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## MEDIA CLIPS – Aug. 6, 2018

### **Arenado's HR in 11th takes down Brewers**

*Gray throws eight innings of one-run ball*

**By Stephen Cohn / MLB.com | Aug. 5, 2018**

MILWAUKEE -- Following **Trevor Story's** four-RBI day, **Nolan Arenado** belted the game-winning homer in the 11th inning of the Rockies' 5-4 victory over the Brewers on Sunday afternoon at Miller Park, helping Colorado avoid getting swept and sending his team home happier after a sour road trip.

"That should resonate throughout the game," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "He is in [the MVP] conversation, and he's starting to gain that reputation. Things like that help solidify his place in the game. That's a big home run, and he's done that. As his career moves forward, he does that more and more."

With the victory, Colorado is two games behind the D-backs and Dodgers in the National League West.

The home run saved the Rockies from their sixth loss in seven games after **Adam Ottavino** blew his third save of the season. Ottavino immediately got into trouble in the ninth by allowing a leadoff shot to **Mike Moustakas** (his first homer since joining the Brewers). **Ryan Braun** then reached with one out on catcher's interference, before Ottavino struck out **Jonathan Schoop** to put Colorado one out away from victory. Ottavino actually struck out the next batter, **Erik Kratz**, but strike three was a wild pitch, with Kratz reaching first and Braun advancing to third.

**Orlando Arcia** scored Braun with an RBI double to cut Milwaukee's deficit to a run, then, with **Hernan Perez** batting, Ottavino threw another wild pitch to allow Kratz to score the game-tying run. Ottavino finally struck out Perez to end the frame and send the game into extras.

For Arenado, the homer in the 11th was his 29th of the season, tying him with the Cardinals' **Matt Carpenter** for the NL lead. It came on **Corey Knebel's** 3-2 offering, a fastball Arenado turned on and sent a projected 372 feet, according to **Statcast™**, down the left-field line.

"He has a good fastball, and I was just trying to get him down in the zone," Arenado said. "I was just trying to hit it hard, and it's tough. I got the 3-0, and I knew he had it coming over the plate. You don't want to walk anybody in that situation."

Story, who drove in Colorado's first four runs, had high praise for his teammate and one of the NL's top hitters.

"He's our best player, and he showed why right there," Story said. "That was a big-time spot by a big-time player. For the way the last week has been, it was good to come out on top."

Before Arenado went yard, Story was also "huge" -- all series long. The shortstop hit four homers in the three-game series, including a three-run homer in the fifth inning off Brewers starter **Wade Miley** on Sunday. Add in three more homers from the teams' four-game series in May, and Story had seven homers in seven games against Milwaukee this year, becoming the fifth player in Rockies history with seven or more home runs against a non-divisional opponent in a single season.

And while the soft-spoken Arenado gets MVP consideration, it's only fitting the third baseman credited Story with the Rockies' extra-inning win.

"[Story's] been awesome," Arenado said. "He carried us today, and he gave our team and me the opportunity to help out there. He's been carrying us, and I'm just glad he's on our team."

## **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**Gray strikes out the side:** As Black said, **Jon Gray** "emptied the tank" in his eighth and final inning Sunday, striking out two All-Stars (**Lorenzo Cain** and **Christian Yelich**) and **Eric Thames**, who hit a walk-off home run on Friday, in the process.

Gray finished after eight innings of one-run ball on 99 pitches.

"I gave everything I had right there in the eighth inning to make it the best I could," said Gray, who pitched at least seven innings for his fourth straight start. "It was tough. I really wanted to get back out there and have a [complete game], but [I know that's] going to come."

### **SOUND SMART**

With seven home runs in seven games this season vs. Milwaukee, Story became the first Rockies player since Todd Helton vs. Montreal in 1999 to have at least seven homers in a year against a non-divisional opponent. Dante Bichette holds the team record with eight vs. Cincinnati in 1996, which he did in 12 games. Story is the only Rockies player of the five to achieve the feat in fewer than nine games.

### **YOU GOTTA SEE THIS**

Gray faced just 13 batters through four innings but found himself in jams in the fifth and six frames. In the sixth, with runners on first and second and two outs, Arenado finished the inning by moving toward the shortstop position to retire a chopping grounder from Braun.

"I watched the replay and thought I should've charged it, but it was just a tough play and it spun and took off," Arenado said. "You don't really think about it until you watch the replay. It's hard to impress Bud because he's been around a long time, but he said that was one of his favorite plays."

"I forget how many times that he steals hits away from the other team," Gray said. "You don't want to stop appreciating that when it happens. I definitely tip my cap to that."

### **HE SAID IT**

"It was a tough week, hard-fought. I told the guys after the game that it'll continue, it's going to be tough. Winning games sometimes can be challenging and come in a lot of different ways. But today was a good win and showed what this team was all about." -- *Black, on the Rockies' road trip*

### **MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY**

Story added another RBI -- his 18th of the season against the Brewers -- in the ninth inning when he grounded into a fielder's choice, which drove in **DJ LeMahieu**. The original call had Story out at first base on an inning-ending double play, but he was ruled safe upon review, which tallied the fourth run.

Sunday's series finale ended on an overturned call when **Erik Kratz** was ruled out at first on a double play in the 11th inning. Kratz, diving head-first into first base, was originally ruled safe on Story's throw to first.

#### **UP NEXT**

The Rockies return to Coors Field after an underwhelming road trip for a seven-game homestand that starts vs. the Pirates on Monday at 6:40 p.m. MT. Left-hander **Kyle Freeland** (9-7, 3.20 ERA) gets the start for Colorado. Freeland allowed five runs in four innings vs. the Pirates in April. Right-hander **Joe Musgrove** (4-5, 3.63) starts for Pittsburgh. **Charlie Blackmon**, who went hitless in his last 11 plate appearances in Milwaukee, is one hit away from 1,000.

## Dahl recalled; Senzatela (shoulder) put on DL

By Stephen Cohn / MLB.com | Aug. 5, 2018

MILWAUKEE -- If **David Dahl** can get to Miller Park for Sunday's game, he could make his first appearance since breaking his foot on May 30.

The Rockies recalled Dahl, once the organization's top outfield prospect, after a rehab assignment and stint in the Minor Leagues prior to their series finale against the Brewers. According to manager Bud Black, Dahl will be available upon his arrival from Albuquerque to the ballpark, "as long as there's no travel snafus."

Before the injury, Dahl was slashing .275/.309/.484 with four homers and 13 RBIs in 32 games in 2018, following a lost 2017 season due to back and rib injuries. He appeared as a pinch-hitter in the 10th inning on Sunday and walked. He then stole second base.

On Dahl's rehab stint, Black said: "He played well like we expected him to play, and we optioned him to continue to get more at-bats. We wanted him to get into his game, and the last eight days since he was optioned, and the time spent on the rehab assignment, he's gotten close to 40-45 at-bats, and the play has been good, on defense and on offense.

"Hopefully, David comes up and is a part of a position-player group that helps us win."

To make space for Dahl, the Rockies placed right-hander **Antonio Senzatela** (shoulder inflammation) on the 10-day disabled list.

