she said.

"While we think it's wrong that all of San Diego will get to vote for one community's plan, those are the rules, so we will fight to win."

She endorsed Bob Filner and David Alvarez for mayor, only to see Filner ousted by scandal and Alvarez lose to fellow City Council member Kevin Faulconer.

But don't look for her influence to wane with Faulconer's win. Even though Faulconer has been a critic of the Barrio Logan community plan, he's also championed the neighborhoods-first approach that's become vogue among San Diego politicians.

Takvorian embodies that kind of thinking.

Keith Jones

Few people in San Diego have the pedigree of Keith Jones. His grandfathers are the late Evan Jones, the founder of Ace Parking, and philanthropist Malin Burnham.



That alone necessarily would not make him influential.

Some offspring of powerful families flounder for a number of reasons, such as Vegas being so close by.

Jones? He is not floundering. At only 32, he now heads Ace Parking, one of the largest privately owned parking companies in the nation, with 450 locations. It employs more than 5,000 people.

And he's also heavily involved in the community, as an executive committee member of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and chair of the Downtown San Diego Partnership. He holds other positions as well.

"I've been taught by my grandfathers to be engaged civically," he said. "A good amount of people have taught me humility and gratitude."

What he dislikes is extremism, he said. It's not that difficult to find common ground, regardless of your political beliefs, he said. "I think communities are thirsty for that kind of collaboration," he said.

His future seems pretty much limitless, considering his professional position and passion for causes, including fighting homelessness downtown. "I want to continue to find ways to be as effective as possible as a community leader," he says.

And he still goes to his granddad for advice. That can't hurt.

Sumeet Parekh

San Diego has this pretty cool neighborhood. Maybe you've heard of it. Called the Gaslamp. Has lots of hip bars, upscale restaurants and boutique shops.



Sumeet Parekh is the fast becoming the king of it.

An overstatement? Perhaps, but it might not be for long. He's the principal of HP Investors, and his firm has purchased more than a half-dozen properties in and around the Gaslamp over the past 18 months. He's eyeing more, too.

In a joint venture with a New York investment firm, HP Investors recently bought retail and parking interests in Gaslamp Square, which takes up a full city block in the heart of the Gaslamp. The deal was worth nearly \$50 million.

"We're heavily researched-based and we found the most opportunity is on the retail side [of real estate]," he said.

And that means Parekh, who cut his teeth in real estate transactions in New York City, and his business partners can shape a significant portion of the Gaslamp as they see fit. After all, they control the properties.

The good news is that Parekh, who grew up in San Diego, wants to fully realize the Gaslamp's and downtown's potential.

"We're longterm investors," he said. "We look at what's going to best 20 years from now. We're about bringing in tenants who will be interesting rather than who can pay the highest rents."

And he seeks community input for guidance, he added. "We get feedback. We're trying to stay as plugged in as possible."

Pradeep Khosia

Leading a renowned university has got to be hard. You suggest a change or innovation and it will likely be dissected by a horde of Ph.Ds. You might not be the smartest guy in the room. You might not be the 40th smartest guy in the room.



But Pradeep Khosla, the chancellor at the University of California San Diego, has been receiving stellar reviews for his handling of the rising institution since taking the reins in August of 2012.

For one thing, he's a mover, which is saying something when it comes to academia. Change normally comes slowly because the people who run such institutions are smart and thoughtful and deliberate.

Khosla is all of the above, but he's also action-oriented. For instance, when President Obama announced the "grand challenge" to chart the function of the human brain, Khosla called for the establishment of the Center for Brain Activity Mapping to attract the funding that Obama was committing to it. In a less than two months, the new center was a reality.

He's also called for a strategic plan for the university, which would be — get ready for this — its first. He's involving students, faculty, staff and others to participate in the process.

UC San Diego's role in the local economy can't be understated. Last fiscal year, it received more than \$1 billion for research.

And Khosla is hardly meek about going for it.

Benjamin Katz

It's not that our elected leaders are stunted, knuckle-dragging Neanderthals. Benjamin Katz would never say anything like that.

(Others might ...)

But when it comes to information technology, they aren't exactly rocket (or computer) scientists, said Katz, a software expert and proponent of using the latest technological advances to make government work more efficiently and openly.

"The big problem is that there is a lack of technical knowledge," said Katz, who runs JSX, Inc., a software development firm.

He's been active in lobbying for more awareness of the vital role that IT plays in government. Right now, that's lacking considerably, he argues.



"We fully expect our elected officials to know a range of important matters, from finance to zoning, he said. But when it comes to knowing and promoting the latest technological innovations, they fall short, Katz said. "They understand that they don't understand technology," he said. "And they understand that technology is awesome. But when the rubber hits the road, not a lot happens."

So San Diego suffers an IT gap, he said. It simply isn't employing the kinds of systems that lead to better transparency and smarter, time-saving and money-saving governance.

"People like me share the blame," he said. "It's our city and we have the knowledge, but we've sat on the sidelines."

No more. Katz — way smart and politically active — is someone to watch.

Jay Flatley

Jay Flatley has been running the University City-based biotech firm Illumina for nearly 15 years. And he's been running it like Joe Montana ran the 49ers' offense in its hey day.



Many touchdowns. Few interceptions.

Virtually unknown to the general public, he's considered something of a giant in his field, having grown the company —which specializes in genetic analysis research instruments — to considerable heights.

Luke Timmerman, writing in Xconomy, a business and technology website, names Illumina as one of the three life sciences companies "built to last."

