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## MEDIA CLIPS – Dec. 11, 2018

**Bridich: Rox can pay Nolan, 'grow responsibly'**  
**GM discusses Arenado's arbitration; Magadan being considered for hitting coach**  
**Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 10th, 2018**

LAS VEGAS -- Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich told MLB Network on Monday that the club could pay a contract north of \$200 million to third baseman Nolan Arenado and still afford to field a competitive club.

Arenado is entering his final season of arbitration and -- at least for 2019 -- he is expected to exceed the \$23 million record set by Josh Donaldson last year, when he avoided arbitration with the Blue Jays. The Rockies hope to reach a multi-year contract with Arenado, rather than go into the year with the possibility of losing him to free agency after the season.

- Hot Stove Tracker

In Bridich's appearance, arranged during the first day of the Winter Meetings, the Colorado GM said "there is nothing to report" on talks and didn't guarantee a deal. But he said the Rockies would not dismiss a high dollar figure out of hand.

- Creative options available to Rox at Meetings

"Our payroll has grown a lot over the past half-decade, and we're continuing to plan on, as I've said in the past, responsible growth," Bridich said. "We're not in a holding pattern. We're not where we're drawing back on our payroll. We believe that we can continue to grow responsibly."

"It's not going to grow by huge, huge, huge jumps every single year, but we've made some commitments that we believe in, guys that we believe in. We signed Charlie Blackmon this past year to a long-term deal [six years, \$108 million guaranteed]."

The Rockies haven't reduced their Opening Day payroll since 2013 (\$73.9 million after \$81.1 million in 2012). Last season started at a club-record \$136.9 million.

Bridich said he doesn't necessarily think the current free agency of Manny Machado, a third baseman and shortstop expected to land a mega-deal, governs the club's approach to Arenado because "each guy is his own guy."

- Rockies look to bolster offense at Meetings

During an impromptu session with local media after his TV appearance, Bridich also said:

- On the trade and free-agent markets, the Rockies are looking at a group of "more than a few" players to help the offense.
- Bridich confirmed that former Padres, Red Sox, Rangers and D-backs hitting coach Dave Magadan is under consideration to become the Rockies' hitting coach. Magadan was identified as a "strong candidate" by the Denver Post on Monday. Magadan was the Red Sox hitting coach when Boston defeated Colorado in the 2007 World Series. The Rockies parted ways with former hitting coach Duane Espy after the '18 season.

First-base coach Tony Diaz accepted the Twins' third-base coaching job, but responsibilities can be shifted to accommodate that role, as Ron Gideon has spent the last two seasons on the staff listed as a "coach," with responsibilities all over the field.

Jeff Salazar, assistant hitting coach the past two years, is still on the 2019 staff.

With more and more data available, Bridich said the hitting coach will need to double as a hands-on instructor and someone who can coordinate a game plan. But the game-planning has to be collaborative.

"It's not just one person affecting that group approach of how we're going to beat the pitcher tonight," Bridich said.

"There's multiple hitting coaches involved, [plus the] hitting coach and the bench coach a lot of times. The actual players that are in charge of executing and making it happen, they have to be involved.

"We need to get better at that -- the group process."

- Under Bridich, the Rockies have not traded top prospects for established players. Bridich didn't rule it out this offseason, but said careful consideration would come into play before any such deal.

"I very much believe in our system," Bridich said. "It doesn't mean that we're anxious or feel like we need to trade those guys. But it's definitely beneficial to us in that if we are looking to make sure that we leave no stone unturned, to make sure that we have enough depth in our system to add in a trade if we need to."

- Left-handed hitting Ryan McMahon and right-handed hitting Garrett Hampson are in-house candidates at second base, and middle infielder Brendan Rodgers is the team's No. 1 prospect, per MLB Pipeline. But could the Rockies re-sign two-time All-Star DJ LeMahieu?

"We have some guys that are, in theory, able to come in and play second base," said Bridich, who expressed respect for LeMahieu. "He is definitely somebody that we're kicking around, but that's just part of the overall process. It's tough for me to handicap."

- Bridich said the Rockies talked to the D-backs about a possible trade for star first baseman Paul Goldschmidt, who wound up being sent to the Cardinals. However, when asked if there was any shot Colorado could acquire one of the sport's biggest right-handed-hitting power threats from a division rival, Bridich laughed and said he was "not surprised [Goldschmidt] didn't end up in a Rockies uniform, based on what we were told."

- Bridich also acknowledged that the Rockies talked to the Phillies about power-hitting first baseman Carlos Santana, who was traded to the Mariners in the deal that brought Jean Segura to Philadelphia. Reports are, however, that Seattle could make Santana available.

- The Rockies have been linked to the versatile Marwin Gonzalez, who filled many defensive roles and was an offensive force on successful Astros teams in recent years. Bridich didn't reveal the degree to which the Rockies are pursuing Gonzalez, but did offer a scouting report.

"He's always been talented, but he's become pretty productive at the Major League level, so we're certainly aware, but it's always tough to say what the reality is," Bridich said.

**Creative options available to Rox at Meetings**  
**Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 9th, 2018**

LAS VEGAS -- This week's Winter Meetings will challenge the Rockies and general manager Jeff Bridich to find ways to boost their offense while also maximizing young players who can become stars.

The Rockies have qualified for the postseason the last two years because of pitching. But with a better offense, they may have overcome the Dodgers' six-year stranglehold on the National League West in 2018. Instead, they lost a Game 163 tiebreaker at Dodger Stadium and, after defeating the Cubs in the NL Wild Card Game, bowed to the Brewers in a three-game sweep in the NL Division Series.

- Hot Stove Tracker

The Rockies, who have the flexibility of moving Ian Desmond from first base to left field, figure to be in the mix should the Mariners trade power-hitting first baseman Carlos Santana, who was recently obtained from the Phillies. Other first basemen identified as possibly available are the Blue Jays' Justin Smoak and the Giants' Brandon Belt, although those clubs could be tough matches because they are seeking starting pitching -- something the Rockies would rather hoard than deal.

The Denver Post also reported Sunday that Blue Jays center fielder Kevin Pillar could emerge as a Rockies trade target. Rockies center fielder Charlie Blackmon, 32, headed into the second year of a six-year, \$108 million deal, has said he would be open to moving to a corner-outfield position at some point, but as of the early offseason, the Rockies had not discussed the idea with him.

- Rockies look to bolster offense at Meetings

The Rockies could be creative with free-agent options.

Left-handed-hitting outfielder Michael Brantley, coming off consecutive All-Star seasons with the Indians, is a practitioner of the type of patient and contact-heavy at-bats that the Rockies lack. Brantley, who will turn 31 on May 15, over the last two seasons has a 117 OPS+ and chased only 12.1 percent of pitches out of the zone -- sixth-lowest in the Majors,

according to Inside Edge. In much the same way Desmond did before signing his five-year, \$70 million contract going into 2017, Brantley reportedly has expressed a willingness to add first base to his profile.

Former D-backs outfielder A.J. Pollock, 31, also has tools that could fit, but USA Today reported an asking price of five years and \$80 million, which would be difficult for the Rockies to meet. Versatile switch-hitter Marwin Gonzalez, who will turn 30 on March 27, and Josh Harrison, 31, may fit the budget, and they can play in the infield and outfield.

While the Rockies want to boost their offense, they have seen players developed within their system blossom when they haven't been blocked by veterans. Left-handed-hitting David Dahl had a strong finish to 2018 and figures to be a key cog in 2019. No matter whom the Rockies obtain, infielders Ryan McMahon and Garrett Hampson figure to be fed increased playing time. Infielder Brendan Rodgers -- ranked by MLB Pipeline as the Rockies' No. 1 prospect -- could be knocking at the door in 2019.

Of course, all money discussions are against the backdrop of third baseman Nolan Arenado headed into his last year of club control with an attempt to negotiate a multiyear deal expected.

In addition to improving the offense, the Rockies will have to see how their coaching staff falls into place. Former first-base coach Tony Diaz took the third-base coaching job with the Twins, and hitting coach Duane Espy was not retained. Additionally, MLB Network insider Ken Rosenthal reported Sunday that bench coach Mike Redmond is a candidate to become Orioles manager.

**Rockies look to bolster offense at Meetings  
Bridich seeks run production, along with catcher, bullpen help  
Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 7th, 2018**

DENVER -- After consecutive postseason appearances driven by homegrown talent -- whether it's been drafted and developed hitters such as Nolan Arenado, Trevor Story and Charlie Blackmon or a rotation full of pitchers who have never thrown a Major League pitch for another team -- can the Rockies look outside and find production that will make them a World Series threat?

The task of improving the offense is the No. 1 priority as the Rockies, under general manager Jeff Bridich, head to the Winter Meetings, which begin on Monday at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas. In an odd twist for a franchise known for hitting, Colorado won 91 games -- second-most in its history -- on the strength of a rotation that led the National League in innings pitched, and the starters were a key element for a pitching staff that produced the lowest batting average against in the club's 26-season history (.250). Yet, the offense produced its lowest batting averages for a season (.256) and on the road (.225).