Senzatela hurled six innings of one-run ball in a loss to the Cardinals on Thursday, his third time in five starts this season pitching at least 5 2/3 innings and surrendering one or zero runs.

In a side session on Saturday at Miller Park, Black said Senzatela had mild inflammation.

"After his start on Thursday was a little bit more sore than normal on Friday," Black said. "[Saturday], as pitchers normally do side sessions, he felt a little discomfort in his shoulder. We backed him off that, and after our medical staff examined him, we felt it was best that he take a little bit of a step back.

Senzatela was lined to make his sixth start of the season against the Pirates at Coors Field on Tuesday, but Black called it "problematic" to start a pitcher three days after an injury-shortened side session.

A potential candidate to make Senzatela's start? **Chad Bettis**, who will likely be activated from the 10-day disabled list (right middle finger blister) soon. Expected at first to be the odd man out with a 5.10 ERA after the Rockies' rotation posted a 1.71 home ERA in July, Black didn't deny if Bettis would be the Tuesday starter.

"It lines up for Chad, but I'm not going to definitively say [he's starting]," Black said. "But it lines up for Chad."

## Nolan Arenado's 11th-inning homer lifts Colorado Rockies past Milwaukee Brewers

*Jon Gray is 3-0 over four starts with a 1.52 ERA since returning from his tuneup at Triple-A*

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Aug. 5, 2018

MILWAUKEE — The adage in major-league baseball goes something like this: “A team will win 60 and lose 60 over the course of the 162-game marathon. It’s what it does with the other 42 that counts.”

The Rockies’ dramatic, head-spinning, 5-4 win over the Brewers in 11 innings Sunday at Miller Park was one of the 42. Actually, it was much, much bigger than that.

Allow Nolan Arenado to explain. After all, Colorado’s all-star third baseman and National League MVP candidate won the game with a solo home run on a 3-2, 98.2 mph fastball off Corey Knebel.

“It was a big win, and these games lately have been extremely stressful,” a very tired Arenado said after hitting his 29th home run of the season, tying him with St. Louis’ Matt Carpenter for the NL lead. “This road trip has been really tough on us, and we really needed to win. I was just happy to contribute, because lately I haven’t felt like I’ve done that. I would have been a really bad flight home (if we’d lost). That’s for sure.”

After a week full of late-game drama and misery, the bullpen actually did nail down a victory, with [Scott Oberg](#) shutting down Milwaukee in the 10th inning and [Seunghwan Oh](#) escaping the 11th despite giving up two singles. He induced Erik Kratz to ground into a double play to end the crazy afternoon for Oh’s first save in a Rockies uniform. Yet even the final out of the game required a replay review.

“It was a tough week, but this was a big win,” manager Bud Black. “I told the guys after the game that this is going to continue. Winning games at this time of the year can be challenging, and they come a lot of different ways, but this was a good win. I think it showed what this team is all about.”

The victory also was important because it came against the Brewers, a team Colorado is competing against for a possible NL wild-card berth. Milwaukee had won seven of its last eight vs. the Rockies. The win snapped the Rockies’ losing streak at four games, taking the some of the sting out of a tough 2-5 road trip. At 59-52, the Rockies are two games behind the Dodgers and Diamondbacks in the NL West race.

The game should not have gone into the 11th inning. In the ninth, [Adam Ottavino](#), pitching in place of usual closer [Wade Davis](#), should have gotten the save, but catcher [Tom Murphy](#) couldn’t handle strike three in the dirt to Kratz, and the

Brewers stayed alive. They tied the game on an RBI double by .199 hitter Orlando Arcia and a second wild pitch by Ottavino that scored Kratz from third.

Lost in the madness, perhaps, was the start by [Jon Gray](#) and another sizzling performance by shortstop [Trevor Story](#). Gray pitched one of the best games of his career, allowing one run over eight innings, on four hits with eight strikeouts and only two walks. The only run he allowed came on Travis Shaw's solo home run in the second. Black was tempted to let Gray go for the complete game but decided against it.

"He was right at 100 pitches, and they were getting to the meat of their order," Black said. "I thought Jon might have emptied the tank in the eighth inning. We talked about that afterward."

Gray, who is 3-0 over four starts with a 1.52 ERA since returning from his tuneup at Triple-A Albuquerque, agreed with his manager.

"I definitely did empty the tank in the eighth," said Gray, who struck out Lorenzo Cain, Christian Yelich and Eric Thames in succession to end his work for the day.

Story, who drove in four of Colorado's runs, blasted a three-run homer to left field in the fifth inning off starter Wade Miley to give the Rockies a 3-1 lead. Story recorded four RBIs against the Brewers for the fourth time this season, becoming the first player in Rockies history with four games of four or more RBIs against a single opponent in a season.

One of the game's many turning points arrived in the sixth inning. A leadoff single by Yelich and a one-out walk by Mike Moustakas backed Gray into a corner with two dangerous hitters coming to the plate. But Gray struck out Shaw with a slicing, 3-2 slider. Then third baseman Arenado gobbled up Ryan Braun's hot chopper, spun and fired a perfect throw to first to nip Braun for the third out. It's a play Arenado might want to add to his career highlight reel.

"That was (special), and it saved a run, too," Arenado said. "It's hard to impress Bud, because he's been around for a long time, but he even said it was one of the favorite plays he's ever seen me make. That's when I knew it was pretty good."

## Looking ahead

**Pirates RHP Joe Musgrove** (4-5, 3.63 ERA) at **Rockies LHP Kyle Freeland** (9-7, 3.20), 6:40 p.m., Monday, ATTRM; 850 AM



Freeland has faced the Pirates three times during his short stint in the majors and has not fared well, going 1-2 with a 6.32 ERA. The 25-year-old left-hander allowed a season-high five runs on six hits in a 10-2 loss at Pittsburgh on April 18. Since that game, however, Freeland is 9-4 with a 2.73 ERA in 18 starts. Freeland has been terrific at [Coors Field](#), where he's 6-2 with a 2.45 ERA in nine starts this season. Musgrave is in a groove, despite losing 1-0 to Zack Wheeler and Mets in his last start when Musgrave gave up one run on seven hits. He's been charged with just three earned runs over 14 innings since the all-star break. The 25-year-old right-hander has pitched at least seven innings in three consecutive outings and won four of his last five starts. Monday will be his first career start vs. the Rockies. — Patrick Saunders, The Denver Post

**Tuesday:** Pirates RHP Jameson Taillon (8-8, 3.74 ERA) at TBA, 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

**Wednesday:** Pirates RHP Chris Archer (3-5, 4.49) at Rockies RHP German Marquez (9-8, 4.70), 1:10 p.m., ATTRM

**Thursday:** Dodgers RH Ross Stripling (8-3, 2.68) at Rockies LHP Tyler Anderson (6-4, 4.05), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

## **Journal: Thoughts on Rockies' closer, Trevor Story and Jon Gray after wild win**

*Closing big-league games is a different beast, and it's sure not for everybody*

**By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Aug. 5, 2018**

MILWAUKEE — My head's still spinning from the Rockies' wild, 5-4, 11-inning win over the Brewers on Sunday, and from a seven-game road trip in which the Rockies lost three games in walk-off fashion and barely escaped a fourth heartbreaker.