"Culturally, it is widely admired (and in many circles, feared and loathed) for its aggressiveness," he writes. "When its independence was threatened by hostile, low-ball takeover from Roche, it fought back and won. A little more than a year later, it continues to crush Wall Street sales forecasts and its stock has doubled since the failed takeover bid."

Why? It's because of Flatley's leadership. "He's a very ambitious leader who anticipates the future," Eric Topol, the director of the Scripps Translational Science Institute told U-T San Diego.

Stacey Pennington

Arguably, urban development has never been more, well, hip. People are moving to downtown neighborhoods in greater numbers, lured by mass transit, walkable streets and amenities such as boutique shops and restaurants featuring beers not called Bud but something like Buffalo Trace Oaked Imperial Chocolate Porter.



Stacey Pennington is in the thick of this trend. She's behind an effort to transform a five-block area in the East Village into a thriving, unique, progressive community. She hopes the project, called Makers Quarter, could be a role model for future urban development.

The ambitious venture — which could take as long as 15 years to be realized — will include homes, shops, retail and businesses, but the resulting mix will hardly be static. She envisions it as a space that will attract arts, community events and other pulse-raising features.

"A project of this scale is new and so we know we have to be innovative," said Pennington, who has a master's degree in urban planning from Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

One of the innovations is called SILO, which is a former vacant lot in the project area where activities are held to attract people in the neighborhood. She wants them to participate in the planning process. "It's a way of opening up the community and have people bring ideas to us," she said.

Normally, it's difficult to reach stakeholders, and it's normally done late in the planning process, she said. That makes it challenging to incorporate the ideas into the development. This concept changes that.

This type of urban village is the future, said Pennington, who's been involved in downtown development projects since the late 1990s.

Younger people are shying away from suburban living in greater numbers. In a way, they are rebelling from their youths when they were driven to Point A to Point B and didn't feel a strong sense of community, she said.

They want to be close to where they work, live and play. And many civic leaders are on the bandwagon because such development attracts educated young people. Many seek space and support to create start-ups which bolsters local economies.

Since developable suburban space is limited, it only makes sense to push growth in urban cores, where infrastructure is already in place, supporters of such projects say.

"There's a hunger for authentic, diverse and walkable spaces," Pennington said.

And she's out to create it.

Jim Crute

It's pretty well known that San Diego has become a significant force in the craft beer industry.

And why not? It's an attractive career that offers great benefits, such as, well, beer.

While it would seem that Greg Koch, CEO and co-founder of Stone Brewing, would be the obvious choice for San Diego's most influential person in craft beer, we beg to disagree. For one thing, he is taking off for six months to travel. So out of sight ...

Secondly, he can seem a bit eccentric at times, which has a tendency to dampen influence, not enhance it. If you're Steve Jobs, it's a different story. The late Apple co-founder was changing life as we know it. This is beer we're talking about.

Jim Crute, founder of Lightning Brewery in Poway, is brewing — both when it comes to beer and influence. For one thing, he's brilliant. He's got a Ph.D. in biochemistry. And he makes really good, award-winning beer, such as its Elemental Pilsner and Old Tempestuous Ale.

And we're pretty compelled by his back story as well. He dabbled with making beer since his college days, but it was not his full-time vocation — until he got laid-off from his job at a local biotech firm.



What to do? Cry in your beer? Or make beer?

He choose the latter.

Not surprisingly, he's quite scientific about it. On his web site, he even has a "Beer Science" section where he explains the process:

"The best-tasting craft beers all start when we mill our malted (sprouted and dried) grain into warm water. The grain's enzymes re-hydrate and break down their substrates, the nucleic acids, proteins and starches. We then warm this mash up to 160 degrees so that the grains' enzymes can liberate the substances that promote healthy yeast growth and break down the starches to simple sugars. Biochemical processes between the simple sugars and yeast growth ferment into ethanol (the alcohol in beer) and natural carbon dioxide."

OK ...

But he's mostly dedicated to making beer the old-fashioned way, without additives or preservatives and with homage to brewers generations before him. Crute has also become more involved with the local craft beer movement, serving as secretary of the San Diego Brewer's Guild.

Cheers to him.

Philip Rivers

Philip Rivers had regressed. The one-time franchise quarterback was flailing, throwing interceptions, missing receivers, fumbling snaps and losing games and his temper.

The San Diego Chargers failed to make the playoffs for three years straight.



And then came last year. Rivers, under new head coach Mike McCoy, rebounded, throwing for more than 4,400 yards and 32 touchdowns and just 11 interceptions. The Chargers earned a wild-card spot and won a play-off game. Rivers was named the Associated Press' Comeback Player of the Year.

In a city that has few bonafide sports stars, Rivers stands out. He is San Diego's best hope for bringing home a championship. The NFL is a quarterback-driven league and if a team doesn't have a franchise quarterback, the team is in for a long, long season.

Hello Cleveland Browns, Jacksonville Jaguars and Minnesota Vikings. (All of which drafted quarterbacks in the first round of the NFL draft, hoping to strike gold ...)

Last season, Rivers soared to the national spotlight, sparked by his feisty personality and — of all things — a bolo tie. Team rules require players to wear ties when traveling and Rivers went with the Western-style bolo. Local stores sold out of them. Network football commentators even donned them.

Rivers was hot.

While some may believe that Steve Fisher, head coach of the San Diego State University men's basketball team, deserves the top spot for most influential in sports, we can't say that's a slam dunk.