• Hot Stove Tracker

Three offensive players the Rockies counted on extensively are in free agency -- second baseman DJ LeMahieu, right fielder Carlos Gonzalez and on-and-off starting outfielder Gerardo Parra. A team with a mid-level payroll usually looks first to the inside, and outfielder David Dahl's strong finish (.277, nine home runs, 27 RBIs in September) should put him in position to move into a starting role. Outfielder Raimel Tapia, and infielders Ryan McMahon and Garrett Hampson, also are poised for greater responsibility.

Still, the time has come for the Rockies to hit on an established offensive player, either through a trade or free agency. But any moves that add to the payroll come against the backdrop of Arenado heading into his final year of arbitration. The club is hoping to sign him to a multi-year deal, but that could take a bit. Manny Machado's free agency will likely set the parameters of what Colorado will have to do to keep Arenado.

Club needs

The key here is the roster is versatile enough, with veteran Ian Desmond's flexibility and the fact that homegrown players are trained at several positions, that the Rockies aren't hamstrung on the position of the needed acquisition. Could it be a versatile free agent such as Marwin Gonzalez or Josh Harrison? Could they make a play for first baseman Carlos Santana, recently traded from the Phillies to the Mariners? The market also is full of second basemen and outfielders. Colorado just wants run production. The club also has been combing for bargains at catcher and relief pitcher.

Whom might they trade?

Most of the buzz has been players the Rockies don't want to trade -- like their starting pitchers and middle infielder Brendan Rodgers, who is ranked as the club's No. 1 prospect by MLB Pipeline. But look for Rodgers' name to come up. Other names that could surface are corner infield prospects Colton Welker (No. 2) and Tyler Nevin (No. 11). Expect clubs to ask about Dahl and righty pitcher Jon Gray, coming off 2018 struggles after a solid campaign in '17.

Prospects to know

The Arizona Fall League was an eye-opener, as Nevin and Sam Hilliard (No. 9) wowed experts. With Welker and Nevin in the system, could either of them be used in a deal? Is Hilliard -- big, fast and with bat speed -- a tailor-made Rockies corner outfielder or trade bait?

Rule 5 Draft

The Rockies enter the Winter Meetings at 39 players -- one shy of the 40-man roster limit. They aren't likely to participate in the Major League phase. The intriguing player who could draw interest is lefty pitcher Breiling Eusebio (No. 19), who was limited to three starts at Class A Asheville before undergoing Tommy John surgery. But considering his limited work in 2018 and '17 (shut down after eight Double-A starts with an oblique injury), it's a longshot.

Payroll summary

The Rockies are in the \$88 million range entering the Winter Meetings. Whether it's a one-year deal or the basis of a multi-year, Arenado could break the arbitration record for one year (\$23 million by Josh Donaldson in 2017), and there are six more arb-eligible players, including Story. Last year, the Rockies finished at \$143,968,544 (per Spotrac), although that included a long-settled \$4 million payout to former shortstop Jose Reyes. Last year's Opening Day payroll was a club record, and Bridich has said the club is on a "responsible growth" plan.



**VIP Experience part of Rockies' WM auction**  
**Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 10th, 2018**

LAS VEGAS -- The Rockies are offering Spring Training and Coors Field experiences up for bid in the seventh annual Winter Meetings charity auction.

This year's auction will support the Jackie Robinson Foundation and the Negro Leagues Museum, two important institutions that educate future generations of young people through honoring significant moments and individuals of baseball's past.

The auction is live on [MLB.com/wintermeetingsauction](http://MLB.com/wintermeetingsauction) through Thursday, when it will conclude at 8 p.m. MT. Items include special baseball experiences, including meetings with some of the game's biggest stars, along with unique items donated by MLB and the 30 clubs.

The following items are up for bid:

- Spring Training VIP Experience: The winner and three guests receive an opportunity to tour the Rockies' Scottsdale, Ariz., training center, Salt River Fields at Talking Stick; meet manager Bud Black; watch batting practice from the field; have lunch in the complex dining room and watch a game from great seats. The date would be mutually agreed upon. Travel to Arizona and lodging are not included.
- Coors Field VIP Experience: The winner and three guests will have the opportunity to tour Coors Field broadcast booths, watch batting practice from the field and meet all of the Rockies' broadcasters before enjoying the game from great seats.

**Every team's Winter Meetings wish list**  
**MLB clubs head to Las Vegas next week for annual summit**  
**David Adler and Chad Thornburg | MLB.com | Dec. 9th, 2018**

Baseball's annual Winter Meetings are set to begin on Monday in Las Vegas, and that means Hot Stove season is about to really kick into high gear.

There have already been some big moves this offseason -- the Yankees' trade for James Paxton, the Mets' trade for Edwin Diaz and Robinson Cano, the Nationals' signing of Patrick Corbin, the Cardinals' trade for Paul Goldschmidt -- but that's only the beginning.

When the industry gathers at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, it'll be a chance for teams to set deals in motion and maybe make a big splash or two. What might those be this year? MLB.com is previewing the Winter Meetings right here.

Here are the biggest needs for each of the 30 MLB clubs entering the Winter Meetings.

## AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST

### Blue Jays

A rotation with a lot of question marks beyond Marcus Stroman and Aaron Sanchez means Toronto needs arms. And those two starters might even draw trade offers, as they're each under control for only two more seasons. [More >](#)

### Orioles

New general manager Mike Elias has his work cut out for him, as there's a lot the O's need. Besides a new manager and coaching staff, the biggest needs include a middle infielder to pair with Jonathan Villar, a third baseman and multiple outfielders. [More >](#)

### Rays

The Rays are casting a wide net this offseason in their search for potential impact acquisitions on the trade and free-agent markets. They're looking to add a veteran starter and a hitter to a young core that won 90 games in 2018. [More >](#)

## Red Sox

The World Series champs have already brought back Steve Pearce and Nathan Eovaldi. But Craig Kimbrel and Joe Kelly are also free agents, which leaves the bullpen as the top priority. Relievers like Adam Ottavino, David Robertson and Andrew Miller will be on the table. [More >](#)

## Yankees

The Yankees want one more starter to go with Paxton and the returning CC Sabathia. They want to preserve their deep bullpen, too, with Robertson and Zach Britton being free agents. There's also the Didi Gregorius-sized hole at shortstop, as he'll be recovering from Tommy John surgery. Manny Machado, anyone? [More >](#)

## AL CENTRAL

### Indians

The Indians could be on the verge of some franchise-altering moves. They've traded All-Star catcher Yan Gomes and could deal starters Trevor Bauer or Corey Kluber or some of their top Minor League prospects to address needs elsewhere on the roster, such as the outfield and their bullpen. [More >](#)

### Royals

The Royals' weakest area in 2018 was the relief corps, so that'll be the focus entering the Winter Meetings. They need arms at the back end of the bullpen, and GM Dayton Moore will likely be looking for some veteran additions. [More >](#)

### Tigers

The middle infield will probably be the Tigers' chief priority -- they want to add a veteran shortstop and maybe a second baseman, too, to give prospect Dawel Lugo time to develop. Detroit is also looking for bullpen help ... but then again, who isn't? [More >](#)

### Twins

The Twins want a starter and a closer -- they need to fill that second role after trading Fernando Rodney in August. Plus, they could make a move for a corner infielder/outfielder to complement recent acquisition C.J. Cron. [More >](#)

## White Sox

The White Sox are thinking big. Bryce Harper big. They have serious interest in the superstar free agent. Beyond that, a starter to bolster the rotation in Michael Kopech's absence may be on the list. [More >](#)

## AL WEST

### Angels

The Angels need more pitching, and they need it for both their starting rotation and bullpen. After a string of pitching injuries over the last few years, the club will likely prioritize durability in its search. Los Angeles could also seek an upgrade at catcher, particularly an experienced option. [More >](#)

### Astros

The Astros' roster is still loaded, but they missed out on two players they were interested in: Goldschmidt and Eovaldi. That gives a clue about what Houston will be pursuing at the Winter Meetings -- a starter and an impact bat. [More >](#)

### Athletics

The A's offseason agenda remains focused on filling out their rotation and finding a catcher. They have a decision to make on whether they want to bring back second baseman Jed Lowrie, while they also need to acquire multiple starting pitchers. Look for Oakland to ramp up its activity next week after a quiet start to the offseason. [More >](#)

### Mariners

Jerry Dipoto's been making trades left and right, and his roster revamp isn't done yet. The M's might not swing another blockbuster, but they'll certainly be looking to add pitching, especially with both their ace Paxton and their closer Diaz now on new clubs. [More >](#)

### Rangers

The Rangers have one thing on the mind: pitching. That means multiple inning-eating starters and depth for a depleted bullpen. Texas might not splurge on an expensive name, but they'll be seeking dependability to help take pressure off their younger pitchers. [More >](#)

## NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST

### Braves

The Braves have already gone out and gotten Josh Donaldson and Brian McCann. What's next? Perhaps an ace for the pitching staff, and maybe even more. Atlanta might also look for an outfielder like Michael Brantley, or a late-inning reliever. [More >](#)

### Marlins

The Marlins' burning question entering the Winter Meetings: Will they trade J.T. Realmuto? But that's not the only question. The rebuilding Marlins need to add offense, through short-term free agent deals or trades, all if the price is right. [More >](#)