But I've tried to collect my thoughts in a coherent manner to pass along a few thoughts and observations.

— Closing big-league games is a different beast, and it's sure not for everybody.

On Friday night, after Wade Davis blew his second consecutive save, I asked manager Bud Black if he was going to take Davis out of the closer role, at least temporarily. His answer was a blunt no, and Black and I've had a running debate about it since.

Many fans, of course, wanted Adam Ottavino to take over the role. I get that. Ottavino has been sensational this season and has a 1.66 ERA. But he's not a bullpen Superman, and that was revealed in the ninth inning Sunday.

Mike Moustakas hit a leadoff homer off Ottavino in the ninth, and Ottavino gave up an RBI double and a wild pitch that scored a run. Granted, catcher Tom Murphy made the inning a mess, getting called for catcher interference on Ryan Braun's at-bat and then failing to handle strike three in the dirt on a pitch to Erik Kratz that should have ended the game. Nonetheless, it's clear that removing Davis, a proven closer, from that difficult role is not as cut and dried as it might seem.

— That said, the Rockies' bullpen remains the team's biggest worry as it tries to stay in the race for a wild-card spot or the National League West title.

— Shortstop Trevor Story is bursting onto the baseball scene like a supernova:

- He hit his 24th home run of the season Sunday and drove in four of the Rockies' five runs.
- He mashed home runs in the final three games of the road trip and finished the season series against Milwaukee with seven home runs and 18 RBIs over seven games.
- Since June 2, Story is batting .339.

"He's been carrying us," said Nolan Arenado, who hit the game-winning solo home run in the 11th. "His approach has been unbelievable."

Story, as usual, was pleased but low-key about his performance.

“Really, I’m just trying to keep things simple and not complicate it,” he said. “A lot of it is about preparation.”

Then Story tipped his cap to Arenado.

“That homer was huge,” Story said. “He’s our best player, and he showed why right there. That was a big-time spot by a big-time player.”

— Colorado needs more production from its catchers, and Black is very aware of it. Murphy went 0-for-3 with three strikeouts Sunday, and the combination of Chris Iannetta, Tony Wolters and Murphy was a no-show with the bat the entire road trip, going 1-for-23. The trio has only five hits since July 14.

“I think you could say (we need more), and they would be the first to admit it,” Black said. “We have talked about them being mired in a little offensive slump. These guys are better offensive players than that.”

— Jon Gray is pitching like he must if the Rockies are going to make the postseason. He has pitched seven-plus innings for a career-high fourth consecutive start. He’s the first Rockies pitcher to do that since Jhoulys Chacin did it twice in 2013.

## **Rockies' Antonio Senzatela goes on DL with sore shoulder; outfielder David Dahl called up**

**By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Aug. 5, 2018**

MILWAUKEE — Antonio Senzatela, the Rockies' young right-handed starting pitcher, was placed on the 10-day disabled list Sunday because of shoulder tenderness. It's not considered a serious injury but the Rockies want to give him time to recover before he pitches again.

In a corresponding move, the club recalled outfielder David Dahl from Triple-A Albuquerque. Dahl, 24, was not in the starting lineup for Sunday afternoon's game against the Brewers but was expected to be available for the game. He was traveling from Albuquerque through Dallas to get to Milwaukee on Sunday morning.

Senzatela, 23, felt discomfort in his shoulder after his start at St. Louis on Thursday. When the discomfort lingered, the Rockies decided to put him on the DL.

"It was a little bit more sore than normal, on Friday," manager Bud Black said. "Yesterday, when he pitched a side session, as pitchers normally do, he felt a little bit of discomfort in his shoulder. We felt it was best for him to take a little step back. We think it's mild inflammation."

In five starts this season, Senzatela is 2-2 with a 3.60 ERA, with 11 walks and 23 strikeouts. Prior to his first start of the season on July 3, made 10 relief appearances and went 2-1 with a 6.23 ERA, with six walks and 14 strikeouts

Senzatela was scheduled to start Tuesday against Pittsburgh at Coors Field. Veteran right-hander Chad Bettis, who has been on the DL recovering from a blister on the middle finger of his pitching hand, will likely take Senzatela's place in the rotation.

"It lines up for Chad, if we indeed go in that direction," Black said.

Dahl went on the DL on June 1 after breaking the second metatarsal bone of his right foot after fouling off a pitch. He has been rehabing at Triple-A and hitting the ball relatively well. In 19 games for the Isotopes, Dahl batted .286 with seven doubles, two home runs, nine RBIs and a .749 OPS. Before his injury, Dahl was playing well for Colorado, batting .275 with a .793 OPS that included three doubles, two triples and four home runs.

“The play has been good, both on defense and offense,” Black said. “Hopefully David comes up and is part of a position-player group that helps us win.”

## Let's rethink the language and meaning of minor league assignments

*It's not as simple or negative as being "demoted" or "sent down"*

By Renee Dechert / Purple Row | Aug. 5, 2018

Here are three recent headlines:

"**Rockies** send opening-day starter **Jon Gray** down to Triple A" — *USA Today*

"**Ryan McMahon** surprisingly sent down, despite major adjustment" — *RoxPile*

"Rockies' **Noel Cuevas** Sent Down to Triple-A" — *CBSSports.com*

And the introduction from a **Nick Groke** piece:

"The puzzling descent of Jon Gray into minor-league purgatory reset the Rockies rotation like a hard reboot."

See any similarities?

Notice the words "sent down"— Groke goes so far as to reference "purgatory." These are terms associated with failure and punishment.

In fairness, being "sent down" and "called up" corresponds to the hierarchical arrangement of professional baseball: The A-level minor leagues provide a gateway to Major League Baseball. A player — say, **Brendan Rodgers** — works his way through the minor leagues as he improves his game.

But I'm bothered by saying that players are "sent down" or "demoted." This is language that stigmatizes learning, and players can't avoid it given that this is the vernacular of MLB.

As a teacher (granted, of writing not baseball), I find this language problematic. I realize that understanding **APA documentation** isn't the same as mastering a changeup, but the principles of learning are universal, and I'd like to rethink the notion of "sending down" by focusing on the recent experiences of two **Rockies**, **Ryan McMahon** and **Jon Gray**.

Let me begin by describing some of the pedagogy that provides a foundation for my teaching. I learned this approach from **Maryellen Weimer** (if you're interested, I recommend *Learning-centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice* [2nd ed.]). Here are three relevant concepts:

- Effective learning requires a safe environment that promotes trust.
- Learning requires practice — and some of that practice will result in failure.
- Low-stakes assignments build confidence that leads to higher-stakes assignments and success.

This practice is *learner-centered*, where the emphasis is on the student *doing* rather than the teacher *telling*. Fear can be an effective motivator, but any learner handles fear better in an environment where they feel safe to experiment, practice, fail, and improve. Repetition leads to confidence and success. A central premise is thinking of failure not as, well, failure but as part of a complex learning process.

Every semester, I work with students who have never experienced academic failure (even in low-stakes assignments), and they struggle to learn how to learn — they see failure as an end, not as part of a process. It's the most important skill I teach (more even than the fact that "tacos" is a plural and not a possessive). As a culture, we tend to view failure as an indicator that a person is broken in some way (or a "**head case**") rather than as a learning opportunity. In my experience, that's a flawed approach. Being learner-centered leads to better outcomes.

With this in mind, consider the recent experiences of **McMahon** and Gray when they were sent to the **Albuquerque Isotopes**, the Rockies' Triple-A affiliate.

### **Ryan McMahon**

After a 47-game stint with the Rockies where McMahon hit just .211/.283/.337, he changed his swing by adjusting the angle of his bat. As he **told Jake Shapiro**, "It feels good to have a better idea, and to know all the other stuff I was doing wasn't wrong." In the game immediately following this adjustment, he hit a home run against the **Mets**. The next day, June 21, McMahon was sent to Albuquerque. Rockies Twitter was outraged. McMahon, fans argued, had fixed his swing only to be demoted. As Shapiro put it, "[T]he move itself felt off."

But what if this was not to punish McMahon but instead to give him an opportunity for steady practice that he wouldn't receive with the Rockies simply because the team couldn't give him enough game time?

And, indeed, McMahon caught fire in Albuquerque. When he returned to the ‘Topes with his new swing, he hit .305 over 32 games (7 home runs and 27 RBIs). (For comparison, before that, through 55 games in Triple-A, he hit .290 with 11 home runs and 48 RBIs).

Here’s how McMahon **described** his time in Albuquerque: “I’ve been getting some consistent at-bats and I fixed some things that were flawed with my swing . . . . I worked on staying on line, things like that.” In other words, he got consistent practice — and he’s been a solid player since his July return to the Rockies. McMahon wasn’t being punished; he was placed in a low-stress environment where he could succeed.

## **Jon Gray**

When Jon Gray was sent to Albuquerque on June 30, the move received national attention — as had his meltdown in the 2017 Wild Card Game. The puzzle of Gray’s pitching has been well documented. (See **here** and **here**.) Simply put, there is no precedent that explains the disparity between Gray’s traditional numbers and his advanced metrics.

Bud Black **described** Gray’s challenges like this: “Jon throws strikes. But he doesn’t command the zone with his fastball like **Tyler Anderson** does, or **Chad Bettis**.” Black continued, “We felt that this was the right time to get Jon to Triple-A to work on some things . . . Not so much mechanically, but mentally, and for him to realize some inconsistencies that have happened. We have to get that straightened out.”

This is Black, the teacher, outlining what Gray, the student, needed to work on. Let’s be clear: Gray was sent to Albuquerque not as punishment; like McMahon, he was sent there for practice. Perhaps Groke **put** it best: “He [was] learning, again, to be a pitcher.”

Gray threw two games in Albuquerque before unexpectedly being called up after an injury to **Antonio Senzatela**, but his time in Triple-A appears to have worked. Gray returned to Coors and led the Rockies to a 4-1 victory in a four-hit game against the **Mariners**. He left the field to a standing ovation. As an emotional Gray **told** Anne Rodgers after the game, “I didn’t think I was ever going to have that feeling again.”

These are the words of someone who believed he had failed. Gray is only 23, a number 3 draft pick from the University of Oklahoma with a killer fastball-slider combo, who now pitches in one of MLB’s most challenging ballparks. These are the



words of someone who thought his career was over, that he had failed spectacularly. He hadn't failed, but he needed to go to Triple-A for practice.

In the four games Gray has pitched since his return to the Rockies, he's allowed only 6 earned runs with a 1.43 ERA in 37  $\frac{2}{3}$  IP. He has shown command of his pitches and the ability to handle stress. Gray **discussed** the change with Groke, saying that he felt "more competitive," and had changed his perspective:

"The way my thinking changed from Albuquerque to here was positive . . . . I was enjoying baseball. I was enjoying life. And I could see the positive results. There wasn't so much negativity running around."

Gray has learned to focus on single hitters, "sub-games," Groke calls them. It's a strategy that breaks complex tasks into smaller, more manageable ones. "I'm definitely gaining confidence," Gray said. "I know that when I throw bad pitches, I'm not freaked out about it. If I throw a terrible pitch, it's like, 'OK, whatever, I know what a good one feels like too. So here we go.' It's just that sort of thinking that's been different."

### **Final thoughts**

McMahon and Gray are only two examples, but they're instructive. Professional athletes are exceptionally talented, but they're also people working in a stressful environment. Rather than judge athletes by their failure, instead consider how they handle that failure. Needing a place in which to practice and reset isn't a sign of weakness: It's a mark of character.

A good illustration is **Adam Ottavino**, a visual learner, whose struggles in 2017 (think 16% walk rate) led to his removal from the post-season roster. During the off-season, he worked with **Driveline**, used high-speed cameras, and practiced in an abandoned Harlem shoe store. As Travis Sawchik **put it**, "For **Ottavino**, the offseason wasn't so much about building a better pitch but a better way to *practice*." It worked, and in 2018 Ottavino reinvented himself to the point that he has become a **Pitching Ninja** staple.

Being "sent down" isn't a sign of failure: It's the next step forward. We should use language that acknowledges this.

## Rockies 5, Brewers 4: Rockies hang on to win in extra inning thriller in Milwaukee

By Samantha Bradfield / Purple Row | Aug. 5, 2018

After a 1-5 start to this road trip through the Midwest, the **Rockies** were able to head home on a happy flight with a 5-4 victory over the **Milwaukee Brewers** on Sunday afternoon. It is their second consecutive Sunday afternoon victory after beating the **Oakland Athletics** last Sunday 3-2. It certainly didn't come easily, but they were able to pull it off in eleven innings.

### The Gray Wolf works his magic

**Jon Gray** threw a gem today. He started with a rough few early innings, which included a solo home run to **Travis Shaw** in the second inning and a single to **Ryan Braun**, but finished strong. After the early inning traffic, he got **Jonathan Schoop** to ground into a double play and sent down seven straight. **Gray** struck out three straight in the eighth to end his gem of an outing, finishing with a line of eight innings, four hits, one earned run, two walks, and eight strikeouts on 99 pitches.

### A Story-book series

**Trevor Story** continued his dominance over the Brewers, scoring four out of the five runs for the Rockies after scoring all four runs last night. The first three came off a three-run homer in the fifth inning to give the Rockies a 3-1 lead. His fourth came by outrunning a potential inning ending double play in the ninth to score **DJ LeMahieu** and tack on an insurance run going into the bottom of the inning, which the team ended up needing.

In this series, **Story** drove in nine of the 12 runs for the Rockies. Carlos González and **Nolan Arenado** accounted for the other three, with CarGo's two-run homer on Friday and Nolan's solo shot in this game (more about that below). He has seven home runs against the Brewers this season, four of which came in this series.