### Mets

Brodie Van Wagenen has already made waves with his trade for Cano and Diaz. What will the new Mets GM do at his first Winter Meetings? His next move could be for a catcher (Realmuto?), a right-handed-hitting outfielder (A.J. Pollock?) or another stud reliever (Miller?). [More >](#)

### Nationals

The Nats didn't wait for the Winter Meetings to snatch the top free-agent starter on the market, Corbin. And that's only one of the additions they've already made. They won't wait on Harper to continue shopping, either -- they feel they might be an arm short in the rotation and the bullpen, and they'll want a left-handed bat, even if it's not Harper. [More >](#)

### Phillies

The Phillies are going big. They want Machado, and they want Harper. They also want a frontline starting pitcher, especially after missing out on Corbin. It should be an exciting Winter Meetings for Philly. [More >](#)

## NL CENTRAL

### Brewers

The Brewers don't have much wiggle room within their payroll, but their most significant need is at second base after the club non-tendered Jonathan Schoop. The club may also seek an upgrade at catcher and depth for its bullpen, but those needs are less pressing than the vacancy at second. [More >](#)

#### Cardinals

The Cardinals just pulled off one of the biggest moves of the offseason with their blockbuster trade for Goldschmidt, but they still enter next week's Winter Meetings with a shopping list. The club's top priority of an impact bat has been resolved, so now the focus shifts to the bullpen, which needs a late-inning left-hander and a closer. They're also in the market for a reserve catcher. [More >](#)

#### Cubs

The Cubs have been linked to Harper all offseason, and the former Nationals star's free agency will be in the spotlight next week. Besides a potential big splash -- which president of baseball operations Theo Epstein has said would require some payroll creativity to add "dollars of real significance" -- Chicago is seeking additional bullpen depth, a backup catcher and a utility infielder. [More >](#)

#### Pirates

The Pirates already re-signed Jung Ho Kang and added outfielder Lonnie Chisenhall. Expect them to keep an eye on the shortstop market, though GM Neal Huntington has said they're comfortable with rookie Kevin Newman and Erik Gonzalez at the position. They could also add another left-handed bullpen arm. [More >](#)

#### Reds

With a new manager in tow, the Reds project to be aggressive in moving beyond their rebuilding effort after four straight last-place finishes in the NL Central. They need more pitching, both in their rotation and bullpen. They're unlikely to be in the mix for a top free-agent arm like Dallas Keuchel, but could add someone from the tier below him. They also need to find a replacement for Billy Hamilton in center field. [More >](#)

#### NL WEST

#### D-backs

The D-backs addressed one of their top offseason priorities in acquiring starting pitcher Luke Weaver in the Goldschmidt trade. Now they need to fill the void in center field left by Pollock, who is unlikely to re-sign with Arizona, and may also add bullpen depth. [More >](#)

#### Dodgers

The Dodgers have already been linked to a number of top free-agent and trade targets this winter, including Harper, Kluber, Yusei Kikuchi and Jose Abreu, so many will be looking to Los Angeles to see how it retools after a second consecutive World Series defeat. The Dodgers need a veteran catcher to pair with Austin Barnes, and will look to upgrade their bullpen. [More >](#)

#### Giants

New president of baseball operations Farhan Zaidi enters his first Winter Meetings with the Giants looking to address needs in the outfield, rotation and bullpen. He could possibly deepen the club's talent pool by dealing one of its veterans, with Madison Bumgarner being the most valuable trade chip among them. [More >](#)

#### Padres

The Padres have many holes to address on their roster, including third-base and shortstop jobs that are wide open. Among their biggest priorities is acquiring starting pitching, as no rotation members are currently guaranteed spots for next season. The club could also look to deal from its surplus of Major League outfielders. [More >](#)

#### Rockies

With DJ LeMahieu, Carlos Gonzalez and Gerardo Parra all hitting free agency, the Rockies will prioritize offense this offseason. Their versatile roster affords them the luxury of not having limiting needs at specific positions in their search for run production.

**Fall League unveils Top Prospects team**  
**William Boor | MLB.com | Dec. 10th, 2018**

Braxton Davidson's dramatic walk-off homer in the 10th inning back on Nov. 17th lifted the Peoria Javelinas to back-to-back Arizona Fall League titles and signified the end of the AFL season.

However, here at MLB Pipeline, coverage of the AFL is constant. Following the on-the-field play, we have released our top 10 breakout prospects, the top 25 prospects of the AFL and our All-Arizona Fall League Team.

Of course, there's always room for more accolades and that's just what we have below as the Arizona Fall League announced its 2018 Top Prospects team on Monday morning.

The team, selected by league managers and coaches, recognizes players who distinguished themselves against other top prospects throughout the AFL. Voters were asked to consider not only a player's AFL performance, but also their Major League projectability.

#### Catchers

Daulton Varsho, D-backs No. 5 prospect: Varsho, who put together four multihit efforts over a five-game span, hit .262 and drove in nine runs in 18 games.

Keibert Ruiz, Dodgers No. 2 prospect (No. 39 on Top 100): Ruiz played in just 13 games, but left a strong impression on the league's managers and coaches. The 20-year-old hit .286 with six RBIs and also drew six walks while striking out just twice.

#### First Base

Tyler Nevin, Rockies No. 11 prospect: Nevin hit a career-best .328 over 100 games during the regular season and carried that momentum with him into Arizona. Nevin got off to a fast start in the AFL, opening play with a 10-game hitting streak. From there, it was more of the same. The 21-year-old was the AFL's only .400 hitter and ran away with the batting title, slashing .426/.535/.593 and also finished third in the league with 20 RBIs.



Evan White, Mariners No. 5 prospect: White, who collected 14 RBIs over 18 games, hit .257 with a pair of homers in the AFL. White put together a nine-game hitting streak from late October to early November and also stole two bases after stealing just four during the regular season.

#### Second Base:

Keston Hiura, Brewers No. 1 prospect (No. 30 on the Top 100): Hiura's ability to hit was no secret -- something his 70-grade hit tool clearly indicated. However, just because it was known that Hiura can hit doesn't mean that watching him do so was any less impressive. The Brewers top prospect went to Arizona to work on his defense and while he made strides in that department, it was his offense that led to him MVP honors. Hiura, who hit .323, led the league in hits (31), RBIs (33) and total bases (54). He also hit the only grand slam of the AFL, put together 11 multihit games and turned in two five-RBI performances.

Jahmai Jones, Angels No. 4 prospect: Jones, coming off a season during which he hit just .239 over 123 games, hit .321 with two homers and 11 RBI in 19 AFL contests.

#### Third Base:

Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Blue Jays No. 1 prospect (No. 1 on Top 100): Guerrero entered the AFL as the most talked-about prospect and certainly didn't disappoint. Guerrero picked up a trio of hits on Opening Day and kept the hits coming as he began the season with a 13-game hitting streak. The 19-year-old also impressed on the league's biggest stage, hitting a 117 mph double in the Fall Stars Game and concluded his stint in Arizona with a .351 batting average.

Yu Chang, Indians No. 6 prospect: Chang, who also played in the 2017 Fall League, put together a strong offensive showing. The shortstop hit .337, thanks in large part to a stretch where he strung together eight multihit efforts over 12 games. Chang also finished tied for third in total bases (45) and fourth in hits (29).

#### Shortstops:

Cole Tucker, Pirates No. 5 prospect: Tucker's .370 average certainly jumps off the page, but the 22-year-old impressed defensively as well. Tucker's 11 multihit games tied for the league lead (Hiura) and his 30 hits left him tied for second. Tucker also impressed off the field, regularly staying after the game to take photos and sign autographs and was honored with the league's sportsmanship award.

Lucius Fox, Rays No. 9 prospect: Fox, who hit .326 over 21 games, put together an eight-game hitting streak in mid-October and tied for second in the league with 10 multihit games. Fox also drew 16 walks and stole seven bases.

#### Outfielders:

Luis Robert, White Sox No. 4 prospect (No. 44 on Top 100): Robert missed a little bit of time with a minor injury during the AFL, but still hit .324 over 18 games. The winner of the week five Player of the Week Award, Robert put up a 14-game hitting streak from Oc. 9 to Nov. 9. The hitting streak was the longest in the AFL since 2014.

Cristian Pache, Braves No. 6 prospect (No. 68 on the Top 100): Pache hit .279 and turned in four straight multihit games in late October, but the 20-year-old may have been even more impressive defensively. Pache showed off his 60-grade arm and his 70-grade speed on numerous occasions in the outfield and also used that speed to steal three bases.

Ryan McKenna, Orioles No. 12 prospect: McKenna hit .315/.410/.457 over 127 games during the regular season, his best season since the Orioles picked him in the fourth-round of the 2015 Draft, and continued the breakout campaign in Arizona, where he hit .344/.474/.590.

Sam Hilliard, Rockies No. 9 prospect: Hilliard played in just 16 games, but the small sample size didn't keep him from producing. Hilliard had multiple hits in nearly half (seven) of the games he played and finished with two homers and a .328 average.