### Ninth inning woes

The Rockies entered the ninth inning with **Adam Ottavino** on the mound and a comfy 4-1 lead over the Brewers, but that quickly dissolved after a strange series of events. First, **Mike Moustakas** hit a solo home run on the second pitch of his at bat to make it 4-2 Rockies. Two batters later, **Ryan Braun** reached on catcher's interference with one out. Two batters

after that, **Erik Kratz** struck out looking but a dropped third strike wild pitch allowed **Kratz** to reach first to put men on the corners with two outs. **Orlando Arcia** then doubled to score **Braun** and push **Kratz** to third to make it 4-3. **Kratz** then scored the tying run on the next at bat off of another wild pitch by **Ottavino**, who went on to strike out Hernan Pérez to end the inning but the damage was done.

### **Nolan the conquering hero**

Nolan Arenado did Nolan Arenado things and lifted the Rockies to victory in the eleventh inning with a solo home run to left, his 29th of the year.

### **Oh, what a relief**

**Seunghwan Oh** saved the game in the eleventh inning by inducing a 3-6-1 double play to end it. The play wasn't without a little drama as the umpires reviewed it, but the runner was out and the play was overturned. If Oh hadn't caught the ball, the game would've been tied again and would probably still be going since there were **Schoop** and **Shaw** were on first and second when Kratz hit the ball. It was Oh's first save in a Rockies uniform and his third of the 2018 season.

### **Up Next**

The Rockies return home tomorrow to host the **Pittsburgh Pirates**. Joe Musgrave takes the hill against **Kyle Freeland** with first pitch scheduled for 6:40 pm MDT.

## Colorado Rockies: Where has the offense gone?

By Aaron Hurt / Rox Pile | Aug. 5, 2018

The sky seems to be falling for the Colorado Rockies. First, it was the lack of moves made at the trade deadline followed by back to back soul crushing walkoff losses given up by closer Wade Davis.

But lost in all of the disappointments that have plagued the Rockies this past week, there is one thing that has been severely overlooked. Where has the offense gone? The bats need to be held accountable for the team's recent struggles.

In the last 12 games, dating back to July 22, the Rockies have scored more than 4 runs in a game one time...ONE!!!

Luckily, the Rockies have managed to go 5-7 in those 12 games, largely due to excellent starting pitching (not including Saturday's debacle), but the offense needs to start holding up its end of the bargain if they plan on sticking in the playoff race.

To break down just how bad the Rockies' offense has been the last 12 games, here are just a few numbers:

The Rockies have averaged 3.2 runs per game with an ugly .229 batting average and 114 strikeouts. In those games, they have also hit a much worse 16 for 82 (.195) with runners in scoring position and have left a total of 78 runners on base.

What those numbers don't show is the lack of fundamental baseball that have cut down on the opportunities for the Rockies crossing the plate. From the failed bunt attempts (**which may have factored into the demotion of Raimel Tapia**) to baserunning errors and empty at-bats moving runners over, there has been a countless number of little mistakes costing the Rockies.

And let's not forget the Rockies have all of a sudden stopped being aggressive on the bases. For a team that was once in the top 5 in the NL in stolen bases, they have only successfully stolen one base in four attempts in these last 12 games.

The good news is that even though the Rockies have now lost four games in a row, they are still only a handful of games out in both the NL West and the Wild Card. Unfortunately, not only do they need to figure out the back end of the bullpen, they need to figure out how to score runs. Time is getting short. Find the offense.

## The Colorado Rockies have a glaring problem

By Olivia Greene / Rox Pile | Aug. 5, 2018

Back in April, the Colorado Rockies were just getting their regular season started. The concern, all those months back, was the starting rotation but around June we saw them do a 180 at the start of June. Even the sending of Jon Gray down to Triple-A last month appeared to have help him get back to the basics. However that may be the Rockies rotation appears to still have a serious issue.

There are certain things that every baseball club struggles with. At the beginning of the season it was hard to say what the issue was with the Colorado Rockies. Many point fingers to the bullpen and they wouldn't be wrong, but it's time to take another look at the starting rotation. The issue isn't just with one starter, but the entirety of it. If they can't figure out a way to stop this, they'll falling out of contention very soon.

Looking back at the 1st inning of Colorado Rockies games, you can easily spot a trend. While looking at the box scores all the way back to the first regular season game, the Rockies have given up 1 or more run in just the 1st inning a lot.

How many games you ask? In total, they've given up 1 or more runs in the first innings in 52 games. Further breaking that down with home/away splits, the rotation does it more at home than away. In those 52 games, there were 28 instances of 1 or more runs given in the very first inning at home while the rest of the 24 games were on the road.

Last night's game was no different, but it was the most runs that they've given up in a single inning. Colorado Rockies starter **Tyler Anderson** gave up 6 runs in just the 1st inning alone in the 8-4 loss against the Milwaukee Brewers. In most instances, when this had occurred in those 52 games, the Rockies did suffer a loss. Usually, the starters have shown they can bounce back after the 1st and hold off any more runs from happening, but it's just too little too late after giving up a lot runs in the 1st, like they did on Saturday.

An opposing team's momentum is already being built up after scoring in the 1st inning and it appear the Colorado Rockies can't stop them from winning in most instances. This issue has gotten so bad that the Rockies now lead all the MLB in allowing earned runs in the 1st inning with 90 and, as our own Jake Shapiro noted on Twitter last night, a 7.77 ERA.

There doesn't appear to be any signs of this stopping judging by last night's game so how exactly do they solve the problem? It most likely depends on the morale of the starter and what confidence they have. At this moment, something like this will only be pointed out after games like yesterday's.

The Colorado Rockies have a serious problem on their hands and it will more than likely continue to cause them losses until the rotation and coaches can pinpoint the problem. Since that hasn't happened yet, the Rockies starters giving up runs in the 1st will continue to be an odd occurring conundrum.

## Colorado Rockies: Should Jorge De La Rosa return to Denver?

By Noah Yingling / Rox Pile | Aug. 5, 2018

After making some moves at the trade deadline, the Colorado Rockies addressed a few issues that they had by acquiring Seunghwan Oh and acquiring some depth pieces but one thing that they did not address was their lefties in the bullpen.

Currently, with **Mike Dunn** on the shelf after injury and struggles all season long, the only lefties the Rockies have in the bullpen are **Harrison Musgrave** and **Jake McGee**, both of whom have also struggled to ERA's of 4.76 and 6.81.

With their acquisitions of both lefty **Jake Diekman** and **Brad Ziegler** to shore up their bullpen, which **already has the best bullpen ERA in the NL and the second best in all of baseball, behind the Yankees, at 3.13**, it left former Rockies starter **Jorge De La Rosa** out of a job in the D'backs bullpen. So, that made us think, should the Rockies bring De La Rosa back?

Before you make the determination on whether you think the Rockies should bring him back, let's take a look as reliever with the D'backs. This season, before being DFA'd on July 31, De La Rosa was 0-2 with a 4.63 ERA in 42 games (all in relief). His main issue this year is that, while he is allowing more hits, his walk rate is near five per innings, which is an increase of more than one batter per nine inning from last year. Additionally, his strikeout rate has decreased from 7.9 per nine innings last year to 6.9 this year.

Last season, De La Rosa was 3-1 with a 4.21 ERA in 65 games (all in relief).

### The silver lining

With the D'Backs, however, De La Rosa did have some promising things. As MLB Trade Rumors **noted in their article about him being DFA'd**, he has posted a 47 percent groundball rate as a Diamondback. In addition, De La Rosa's struggles have particularly been against versus lefties. Against lefties, they hit .220/.309/.407 against De La Rosa this season and last season, they hit .194/.253/.292 slash line.

So, in other words, on the surface, De La Rosa has struggled this season but in what the Rockies would need him to do, he has been pretty good. Also, an added perk for the Rockies would be that he has pitched to a 1.45 ERA at Chase Field

this year, which could help when the Rockies face the D'Backs in Arizona in late September in which will likely be a very important series. In addition, that could help the Rockies if they make the playoffs and have to face the D'Backs.

If you take a look at his contract, he is only owed \$2.25 million for the entirety of the season so whether the Rockies claim him and decided to pay the rest of what he is owed this season, or if they decide to sign him to a new contract, he would be a cheap option for the Rockies, much like **Santiago Casilla** was or what **Greg Holland** could be for the Rockies as well.



## **Arenado's clutch homer salvages Gray's gem, Rockies avoid sweep in Milwaukee**

**By Drew Creasman / BSN Denver | Aug. 5, 2018**

Absolutely nothing has come easy for the Colorado Rockies since embarking on this road trip to the NL Central. Having been walked off on three times in five games, they looked primed to suffer the fate again. Blowing yet another save, the club was bailed out by the King of Clutch, Nolan Arenado, who launched his 29th home run of the season in the top of the 11th, the decisive blow in a 5-4 win for Colorado over the Milwaukee Brewers.

Other than salvaging a game in the series and on the trip, Arenado's blast and newcomer Seunghwan Oh's guts in the bottom of the 11th meant that their starting pitcher's brilliant effort would not go unrewarded.

Jon Gray has been through a lot this season. In fact, reaching back to last year's Wild Card game, Gray has had difficulty finding a rhythm and his confidence.

But after a remarkably brief two-game stint in Triple-A to help him clear his mind and clean his mechanics, The Wolf Of Blake Street has been simply dominant.

It didn't look like the game would go his way early, but ultimately he strung together arguably his most impressive start of the season considering the circumstances and competition. Pitching eight innings (99 pitches) of one-run baseball in which he got stronger as the game went on, he pitched efficiently and effectively, striking out eight and walking two, surrendering just one.

It is his fourth consecutive outing going at least seven innings and the fifth time in his last six starts. Since returning, he has 1.51 ERA and has struck out 25 and walked just seven over 29.2 innings of work.

Gray did not start out sharp, leaving pitches up in the zone in the first few innings. In the very first at-bat, he hung a breaking ball to the hottest hitter in baseball, Christian Yelich, but was saved by a tremendous leaping catch in left-center by Ian Desmond, possibly taking away a home run.

It was impressive on its own but even more so when you consider he has mostly played first base this season and hadn't played in the outfield in over a month.

The Brewers did manage to get on the board in the second when Travis Shaw obliterated another hanger, driving it far enough over the right-center field fence that Charlie Blackmon would have needed rocket boosters to catch it.

Wade Miley kept the Rockies offense in check until the fifth.

DJ LeMahieu got his first hit since returning from the DL, slashing a one-out double down the left field line. Nolan Arenado then drew an intentional walk in front of Trevor Story's 24th home run of the year and third multi-run homer in the last two games.

He turned on a cutter that was decently located and ripped a line drive that stayed up just long enough to clear the wall in left, giving Colorado a 3-1 lead.

Milwaukee threatened to respond in the bottom half of the fifth. Ryan Brauns singled on a ball that Arenado knocked down at third but could not locate in time to make a throw. After getting a pair of quick outs, but allowing Braun to swipe second, Gray walked Orlando Arcia to put runners at the corners.

Craig Counsel decided to play his power card early, taking Miley out and inserting Jesus Aguilar with a chance to take the lead with one big swing. But Gray worked ahead of Aguilar and got him to hit a routine groundout to Story at short, ending the rally.

Again in the sixth, the Brewers found some traffic against the Wolf, but once again Gray was able to work out of it. Unable to keep him down for long, Yelich singled to right and moved up on a one-out walk from Mike Moustakas.

Gray bounced back with one of his better sequences of the game, striking out Shaw who had taken him deep earlier in this game and also the last time these teams played each other in Denver. Yelich took advantage of Gray failing to pay attention to the runners again, stealing third without a throw but the Rockies starter kept his cool and induced a groundball to third, getting a nifty spinning throw from Arenado to again strand a pair of Milwaukee base runners.

The Rockies had a chance to add in the seventh, getting Blackmon aboard via walk and LeMahieu on because of a defensive miscue from Jonathan Schoop. But Arenado struck out, Story lined out, and Carlos Gonzalez ground out to second, leaving them where they stood.

Gray struck out the side, getting pinch-hitter Lorenzo Cain along with Yelich and Eric Thames, in the eighth.

Colorado got an insurance run in the top of the ninth... but almost didn't. LeMahieu drew a one-out walk and advanced on an Arenado single to left. With runners at first and third, Story hit a grounder at the shortstop that was initially ruled an inning-ending double play. But replay revealed that Story beat the relay throw at first. The call was overturned and the Rockies got their fourth run of the game.

Story drove in all four runs for Colorado until Arenado in extras.

With Wade Davis unavailable with his heavy recent workload, Adam Ottavino was handed the baseball in the ninth and immediately gave up a solo home run to Mike Moustakas. He bounced back to get a weak groundout from Shaw but catcher Tom Murphy was called for his second interference play in recent memory, allowing Braun to reach first, bringing the tying run to the plate in the form of Jonathan Schoop.

Braun once again stole second without any resistance from the Rockies but Otto struck out Schoop looking, leaving it up to Erik Kratz... or so one would assume. Ottavino struck out Kratz on a slider in the dirt that got away from Murphy, allowing him to reach base. Suddenly, without having recorded a hit or even a walk, the Brewers had runners at the corners with two away, the tying run at first.

Orlando Arcia stepped in and fell behind 1-2 but jumped on a slider that was hung, hitting a soft liner to left that scored Braun and allowed Kratz to reach third. Now with the winning run in scoring position, Hernan Perez who was 9-for-18 against Colorado this season, came to the plate. But he wouldn't even need to deliver a hit... again... as Otto unleashed a wild pitch that allowed the tying run to score.

He did bounce back to strike out Perez, but the blown save and been completed.

It was their fourth blown save in the last seven games.

David Dahl, in his first game back from a broken foot (rehabbing the last few weeks in Triple-A) drew a two-out pinch-hit walk in the top of the tenth and stole second but Ryan McMahon, also in a pinch-hit appearance, struck out to strand him there.

Scott Oberg came on in the bottom of the 10th and surrendered a leadoff single to Yelich, which usually (especially lately) proves to be a bad omen. But he got Thames to fly out and got Moustakas to ground into an inning-ending double play featuring some nice footwork from Story.

After retiring Blackmon and LeMahieu with relative ease, Cory Knebel challenged Arenado with a 3-2 fastball and lost the challenge.

Seunghwan Oh came on in the bottom of the 11th and naturally gave up a leadoff single to Shaw. He got Braun to fly out to center but gave up another first-pitch single to Schoop, putting two on with one away.