Daz Cameron, Tigers No. 8 prospect: Cameron stole 24 bases in the regular season and then swiped nine bases, which tied him for fourth, during the AFL. The son of former Major Leaguer Mike Cameron hit .342 over 20 games.

Nick Heath, Royals: Heath posted a .427 on-base percentage and once he got on base, he made the most of the opportunities. The Royals prospect led the AFL in stolen bases (13) and runs scored (21), while batting .338 over 21 games.

#### Designated Hitters:

Peter Alonso, Mets No. 2 prospect (No. 58 on the Top 100): Alonso tied for the Minor League home run lead with 36 during the regular season and then tied for the AFL lead with six. In addition to his six homers, Alonso also hit seven doubles and often showed off his power with eye-popping exit velocities.

Will Craig, Pirates No. 16 prospect: Craig tied with Alonso and Davidson for the home run title, while also hitting .304 over 21 games.

#### Starting Pitchers

Nate Pearson, Blue Jays No. 4 prospect (No. 90 on the Top 100): Pearson racked up 23 strikeouts in 20 1/3 innings and although his ERA sat at 6.20, he did spin three scoreless outings. What's more, Pearson garnered plenty of attention during the Fall Stars Game when his fastball was clocked at 104 mph.

Erick Leal, Cubs: Leal nearly finished the AFL with a perfect 0.00 ERA, but gave up seven runs (six earned) in his final start. The right-hander began the AFL with a 19 1/3-inning scoreless streak and finished 2-1 with a 2.66 ERA over six starts.

#### Relief Pitchers:

Melvin Adon, Giants No. 19 prospect: Adon, a hard-throwing right-hander, was consistently missing bats out in Arizona. Adon notched 21 strikeouts in 12 1/3 innings and limited opponents to a .163 batting average against. He was particularly tough on right-handers as they managed to hit just .091 against him.

Justin Lawrence, Rockies No. 16 prospect: Lawrence tied for the AFL lead with three saves and used a nasty fastball-slider combo to strike out 13 batters in 10 2/3 innings.

**DJ LeMahieu is the best second baseman in Rockies history. So, why are they letting him walk away?**  
**Nick Groke | TheAthletic.com | Dec 10, 2018**

LAS VEGAS — A gumbo of assorted second basemen kicked the dirt at Coors Field over two decades before the Rockies finally found a true keystone, a two-way player so reliable, he at times disappeared in plain sight.

DJ LeMahieu, over his six seasons holding down the right side of the infield, helped form the core of a Rockies renaissance, their first consecutive trips to the playoffs in the 26-year history of the club.

Over the past four seasons, LeMahieu was outdone in WAR, according to Baseball Reference, by only Nolan Arenado and Charlie Blackmon among Rockies. Those three were Colorado's pillars.

"You remember David Eckstein?" Rockies manager Bud Black asked last year. "That son of a bitch showed up. He showed up every day and helped you win. DJ is one of those players.

"He always shows up."

So, why, after LeMahieu won a third Gold Glove last month, after he solidified his spot as the best second baseman in club history, are the Rockies so willing to let him walk away?

"We certainly have a lot of history with DJ. We like him and respect the heck out of him," Colorado general manager Jeff Bridich said Monday at the start of baseball's Winter Meetings. "But we have some guys who are, in theory, able to come in and play second base."

The Rockies entered this week looking to drastically improve their offense, after fizzling out of the National League playoffs in a three-game sweep to the Brewers. Colorado scored just two runs in total in that series.

Bridich, though, can honestly consider his team legitimate contenders next season. They were tied with the Dodgers atop the NL West after 162 games, falling just short in a one-game playoff sandwiched between the end of the regular-season schedule and a wild-card victory over the Cubs.

They are a playoff-worthy team, it seems, but they are also among the worst offenses in the NL. So, Bridich is on the prowl for an offensive boost.

He spoke to the Diamondbacks with sincere intentions of trading for six-time all-star first baseman Paul Goldschmidt, Bridich said Monday. But it appears the Rockies were boxed out from the start, as Arizona was likely reluctant to trade Goldschmidt to a division rival.

The Rockies also spoke to the Phillies about a trade for first baseman Carlos Santana before he was dealt to the Mariners. And Bridich did not dispel the notion that he might be interested in free-agent utility infielder Marwin Gonzalez, a seven-year mainstay with the Astros.

But within this flurry of offseason ideas, LeMahieu is nowhere to be found.

Instead, the Dodgers, Athletics and Nationals, at least, have shown more than a passing interest in signing LeMahieu. He is among the most attractive free-agent second basemen in a market overflowing with them.

"I've heard a lot of different things," LeMahieu said after the Rockies were eliminated at Coors Field. "The thought of it might being my last game as a Rockie makes it more emotional than the ends of other seasons."

The family tree of Rockies second basemen extends from Eric Young to Mike Lansing to Kaz Matsui and Clint Barmes, among others. LeMahieu, though, outdid them all. During the winter meetings seven years ago, the Rockies traded third baseman Ian Stewart and pitcher Casey Weathers to the Cubs for outfielder Tyler Colvin and LeMahieu. He became the most productive piece of the trade, a two-time all-star, three-time Gold Glove winner and an NL batting champ in 2016.

LeMahieu is 30 now and coming off a confusing year offensively. He increased his power numbers, with a career-high 15 home runs and spike in pull power to the left side, something that more accurately matches his 6-foot-4, 215-pound frame. But he was never a slugger, and his drop in on-base percentage (to .321 last season), OPS (.749) and OPS+ (88) turned out a more average season offensively.

His value, as Black said, extends to winning games. When Blackmon can't figure out a mysterious detail in a game, he asks LeMahieu, he said. When Arenado struggled at the plate through September, LeMahieu picked up the slack, hitting a .762 OPS, his best month since April. He was who the Rockies relied on down the stretch late in games. His solo home run at San Diego early in September brought Colorado's offense to life.

"We have had a good core here," Arenado said. "If some of those pieces are gonna be gone, like (Carlos Gonzalez) and DJ, you're going to feel it. Those are huge pieces of our team."

In a crowded market for second basemen, and after a depressed bear market for veterans last year, LeMahieu's free-agent price does not stand to break any banks, it seems. But a player of his caliber seems worthy of at least a multi-year deal. And that's where the Rockies are balking.

Ryan McMahon, 23, a prospect third baseman who converted to first base then second base, found sparse playing time last year but seems poised for a jump. Garrett Hampson, 24, debuted at second base last season and flashed the contact skills and speed that helped him sprint through Triple A. And Brendan Rodgers, 22, the Rockies' top prospect, might move from shortstop to second base.

That leaves the Rockies with three possible replacements for LeMahieu, all cheap in their early years of team control, but all unproven.

Bridich's search for offensive improvement cannot be guaranteed by any of them.

"Their level of talent isn't lost on us," Bridich said. "But being a playoff team and having those expectations ... we need to help them."

His focus at the Winter Meetings, Bridich said, narrowed to finding help at first base and in the outfield. LeMahieu's exit is all but assured. And it will not be without pain.

“He doesn’t like talking to the media because it doesn’t help him win baseball games,” Blackmon said of LeMahieu. “And that’s what he cares about. That and his teammates. He’s one of my favorite people. I’d really like to see him next year. But if we don’t, I’ll see him, just maybe not in the same uniform. I wish people knew him like I did.”



**Rockies can afford Nolan Arenado, GM Jeff Bridich says at winter meetings**  
**Dave Madagan could be Colorado's new hitting coach**  
**Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Dec. 10, 2018**

LAS VEGAS — Topic No. 1 for Rockies fans this winter is not about who's on first in 2019. Nor is it about whether the club will add a power bat to wake up its sleepy offense. Those issues, important as they are, are secondary.

The fate of all-star third baseman Nolan Arenado, who's entering the final year of his contract, trumps everything, at least in the eyes of many fans. Will he sign a long-term deal? Will he be traded?

Yet here at the winter meetings, Arenado's future has been put on the back burner, at least for now. General manager Jeff Bridich, who's busy swapping text messages with teams and agents, has more immediate concerns at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino.

Yes, Bridich is aware of the Arenado issue, and he made it clear Monday that the Rockies are still in the game when it comes to a long-term deal with their third baseman. Bridich said the Rockies continue to have "good communication" with Arenado. The GM also reiterated that Colorado could afford to pay Arenado north of \$200 million on a new deal, adding, again, that the Rockies are seeking "responsible growth."

Last season, the Rockies had an opening-day payroll of \$136.9 million and have steadily increased their payroll over the last few years.

"Our payroll has grown a lot over the past half-decade, and we're continuing to plan on, as I've said in the past, responsible growth," Bridich said. "We're not in a holding pattern. We're not where we're drawing back on our payroll. We believe that we can continue to grow responsibly."

That being said, the Rockies aren't suddenly going to start spending like the Red Sox or the Dodgers.

"It's not going to grow by huge, huge, huge jumps every single year, but we've made some commitments that we believe in, guys that we believe in," he said. "We signed (outfielder) Charlie Blackmon this past year to a long-term deal (six years, \$108 million)."

Hit man. Dave Magadan has emerged as a strong contender to be the Rockies' next hitting coach, replacing the departed Duane Espy. Bridich, however, would not confirm that Madagan will join the staff of manager Bud Black. Bridich did say that the club will hire one hitting coach, plus retain Jeff Salazar as the second hitting coach. Magadan was the Red Sox's hitting coach when they defeated the Rockies in the 2007 World Series.

Magadan, 55, played in the majors for parts of 16 season and was the hitting coach at Arizona for the past three seasons.

Redmond to O's? Rockies bench coach Mike Redmond has interviewed for the job as the Orioles' next manager. He is one of six candidates for the job. Bridich said the Rockies gave permission to the Orioles to allow Redmond to interview.

Quotable. "The nice thing with us is that we don't feel like we have to make a whole slew of changes to the team. We are very comfortable and very happy and very confident in so much of what we have on this team. So we get to be somewhat picky and somewhat choosy." — Bridich

Footnotes. It's clear that Colorado is looking for help in the outfield or at first base. When asked if multidimensional player Marwin Gonzalez was on the club's radar, Bridich said, "That's tough to say," seeming to indicate that the Rockies are not making a pitch for him. Bridich did say that the Rockies talked to Philadelphia about slugging first baseman Carlos Santana, before Santana was traded to Seattle last week. There is no clear indications yet that the Mariners are willing to trade him again. ... Colorado talked to Arizona about trading for all-star first baseman Paul Goldschmidt, Bridich confirmed. But the GM added it quickly became clear that the D-backs were not interested in trading Goldschmidt to Colorado. Goldschmidt was traded to St. Louis last week.

**Rockies head to winter meetings needing offense, but will they find it?  
GM Jeff Bridich says Colorado following “responsible growth plan”  
Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Dec. 8, 2018**

Baseball’s annual winter meetings open Monday at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas. The location invites a bevy of cliches, so we’ll get those out of the way quickly.

Which team will roll the dice on high-priced free-agent outfielder Bryce Harper, or will his agent, Scott Boras, hold out until after the holidays to see if Harper can land baseball’s first 10-year, \$350 million contract? Will the up-and-coming Phillies gamble \$300 million to land infielder Manny Machado?

The Cardinals have already traded for star first baseman Paul Goldschmidt, the Mariners shipped infielder Robinson Cano to the Mets, and it looks like the Indians are open to trading either Corey Kluber or Trevor Bauer, depending on which starting pitcher draws the most chips. But what other big-time wheeling and dealing will take place? It should make for a very newsy four days.

Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich, as usual, is not showing his hand. In his first four winter meetings, Bridich showed no interest in making a big move simply for the sake of making a big move. Much to the consternation of Rockies hot stove fans, that philosophy remains intact and it’s quite possible the Rockies will leave Las Vegas without making a major trade or signing a high-profile free agent.

All we really know for sure is that Bridich says he wants to upgrade Colorado’s inconsistent offense. You can’t blame him. Colorado’s overall .256 batting average was the worst in franchise history, as was its .225 road average.

Following is a breakdown of where the Rockies stand entering the meetings.

— Money matters: The Rockies finished the 2018 season with a club record \$143.9 million payroll (according to Spotrac). Entering the meetings, the club stands in the \$88 million range, but it has a number of high-priced decisions to make. Star third baseman Nolan Arenado is entering his final year of arbitration and it appears he’ll break the arbitration record for a one-year deal, surpassing the \$23 million made by Josh Donaldson in 2017. The Rockies also have six more arb-eligible

players, including all-star shortstop Trevor Story, who could be in line for a \$6 million salary. Bridich did not say if the Rockies will up the ante in 2019, but did say the club is following “a responsible growth” plan.

— Getting offensive: Before the 2017 season, the Rockies signed Ian Desmond to a five-year, \$70 million deal, projecting him as a first baseman and utility player. Perhaps the Rockies will go athleticism and versatility again by signing a free agent such as Marwin Gonzalez or Josh Harrison.

Ideally, Colorado would like to land a power-hitting first baseman, thus freeing up Desmond for other outfield duty. First baseman Carlos Santana might be a fit, but he was just traded from Philadelphia to Seattle. Would the Mariners, currently in full rebuilding mode, turn around and trade Santana? It’s possible.

A dark-horse trade possibility could be Toronto outfielder Kevin Pillar, who’s athleticism and glove work would make him a good fit for Coors Field. He’s projected to make \$5.3 million through arbitration and he showed some value at the plate last season, hitting 15 home runs, driving in 59 runs and slashing .252/.282/.426.

Free-agent A.J. Pollock, the former Diamondbacks outfielder who has tormented the Rockies for years, would be a decent fit, but he’s reportedly seeking a contract similar to the five-year, \$80 million deal Lorenzo Cain signed with Milwaukee last winter. That’s probably too rich for the Rockies.

— Trade hurdles: As Bridich loves to say, “it takes two to tango,” so trades are impossible to predict. Plenty of teams covet the Rockies’ young talent, particularly top infield prospect Brendan Rodgers and front-of-the-rotation starters Kyle Freeland and German Marquez. Teams have inquired about inconsistent Jon Gray, too. Bridich has said that no one is “untouchable,” but the Rockies would have to be blown away to give up their core young pitchers.

**Adam Ottavino: Game is different now, Babe Ruth would struggle**  
**Associated Press | ESPN.com | Dec. 11, 2018**

Whichever team signs free-agent reliever Adam Ottavino will have a confident pitcher.

Assessing the state of today's game on MLB's Statcast podcast, the 33-year-old right-hander said that Babe Ruth couldn't keep up.

"I had an argument with a coach in Triple-A about Babe Ruth's effectiveness in today's game," Ottavino said. "I said, 'Babe Ruth, with that swing, swinging that bat, I got him hitting .140 with eight homers.'

"He was like, 'Are you nuts? Babe Ruth would hit .370 with 60 homers,' and I'm like, 'I would strike Babe Ruth out every time.'

"I'm not trying to disrespect him, you know, rest in peace, you know, shoutout to Babe Ruth. But it was a different game. I mean, the guy ate hot dogs and drank beer and did whatever he did. It was just a different game."

Ottavino had a breakout 2018 campaign, appearing in 75 games with a 2.43 ERA and 112 strikeouts in 77⅔ innings. That came after he posted a 5.06 ERA with 63 K's in 53⅓ innings the year before.

In a 22-year career, Ruth batted .342 with 714 homers. He is the all-time leader in slugging percentage at .690 and OPS at 1.164.

And Ruth likely could strike out Ottavino every time. The left-hander started his career as a pitcher with the Boston Red Sox, winning 20 games twice and posting a career 2.28 ERA. He won two games in the 1918 World Series when the Red Sox beat the Chicago Cubs in six games.

**Elegy for '18 – Colorado Rockies**  
**Dan Szymborski | FanGraphs.com | December 7, 2018**

Nolan Arenado was one of two MVP-candidate hitters on an otherwise sluggish Colorado offense.

The Colorado Rockies beat the Chicago Cubs in the Wild Card game and almost toppled the reigning NL champion Dodgers in the West, but fell to the awesome power of Wade Miley and Jhoulys Chacin. Colorado was a solid team in 2018, but remained a bundle of confusing inconsistencies. Unlike many good Rockies teams, they figured out how to field a rotation that was little fazed by Planet Coors, only to have a shallow, unsteady offense prove to be their downfall.

### The Setup

Coming off an 87-75 season, the team's first winning season in seven years and first playoff appearance in eight, and with a few glaring holes, the opportunity existed for the Rockies to make an aggressive push to challenge the NL elites over the 2017-2018 offseason.

Instead, the team spent \$106 million on three free agent relievers – Wade Davis, Bryan Shaw, and the returning Jake McGee. The bullpen was actually a strength for the team in 2017, finishing sixth in the majors in WAR among relievers; their 3.94 FIP was quite impressive for a team that played half their games at Coors Field. If you don't buy into WAR for relievers, that 3.94 FIP was good enough for the team to rank sixth in the majors in FIP- and seventh in ERA-.

Now, it was reasonable to make bullpen additions, especially after 2017 All-Star Greg Holland, who ended up doing a poor job evaluating the market for his services, departed in free agency. It may have been necessary to make an addition even if they had kept Holland, of course, given his 6.38 second-half ERA (I wouldn't fault the Rockies for Holland's 2018 in this scenario, Jeff Bridich not being a Time Lord as far as I know).

What was unreasonable was what the Rockies did about the significant holes they had outside of the bullpen.

Namely? Next-to-nothing.

The team's 90 OPS+ in 2017 was the 10th-worst in modern baseball history among teams that made the playoffs, though it has since been knocked down to 11th by the 2018 Rockies. Their 87-75 record, while a positive given the team's recent

history, felt a bit disappointing considering it took six above-average starters (German Marquel, Kyle Freeland, Tyler Chatwood, Antonio Senzatela, Jon Gray, and Tyler Anderson), a top-tier bullpen, and two legitimate MVP candidates on the offense just to get that point.

There's a fair argument to be made that OPS+ and similar measures can underrate the Rockies. One longstanding explanation has been the Coors Field hangover theory, which has been demonstrated with mixed results over the last decade, and generally holds that Rockies hitters are hurt somewhat by the difference between Coors Field and the parks closer to sea level. The problem for the Rockies' offense is that this effect has a limit; there isn't enough wiggle room to make them anywhere near a 105 OPS+ team or something.