Kratz strolled to the plate again and hit a chopper to first. Desmond fired to second and the relay from Story pulled Oh off the bag, but the 36-year-old reliever made an athletic play both to catch it and, upon another review, tap the bag with his foot to secure his first save as a Rockie and somehow, somehow, salvage this win.

#### **FINAL STATS:**

*Jon Gray: 8 IP, 4 H, 1 ER, 2 BB, 8 K*

*Adam Ottavino: 1 IP, 2 H, 3 R, 2 ER, 0 BB, 3 K*

*Scott Oberg: 1 IP, 1 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 0 K*

*Seunghwan Oh: 1 IP, 2 H, 0 ER*

*Nolan Arenado: 3-for-5, 2 R, 1 RBI, HR (29)*

*Trevor Story: 1-for-5, 1 R, 4 RBI (HR: 24)*

*DJ LeMahieu: 2-for-4, 2 R*

#### **WHAT'S NEXT:**

The Rockies return home for a three-game series with the Pittsburgh Pirates. They will face Joe Musgrove in the first game, sending Kyle Freeland to the hill. First pitch at 6:40 Mountain Time.

## **Trevor Story stays hot, helps lift Rockies to win in Milwaukee**

**By Rich Kurtzman / Mile High Sports | Aug. 5, 2018**

Have a weekend, Trevor Story.

Despite the Rockies' loss on Saturday, the All-Star shortstop hit a pair of two-run bombs to account for all of Colorado's runs. A similar story unfolded on Sunday as Story launched a three-run homer to lift the Rockies to a 5-4 win and break their four-game losing streak.

But, Colorado did take extra innings to finally beat the Brewers due to terrible pitching and defense in the ninth inning, allowing Milwaukee to tie the game up 4-4. Luckily for the Rockies, Nolan Arenado's monster home run finished off the Brewers in the 11th inning.

Like most games on the losing streak, Milwaukee started out ahead, up 1-0 after the second inning. Jon Gray threw his worst pitch of the afternoon that inning, giving up a home run to Travis Shaw which went into center field.

For the Brewers, starting pitcher Wade Miley was on his game, cruising into the fifth inning before Story turned on a hanging curveball and crushed it out of the park. DJ LeMahieu doubled, and Nolan Arenado walked before the homer, giving Colorado the 3-1 lead mid-way through the fifth.

It was a similar situation in the sixth, as two runners reached — and one even made it to third base — but Gray worked through it with the help of Nolan Arenado's amazing glove and arm.

Gray was on his game throughout, disallowing any damage after two batters reached in the fifth, and he finished with a line of 8.0 IP, giving up four hits and one run while striking out eight and walking two. He was simply phenomenal and has been since he was called back up from Triple-A Albuquerque.

In the ninth, Story came through again, hitting a two-out single to score LeMaheiu and push the lead to 4-1, Rockies.

But hold on a minute. The game wasn't over yet as Adam Ottavino came in to pitch the ninth and allowed three runs to tie the game up at 4-4 and go into extras. In that ninth inning, Ottavino threw two wild pitches and there was a catcher interference call on Tom Murphy, as well as a double hit by the Brewers to tie the game up.

Arenado came through in the clutch in the 11th after neither team could score in the 10th, winning the game for the Rockies. Even the 11th didn't end without craziness; Seun-Hwan Oh found a way to catch a tough throw from Trevor Story to end the game on a double play.

For Story it was the third straight game with a home run, tying his second-longest streak in his career per Rockies PR. He also was responsible for all eight runs the last two days and nine of the last 11 runs for Colorado.

For Colorado, it was a huge win, breaking a lengthy four-game losing streak. The Rockies improved to 59-52, now 2.5 games back of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

## **Arenado's homer lifts Rockies over Brewers, 5-4 in 11**

**By Associated Press / ESPN.com | Aug. 5, 2018**

MILWAUKEE -- The Colorado Rockies can finally relax on the flight home.

Nolan Arenado hit a go-ahead homer with two outs in the 11th inning and the Colorado Rockies beat the Milwaukee Brewers 5-4 on Sunday thanks to an overturned replay review.

Arenado's 29th homer of the season came off Brewers closer Corey Knebel (2-2) and helped the Rockies avoid a sweep, giving them a sigh of relief after finishing an otherwise tough Midwest trip losers of five of seven.

"These games, they've been extremely stressful," Arenado said. "They've been tough on us. We needed to win that game."

With Colorado closer Wade Davis struggling, the Brewers rallied for three runs in the ninth off Adam Ottavino in a save situation. Given a second chance, newly acquired reliever Seunghwan Oh closed out the Brewers in the 11th.

Scott Oberg (7-0) got the win, allowing a hit erased by a double play in the 10th.

Nothing came easy, though.

Oh allowed a hit to Travis Shaw to lead off the 11th. After getting Ryan Braun to fly out, Jonathan Schoop singled to put men on first and second.

Erik Kratz then hit a grounder, and Schoop was forced out at second. Kratz was initially ruled safe at first, but it took 58 seconds to overturn the call on video review, ending the game on the double play.

"Didn't see it, I assume they got it right," Kratz said. "We have to assume they got it right."

It was Oh's first save since coming from Toronto in a July 26 trade.

Davis, who blew consecutive save opportunities on Thursday and Friday, could only watch Ottavino do the same in a wild ninth inning.

"He had some unfortunate happenings around him," Rockies manager Bud Black said.

Trailing 4-1, Mike Moustakas led off with a homer for the Brewers. After an out, Braun reached base on a catcher's interference call, and with two outs and two strikes, Ottavino threw a wild pitch that Kratz swung at.

Kratz reached first on the swinging strikeout, and with new life, Orlando Arcia doubled to score Braun. With Kratz on third, Ottavino uncorked another wild pitch, allowing Kratz to score, tying it at 4-all and sending the game to extra innings.

#### GRAY GREAT

The blown save in the ninth erased a sterling performance by Rockies starter Jon Gray.

He allowed one run over eight innings, scattering four hits and two walks while striking out eight, including the final three batters he faced. In his last four starts, Gray has dropped his ERA more than a full point to 4.73 by allowing just five runs over 29 2/3 innings.

#### ARENADO'S SPIN

Arenado saved a run in the sixth with some nifty glove work.

With runners on the corners and two outs, the third baseman snagged Braun's chopper moving backward in the hole to his left, then spun and fired a strike to Ian Desmond at first.

"You don't really think about it until you watch the replay," Arenado said. "It's hard to impress Bud because he's been around a long time, but he even said it's one of the greatest plays he's ever seen from me."

#### STREAKING STORY

Trevor Story homered for the third straight game with a three-run shot off Brewers starter Wade Miley in the fifth.

Story now has four homers over his last three games, including two in Saturday night's loss, and 24 on the season. In seven games against the Brewers this season, he's hit seven homers to go along with 18 RBI.

#### NEW BREW

The Milwaukee Brewers claimed right-hander Jordan Lyles off waivers from the San Diego. The 27-year-old Lyles is 2-4 with a 4.29 ERA in 24 appearances, including eight starts, this season. Brewers general manager David Stearns expects to activate Lyles Tuesday or Wednesday.