And furthermore, if Rockies hitters face a special disadvantage from playing at Coors that simply makes hitters worse overall in terms of their value, it doesn't excuse the front office's role in that underperformance; it means that they have to overengineer things when putting together an offense. It's an aggravating factor for a crime of apathy, not a mitigating one.

The front office made exactly one move to improve the offense, bringing in Chris Iannetta, who hit .254/.354/.511 for the Diamondbacks in 2017; he'd turn 35 near the start of the 2018 season. And that was it.

Whether due to ignorance or incompetence, the front office ignored the fact that their 1B/LF/RF offensive triad were all at the bottom of the league in 2017. Despite the noise about giving Ryan McMahon and David Dahl real shots in spring training, Ian Desmond and the injured Gerardo Parra were given their jobs back on a silver platter, along with Carlos Gonzalez, who re-signed with the team in the middle of spring training.

#### The Projection

The ZiPS projections had the Rockies at 82-80 coming into the season, facing significant trouble behind the Dodgers from the Diamondbacks (a good call for 5/6th of the season) and the Giants (oops). ZiPS was very optimistic about the pitching staff, with Jon Gray, German Marquez, Kyle Freeland, Antonio Senzatela, Tyler Anderson, a returning Chad Bettis, and even Jeff Hoffman all projected for an ERA+ of at least 96 for the season. But ZiPS only saw 1.0 combined WAR from the Trio of Sadness at 1B/LF/RF, and another blazing hot 0.7 WAR from Iannetta.

## The Results

For a nine-win miss, ZiPS didn't do too badly with the Rockies, getting the team's essential contours right but missing on the magnitude of just how good the starting pitchers were. From a projected solid-and-deep mix of no. 2 and 3 starters came two stars in German Marquez and Kyle Freeland, the latter of whom was a legitimate Cy Young ballot contender (depending on your philosophy on FIP vs. ERA and related adjusted measures when it comes to evaluating past contributions).

The Rockies should get a ton of credit for their rotation, piecing together a group that received relatively little trouble from pitching half of their games in Coors Field, a feat that has frequently eluded the team over their existence. They've built good bullpens before — the mid 90s Rockies had a terrific group — but starting pitching was always a particular bedevilment.

### Colorado Pitching Rotations, 1993-2018

Season	ERA	FIP	WAR	ERA-
2009	4.10	3.97	16.8	89
2018	4.17	4.07	15.0	90
2017	4.59	4.56	11.7	91
2010	4.21	3.83	16.3	92
2007	4.58	4.71	11.8	96
2006	4.72	4.50	14.9	96
2000	5.59	5.31	11.4	98
2016	4.79	4.39	11.6	99
1995	5.19	4.92	8.3	101
2013	4.57	4.11	11.0	104
2001	5.48	5.14	9.8	105
1997	5.48	5.25	7.4	106
1998	5.62	4.99	10.7	107
2011	4.73	4.46	8.4	108
2002	5.24	5.27	5.4	108
1996	5.68	5.42	6.1	109



2008	5.14	4.49	12.0	110
1994	5.30	4.72	6.4	111
1999	6.19	5.61	7.6	111
2003	5.57	5.16	7.2	113
2014	4.89	4.54	5.9	114
2005	5.30	4.83	8.2	114
2004	5.54	5.19	7.1	114
2015	5.27	4.87	4.3	117
1993	5.49	4.81	5.6	119
2012	5.81	5.14	2.6	126

Surprisingly, the bullpen turned out to be a bit of a disaster over the first half of the season. Davis wasn't horrific, just mediocre, but Shaw and McGee were nearly unmitigated disasters; the three signed relievers combining to make \$31 million in return for 171.1 innings of 5.41 ERA ball, which is...not...good. The second half of the season turned out to be sunnier and the addition of Seung-hwan Oh was one of the better trade pickups in baseball.

The offense was a rerun of the 2017 season. Once again, the team had two MVP candidates (with Charlie Blackmon swapped out for Trevor Story) and little production from the key offensive positions. The aforementioned Trio of Sadness, projected at 1.0 WAR, combined for 1.0 WAR, though with the odd wrinkle that they only got that high because of Carlos Gonzalez's positive defense by UZR. David Dahl grudgingly got playing time at points when healthy, and Ryan McMahon was mostly relegated to the bench. Raimel Tapia appeared in 25 games but only started two of them, generally being used only as a pinch-hitter or pinch-runner.

Given a chance at a mulligan to address the offensive at the trade deadline, the Rockies made the big addition of...Matt Holliday, who received little interest in the offseason and spent his age-38 season out of professional baseball. Holliday did hit, but gave back almost as much value in defense, finishing at 0.1 WAR in his brief return. It's notable how easily Holliday was handed playing time compared to the team's young players, getting 65 plate appearances in his five weeks with little of the resistance McMahon or Tapia faced.

Despite the front office hinderance, the Rockies' rotation and stars got them to 90 wins, a game shy of toppling the Dodgers in the division, and the playoffs, before an embarrassing NLDS sweep by the Brewers, only scoring two runs in three games.

#### What Comes Next

What's frustrating about the Rockies is just how many of the tools they have for a great team, rather than a merely good one that wins 85-90 games for a few years. The player development part of the front office has done a terrific job, with almost the entire rotation coming from within; the lone exception is German Marquez, who was obtained from the Rays in the Corey Dickerson trade. The team's three MVP-candidate position players the last two years (Blackmon, Arenado, and Story) are also farm system products. In the pen, Scott Oberg was homegrown and while Adam Ottavino wasn't a Colorado product, the Rockies were the team that turned him into a top reliever after being a mediocre starting pitcher prospect claimed off waivers.

And the team has more talent coming. Brendan Rodgers should seize a job in the infield fairly quickly, and Tapia and McMahon, while not technically qualifying as prospects, really should be given their limited opportunities to shine thus far.

It's at the major league level, however, the team is just not currently run all that well. But there's still time; despite the problems, they did make the playoffs in consecutive seasons, and the team still has opportunities to add real difference-makers in offense. Why shouldn't the Rockies be a player for Bryce Harper? I'd argue there's no team in baseball that needs him more.

And changing how the team is run wouldn't require a giant teardown and rebuild. It just requires properly evaluating the team's offensive weaknesses, realizing that Ian Desmond is a sunk cost who should either be a role player or making the league minimum with another team after his release, and treating the team's offensive prospects as potential contributors who can add value rather than as inconveniences for mediocre veterans. Keep the team, nix the front office.

#### ZiPS Projection – Nolan Arenado

One problem on the horizon for Colorado is the impending free agency of Nolan Arenado, the prize of their high-performing prospect pipeline. He's Troy Tulowitzki without the injuries, a player still on the sunny side of 30 who could very possibly have Hall of Fame career, especially if the BBWAA becomes better at evaluating mid-spectrum players.

ZiPS Projections – Nolan Arenado

Year	BA	OBP	SLG	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB	OPS+
	DR	WAR												
2019	.289	.356	.552	589	100	170	39	4	36	118	63	118	2	123
	9	4.5												
2020	.288	.356	.552	562	94	162	39	5	33	111	60	110	2	123
	8	4.2												
2021	.288	.355	.550	545	90	157	37	5	32	107	57	104	2	122
	7	4.0												
2022	.286	.352	.537	525	84	150	35	5	29	99	54	98	2	119
	7	3.6												
2023	.279	.344	.512	502	77	140	32	5	25	90	50	91	2	111
	6	2.8												
2024	.274	.336	.487	478	70	131	28	4	22	81	45	82	2	103
	5	2.1												

ZiPS suggests a five-year, \$143 million extension for Arenado if signed today. While he’s likely not the type of player who should be signed to an eight-to-ten-year extension, as he’s not hitting the free agent market at as young an age as Manny Machado or Bryce Harper are, he’s a player the Rockies can’t easily replace, and has deserved his MVP consideration the last two seasons.

**Rockies not close to a contract extension with Nolan Arenado**  
**Aniello Piro | MileHighSports.com | December 10, 2018**

The MLB Winter Meetings are underway in Las Vegas, NV, and the Colorado Rockies will be swirling in the hot stove conversation. And one of the hottest storylines attached to Colorado is the contract situation surrounding Nolan Arenado.

Arenado is set to become a free agent following the 2019 season. The Rockies have expressed interest in retaining the superstar third baseman long term, though there has been no reported traction on a deal.

Rockies General Manager Jeff Bridich is in Vegas and caught up with MLB Network to talk about the Rockies offseason and was asked in particular about Nolan Arenado.

“We are still communicating with Nolan,” Bridich said. “There is nothing to report one way or the other.”

Nothing to report means the Rockies aren't close. That's not a positive, considering Arenado has been with the team his entire career and is by-far the best player on the team. Maybe, the best in team history.

So, are the Rockies ready to give Arenado that massive deal?

“Yeah, sure.” He said. “Our payroll has grown a lot over the past half decade, and we are continuing to plan on, as I have said in the past, responsible growth. We are not in a holding pattern, we are not drawing back on our payroll. We believe that we can continue to grow responsibly. It's not going to grow by huge jumps every single year, but we have made some commitments that we believe in, guys that we believe in.”

Arenado will likely command north of \$200 million if he hits the open market. While the price tag is Rocky Mountain High, Colorado still has a legitimate chance of retaining him. Colorado has anteed up money before to retain players long term, including a massive seven-year deal worth more than \$125 million for Troy Tulowitzki in 2010, among others.

“We would love to have Nolan around for a long period of time,” Bridich said. “We have had a great relationship with him.”

Any negotiations the Rockies have with Arenado will be internal, but ideally, the Rockies would like to have their star signed to a new deal before the season starts. But, as one of the best players in the world, that seems less than likely.

Still, the Rockies and Nolan are working to get something done.

“Guys get to this point in their career,” Bridich said of Arenado’s impending free agency. “He’s earned it. He’s become one of the top three or five players in the entire game, and we are at a certain point in his career, and a lot of guys arrive at that point. Now it’s time to make adult decisions for everyone involved.”

Or, is Bridich calling Arenado out there, at the end?

Some general managers’ careers are defined by one or two big moves. If Bridich re-signs Arenado, that will be a home run, a highlight of his career. If he strikes out, that will be damning for Bridich’s legacy.

What comes next?

**After Arizona dealt Goldschmidt for peanuts, Rockies would be ludicrous to trade Arenado**  
**Aniello Piro | MileHighSports.com | December 8, 2018**

The baseball hot stove is off to an exhilarating start with many big deals having already come together.

The winter meetings have not even started yet, and Patrick Corbin has already landed a massive deal from the Washington Nationals. Nathan Evoldi re-signed with the Red Sox for over \$60 million. And most recently the Arizona Diamondbacks traded All-Star first baseman Paul Goldschmidt to the St. Louis Cardinals in exchange for three players and a 2019 Competitive Balance Round B draft pick.

Heading into the offseason, there was speculation that Arizona would ponder moving on from its franchise cornerstone and begin what would likely be a lengthy rebuild. The Diamondbacks wasted no time and dealt Goldschmidt quickly, signifying that Arizona feels its title window has closed.

The deal opens up the National League West a little bit more, but the Colorado Rockies and Los Angeles Dodgers remain the favorites to capture the division crown in 2019. More important than division implications, the situation in Phoenix, AZ., shows that Colorado would be wise to lock down Nolan Arenado.

Just like Goldschmidt, Arenado is set to become a free agent after the 2019 season. So the Rockies find themselves in an uncomfortable situation entering the year without a long-term commitment from the 27-year-old. There has been no indication that Arenado and the Rockies have made any traction on an extension, which casts a sense of doubt over the future outlook of the franchise as everyone ponders his potential exit.

While Colorado's situation with Arenado is similar Arizona's with Goldschmidt, the Rockies would be wise to do the opposite of its division rival and hang onto Arenado. If the Rockies were seriously considering moving him, the time to do so would have been last season.

Arizona received Carson Kelly, Andrew Young, and Luke Weaver in addition to the draft pick in the deal for Goldschmidt. The Diamondbacks went for volume in the deal and the overall return was a bit lackluster, considering Goldschmidt's impact.

While Goldy has just one season left on his current contract, it is safe to assume St. Louis will look to re-sign the all-star first baseman to a lucrative deal. If the Cardinals are able to do so, then the red birds will definitely be viewed as the winners in this trade.

Trading Goldschmidt was justifiable, but Arizona did not necessarily receive a premium return for a premium player. Kelly is projected to be a solid player and Weaver should slide into the rotation nicely; however, the lack of top-tier talent is a bit underwhelming.

As one person put it, "Cardinals won (the trade), Diamondbacks got a meh return." Another said, "More would have been nice, of course, but this seemed fair."

Applying the same set of principals to a deal involving Arenado just does not make much sense for the Rockies, unless Colorado would be receiving a massive overhaul of talent. Arenado is on par with Goldschmidt at the plate and is a better defender. He is also younger and plays a more vital position. Any deal for Arenado would need to be outstanding for Colorado.

So where does this leave the Rockies?

Well, Colorado is pinned between a rock and a hard place, but will likely have to ride this season out and roll the dice on Arenado choosing to stay. Trading Arenado now would only disgruntle a fanbase that has grown significantly over the past two seasons. With the potential of a third straight run at the playoffs, moving Arenado would undo much of that growth and get the Rockies killed in the court of public opinion.

The Rockies have been working progressively to improve every year and contend for a World Series title. 2019 will be a critical season for Colorado as the Rockies look to take the next step as a franchise though.

Trying to compete for a title with the cloud of Arenado's potential exit hanging over the club certainly adds some pressure. That said, Arenado has not been afraid to say that winning is his highest priority. If the Rockies continue to trend in the right direction and improve on last season's success, Colorado just might be able to convince No. 28 to stay for the long haul and potentially bring the first championship home to 20th and Blake.

**Colorado Rockies: Time to ditch sustainable growth for all-in approach**  
**Jake Shapiro | RoxPile.com | Dec. 11, 2018**

LAS VEGAS – Over the past two seasons, the Colorado Rockies have both succeeded and failed on capitalizing on a limited contention window. The franchise snapped its long postseason drought but has failed to make the National League Championship Series.

In a wild, wild National League West, the Colorado Rockies have themselves a new opportunity. For a division which has featured seven playoff teams in the past three seasons, 2019 is shaping up to be the weakest West in years.

Superstar slugger Paul Goldschmidt's departure is the leader of a parade that seems to be headed out of the desert. Meanwhile, in the Bay, they've lost a few to free agency and there is buzz about a bargain on their Bum. And, of course, the Padres are ... still ... well, you know the Padres.

It's shaping up to be a race between the two teams there were required to play a 163rd game against each other in 2018.

What does that mean for their the Rockies and their limited championship window?

Pretty simple if you want to stop reading now: Cash in to win now or double down to extend the window.

The Rockies have stayed between this line the past few years, not selling many of their prospects in trade while also staying pretty smart while spending some cash.

But the time should be now to cash in.

The Dodgers still have a top 10 farm system and much of their talent is young. The West may not be any easier to win than it is now, albeit maybe it was with the winning number being 92 last season.

Coming off of two straight postseason runs, there is forward momentum, talent and experience on the Colorado roster.



“Our payroll has grown a lot over the past half-decade,” Jeff Bridich said at the Winter Meetings on Monday. “We’re continuing to plan on, as I’ve said in the past, responsible growth. We’re not in a holding pattern. We’re not where we’re drawing back on our payroll. We believe that we can continue to grow responsibly.”

The Rockies have some capital to tap into, both in money and prospects and there are plenty of players available in areas of need. Following a winter in which Colorado spent more than just about anyone, Jeff Bridich and Company might be best to do the same again.

“The plans about growth of our payroll it doesn’t happen on a year to year vacuum it happens more broadly than that,” Bridich continued. “But the postseason definitely helps and the things that come along with that, the great fan support, are being able to welcome north of three million fans into the ballpark and what that means to us and our players in terms of support. It certainly helps but we’ve had those plans in place and we can massage those plans short to mid term and that helps that growth. You adjust a bit with success but all those things point up and that’s the nice thing.”

Colorado has never won the National League West and, after coming closer than ever, there should be a fire lit under the whole organization.

Over the next few weeks, we’re going to find out just how serious the Rockies are about winning. They’ve done nothing over the past several years to question their want ... but a lackluster offseason might.

Bridich chilled some hype, saying it wouldn’t a huge jump in payroll and that the Rockies are comfortable with most of their roster, saying they will be choosy.

But should they be, given a poor offense and only so much guaranteed time with Nolan Arenado left? Who is to say. But given Colorado’s chips and odds, it might be time to move their chips all in this offseason and get that process in place here at the Winter Meetings in Las Vegas.

**Colorado Rockies: Jeff Bridich on payroll and its impact on Nolan Arenado**  
**Kevin Henry | RoxPile.com | Dec. 10, 2018**

LAS VEGAS — With Day One of the Winter Meetings officially in the books here at Mandalay Bay, it's clear that the Colorado Rockies will do some spending this offseason on free agents. It's just a matter of how much and how that impacts an upcoming decision on their All-Star third baseman.

Colorado Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich met with Rox Pile and other media members on Monday and the subject of his franchise's payroll was a big topic of discussion. Will what the Rockies spend this offseason make a difference with anything they will be offering to Nolan Arenado with his contract set to expire after the 2019 season?

One of Bridich's main themes in recent months has been Colorado using "responsible growth" when it comes to their payroll. Part of that responsible growth was a big contract for Charlie Blackmon and a revamped bullpen. Part of that growth is also the reason why DJ LeMahieu and Adam Ottavino are currently being discussed as "former members" of the franchise.

"Responsible growth" was once again a message used by Bridich during his impromptu media conference on Monday.

"Our payroll has grown a lot over the last five years, the last half decade. And we will plan on, as I've said in the past, responsible growth," Bridich said. "We are not in a holding pattern or we are drawing back on our payroll. We believe we can continue to grow responsibly. It's not going to grow by huge, huge, huge jumps every single year."