#### TRAINING ROOM



Rockies: Colorado placed RHP Antonio Senzatela (shoulder inflammation) on the 10-day disabled list. The club hopes that RHP Chad Bettis (blister) can come off the DL and take Senzatela's turn in the rotation Tuesday. OF David Dahl was called up from Triple-A Albuquerque to take Senzatela's spot on the roster.

Brewers: OF Lorenzo Cain and 1B Jesus Aguilar each had scheduled days off, but appeared as pinch hitters.

UP NEXT

Rockies: Colorado hopes left-hander Kyle Freeland (9-7, 3.20 ERA) finally finds success against Pittsburgh when the Rockies open a three-game set against the Pirates on Monday night. Freeland is 1-2 with a 6.32 ERA against Pittsburgh, including allowing five runs in an April 18 loss.

Brewers: Milwaukee has a day off on Monday before starting a three-game series against San Diego.

## What MLB contenders must do to catch up to the front-runners

By Craig Edwards / ESPN.com | Aug. 5, 2018

With the trade deadline over, teams are pretty close to set with their rosters for the remainder of the season. Now they have to hope the moves they made were enough to make a difference.

While the division leaders and teams in wild-card position attempt to hold on, the underdogs will have to play better to catch the favorites. Here's what some of those underdogs need to do to make a move up the standings.



### Seattle Mariners in the AL Wild Card race: Seager, Segura snap slumps; no rust for Cano

Heading into their game on July 4, the Mariners were 55-31 and on the heels of an eight-game win streak. Their lead over the A's for the second wild card stood at eight games. They would win just 9 of 21 games the remainder of July and then lost their first four in August to fall behind Oakland.

The Mariners were fortunate to jump out to that big lead in the first place as their offense, rotation and bullpen all were pretty close to average for much of the season. The culprit over the past month has been an anemic offense. Since July 4, the Mariners as a team are hitting a Freddy Galvis-like .236/.293/.359, with only the Detroit Tigers having worse production over that span.

Jean Segura (.220/.242/.288 since the All-Star break), Kyle Seager (.209/.261/.395) and Ryon Healy (.222/.286/.444) all have been terrible during the Mariners' slide. To get back in the race, Seattle's offense needs to get going. The good news for the Mariners is that Seager and Segura have track records that suggest they will play better. Plus, Robinson Cano is almost back from his performance-enhancing-drug suspension. For the Mariners to get back in front of the A's in the wild-card race, the lineup is going to have to improve.



### New York Yankees in the AL East race: Severino, new additions need to right rotation

The Yankees will very likely be in the postseason. Unfortunately for them, it now appears more likely than not that they will be subjected to the vagaries of a one-game playoff. While the AL East was a dead heat for much of the season, after this weekend's four-game sweep, the Yankees have slipped well behind the Red Sox for the division lead. The race isn't over, however, as the Yankees still have a ton of talent, a favorable remaining schedule and six meetings with Boston in the last 12 games of the season.

The numbers suggest the Yankees bullpen has struggled since the All-Star break, with an ERA near 6.00, but the pen has pitched better than that. Relievers are striking out 28 percent of batters in the second half and issuing walks just 8 percent of the time, producing a FIP in the mid-3.00s. That bad luck should turn in the Yankees' favor, but if they want to get close to the Red Sox, their starters must do better. With an ERA and FIP near 5, the Yankees' starters simply have stunk since the break. Masahiro Tanaka has pitched well, but Luis Severino, CC Sabathia and Sonny Gray all have struggled. To catch the Red Sox, Severino needs to get things right and new acquisitions J.A. Happ and Lance Lynn have to step in and contribute right away.



### **Milwaukee Brewers in the NL Central race: Win head-to-head matchups with Cubs**

While the Cubs and Brewers are close in the standings, most projection systems expect the Cubs to take the NL Central by three or four games. The Brewers are expected to get to 90 wins, but the Cubs' superior talent in the rotation and better all-around players project to be too much.

The Brewers couldn't find a starting-pitching match at the trade deadline. Waiver claim Jordan Lyles might help there or in the bullpen, but the club could be active in the trade market the rest of the month. Jordan Zimmermann, James Shields and Matt Harvey are names to keep an eye on, but none of those guys will close the Brewers' gap in the division race alone.

So the Brewers need to take advantage of their opportunities against the Cubs. Beginning with a two-game series on Aug. 14, Milwaukee will play against Chicago eight times over the next month. Taking six of eight would go a long way toward erasing whatever talent deficit the Brewers might have against the Cubs and give the division advantage to Milwaukee.



### **Colorado Rockies in the NL West race: Jon Gray needs to be an ace**

With the Dodgers making big moves to bring in Manny Machado and Brian Dozier and the Diamondbacks making a series of smaller moves to add Eduardo Escobar, Matt Andriese and Brad Ziegler, the Rockies feel like something of an afterthought in the NL West. But Colorado is right there with the two favorites in the standings. Even so, the team's offseason moves haven't gone as planned, with Wade Davis, Jake McGee and Bryan Shaw failing to help the Rockies capture the bullpen magic that propelled them to the playoffs a year ago.

Newly acquired Seunghwan Oh should help the bullpen some, and Adam Ottavino has been great all year, but if the team is going to catch the division leaders, the starting pitching is going to have to do the heavy lifting. That starts with the recently demoted Jon Gray.

The first three months of the season, Gray put up one of the more unusual lines possible, with a FIP close to 3.00 but an ERA near 6.00 in what would have been the biggest differential in history. Whether it was just bad luck or Gray needing some fixing, he has been dealing in his return, giving up just five runs in 29 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings (1.52 ERA) and going at least seven innings in each of his past four starts. If the Rockies are going to stay in the race, they will need Gray to continue his strong run.



### **Oakland Athletics in the AL West race: Put the pressure on**

The A's aren't just being chased by the Mariners in the AL West. They are also now chasing the Astros, surprisingly enough. Can the A's really hang with the defending champs? They've actually been doing just that for a while. From April 10 through Aug. 4, the Astros put up an impressive 62-39 record, which is a 99-win pace over 162 games. During that same time, the A's put up the very same 62-39 record. The only difference between the clubs' records is the first two weeks of the season. Since June 15, the A's are a remarkable 32-10 and are being led by their bullpen and their offense.

Since June 15, there are 31 American League players with at least 100 plate appearances and wRC+ at least 30 percent better than league average. Oakland has five of those players, the most of any team. With Matt Chapman playing like an MVP, Stephen Piscotty rediscovering his power, Khris Davis continuing to mash, Jed Lowrie defying his age and Mark Canha destroying lefties, the A's have had the best offense in baseball for nearly two months.

The bullpen has been similarly great, with Blake Treinen, Lou Trivino and Emilio Pagan surprising with big contributions. The addition of Jeury Familia should help further. Oakland isn't likely to keep pace with Houston going forward, but it is a lot closer than anyone could have expected. The Astros played a lot of extra games last season to bring home the title, and the long summer could wear them down. If the Oakland offense keeps giving the team leads and the bullpen continues to close out games, the A's just might make a race out of the AL West.