Now what does that mean for this offseason? Seemingly, don't believe the rumors about Bryce Harper coming to Colorado any time soon. Colorado invested in Ian Desmond two seasons ago and Wade Davis, Bryan Shaw and Jake McGee last offseason. This offseason, the Rockies will invest again in a free agent ... but it's not going to be in a huge way with a huge number.

And one of the reasons for that is Arenado and what is happening with his contract. Bridich said the Rockies and Arenado's camp have been talking about the contract but didn't give an indication of any movement.

However, Bridich stated his franchise wants to keep Arenado at the hot corner for years to come.

“As I’ve stated in the past, we would love to have Nolan around for a long, long period of time,” Bridich said. “We have had a great relationship with him and he’s had a great one ... I don’t want to speak for him. .. but he’s a had a great relationship for many, many years, ever since he was drafted with the Rockies. He’s come to this point in his career, and he’s earned it. He’s become one of the top three or five players in the game. Now it’s time to make adult decisions.”

Those “adult decisions” include a contract that could be among the largest ever signed for a talent who has set records at his position since coming into the league in 2013. They will also likely impact other decisions the franchise will make in terms of personnel this offseason.

There is still plenty to come from Las Vegas this week. However, it’s also very clear that the decision regarding Arenado and his future with the Rockies is a big factor in this offseason.

**Colorado Rockies Winter Meetings Quick Hits: Ottavino, LeMahieu, Santana, Redmond, Gonzalez  
Noah Yingling | RoxPile.com | Dec. 10, 2018**

Monday is the official start of the Winter Meetings in Las Vegas and there has been some news and notes regarding the Colorado Rockies or the Rockies free agents in the first few hours of the Meetings.

The Winter Meetings are only a few hours old but there already have been some reports in regards to the Rockies.

According to Jon Heyman of Fancred and MLB Network in this tweet, former Rockies reliever Adam Ottavino is at the top of the list for the World Champion Boston Red Sox. Additionally, SNY's Andy Martino reports that the New York Mets are looking to sign some relievers with Ottavino being among their top choices. Ottavino, 33, had a 2.43 ERA in 75 games with the Rockies in 2018 along with a FIP of 2.74 and a WHIP of 0.991. There haven't been any rumors linking Ottavino coming back to the Rockies so I think it's safe to say, as of right now, he will not be returning to the Rockies in 2019.

Jesse Dougherty of the Washington Post reported in this article that Nationals GM Mike Rizzo has checked in with DJ LeMahieu and his agent about coming to our nation's capital. However, Rizzo noted that he has checked in with about 40 free agents. Jon Heyman noted on Twitter that the Nationals are looking at a few free agent second basemen, including LeMahieu. Jon Morosi of MLB.com also reports on Twitter that the Dodgers are showing continued interest in LeMahieu.

According to Thomas Harding of MLB.com in this article, the Rockies "figure to be in the mix" for the Seattle Mariners new first baseman Carlos Santana. Santana was just acquired by the Mariners in a trade with the Phillies last week but the Mariners could look to flip him in a salary dump. The problem for the Rockies would be that he is owed over \$40 million in the next two seasons but the Mariners have taken on salary from other teams before (e.g. Santana) so the Rockies could trade Ian Desmond, who is owed about the same amount of money but in 3 years, and a prospect or two. Desmond would also give the Mariners some versatility. Santana has been above average both offensively and defensively at first base in the past few seasons as he has 11 Defensive Runs Saved at first base and an OPS+ of 114 in the past three seasons.

Ken Rosenthal of MLB Network and The Athletic reports on Twitter that Rockies bench coach Mike Redmond has been interviewed for the Orioles managerial position. As our colleagues over at Bird Watcher noted this morning, the Orioles new GM Mike Elias said in his introductory press conference that "experience, especially good experience, is always attractive in any hiring process." Redmond has a little over 2 years of managerial experience as he is the former manager of the Miami Marlins. If Redmond does leave the Rockies to become the Orioles manager, he would be the third Rockies

coaching change this offseason as hitting coach Duane Espy was not retained for 2019 and first base coach Tony Diaz left the Rockies for a promotion as he is the new third base coach of the Minnesota Twins under rookie manager Rocco Baldelli. Thus far, neither have been replaced by the Rockies.

Matt Eddy of Baseball America reports on Twitter that the Rockies have signed pitcher Chi Chi Gonzalez to a minor league contract with an invite to Spring Training. Gonzalez is recovering from Tommy John surgery which cost him all of the 2017 season and most of the 2018 season as he only pitched in 3 games in the minor leagues this past season. He did pitch part of the 2015 and 2016 seasons in the majors with the Texas Rangers and in 17 games combined between the 2 seasons (13 starts), he pitched to a 4.54 ERA (5.06 FIP). His 2015 season was much better than his 2016 season and he pitched more but his main issue is that he does not strikeout many and his walk rate is high, so much so that his walk rate is actually higher (4.8 per nine innings) than his strikeout rate (4.3 per nine innings).

**The Waiting Game: Does Arenado Stay or Go? Rockies Weigh Options**  
Tracy Ringolsby | [InsidetheSeams.com](http://insidetheseams.com) | Dec. 10, 2018

LAS VEGAS, Nev. – The Rockies feel the foundation for success is in place.

That doesn't mean they will resist making some tweaks to the roster.

It does mean they aren't in a hurry to start a dismantling.

They are not the Diamondbacks. Facing a financial crunch because of the \$104.5 million they owe 35-year-old Zach Greinke over the next three seasons, the D-Backs are shedding payroll considering an 8-20 finish to 2018 that saw them fade from first to third in the NL West. They recently traded the clubhouse pillar, Paul Goldschmidt to the Cardinals, and let left-hander Patrick Corbin depart as a free agent to pare payroll. Free agent outfielder A.J. Pollock is expected to be the next to go.

The Rockies, meanwhile, are looking at a club-record Opening Day payroll for the sixth year in a row. They are looking to add to their roster, not tear it down. And most of all, they are looking to sign potential free agent Nolan Arenado to a long-term deal, not shop him.

At least not yet.

"The nice thing is we don't feel we have to make a slew of changes to the team," said general manager Jeff Bridich. "We are very comfortable and very happy in so much of what we have on this team."

Here's the key for the Arenado situation.

He is one of the game's elite impact players.

The Rockies feel they have a chance to build off the back-to-back post-season appearances, which include last season when after 162 games they were tied with the Dodgers for the NL West lead, only to lose a Game 163 at Los Angeles.

That kept them from winning the first division title in their 26-year history, but they still had a wild-card berth, allowing them to make post-season appearances in back-to-back seasons for the first time.

And they know Arenado, who doesn't even turn 28 until April 16, is a cornerstone for success.

That's why amid the hub bub of the Winter Meetings, where rumors take on a life of their own, Bridich and the Rockies remain calm, looking to sign Arenado to a multi-year deal that would keep him from becoming a free-agent next fall.

It's not out of the question to think Arenado could get \$30 million a year or more and given his age it is likely he could wind up with a seven-year deal. He is headed into his final year of arbitration eligibility and if an agreement isn't reached it is a slam dunk that Arenado will break the record \$23 million deal Josh Donaldson signed a year ago to avoid arbitration with the Blue Jays.

Bridich doesn't blink in discussion the matter, although, as usual, he avoids specifics.

"Our payroll has grown a lot over the past half-decade, and we're continuing to plan on, as I've said in the past, responsible growth," Bridich said. "We're not in a holding pattern. We're not where we're drawing back on our payroll. We believe that we can continue to grow responsibly."

They aren't going to go crazy. That isn't Bridich. He is the strong silent type, not the stereo-typical young general manager, who is craving attention.

"It's not going to grow by huge, huge, huge jumps every single year, but we've made some commitments that we believe in, gives we believe in," he said. "We signed Charlie Blackmon this past year to a long-term deal."

Here's the kicker in the six-year, \$108 million package Blackmon accepted – he has the right to opt out in any of the final three years.

That could easily become a path the Rockies could follow with Arenado, although the toll for that route on Arenado could be close to double what was guaranteed Arenado.

The Rockies, however, don't need to panic. They don't need to scurry around this off-season feeling they have to sign or deal Arenado as soon as possible.

Yes, there are plenty of teams that would love to have Arenado, but if he stays healthy his value is going to remain high. Unless the Rockies can get a deal that meets all their expectations this off-season patience will be their virtue.

The Rockies could readily open the season with Arenado a pending free agent. They would wait until the July 31 trading deadline to decide whether Arenado should stay or go.

It would let them have more time to try and work out a deal.

It would let them have more time to see if they meet expectations and retain their role as a key factor in the NL West race that considering the D-backs housecleaning, and the ongoing breakdown-rebuild of the Padres and Giants is becoming a two-team showdown between the Rockies and the Dodgers. With a chance to win a division, the Rockies know it would be worth the gamble that they could lose Arenado at season-end.

It would still leave them with the opportunity for a high return if they decided to move him prior to the trading deadline. Arenado's value could be higher in late July than it is in December because of what he could mean to a team focused on a stretch run, not long-term roster stability.

It would give the Rockies more time to work out details on a deal if Arenado wants to stay.

And that would give the Rockies and their fans something to celebrate.