



MEDIA CLIPS – March 7, 2018

**Oberg aims to carry stellar finish into '18**

*Rockies righty pitched to 2.03 ERA in final month last season*

**By Thomas Harding MLB.com @harding\_at\_mlb**

**Mar. 6th, 2018**

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- The Rockies believe the career and 2017 stats don't define right-handed relief pitcher Scott Oberg as much as illustrate a journey.

Oberg, who turns 28 next week, enters 2018 with a 5.05 ERA in 154 games over three seasons between Triple-A and the Majors. He went 0-1 with a 4.94 ERA last year. But all the hard lessons began paying off last September, when he posted a 2.03 ERA and .208 batting average against in 14 games to help the Rockies into the postseason.

The Rockies signed closer Wade Davis and setup man Bryan Shaw to three-year contracts to be the primary righties in the bullpen. But last season, with Adam Ottavino going through a rough year, Oberg and Carlos Estevez (currently nursing a left side injury) found themselves in key situations during the final month. Oberg struck out both batters he faced during the 11-8 loss to the D-backs in the National League Wild Card Game.

"My mentality going into the offseason was just to continue to build off of the things that I finished up strong, and take a broader look at the season as a whole and address some of the things that came up," Oberg said. "Every year I go through a few weeks, a few months, to try to take an objective look at the season, see where I had success, see where I didn't and why I didn't. And just continue to learn."

Oberg fanned 13 in 13 1/3 September innings -- a sign that he was in the strike zone early and could use his power mix of pitches and unique angles.

Setting up on the extreme first-base side of the rubber, Oberg works the glove-side corner (outside to a right-handed batter) with a four-seam fastball -- averaging 96.4 mph -- that he used 44.93 percent of the time last season and a slider he broke out 34.8 percent of the time, according to [Statcast™](#). But he also used a two-seam fastball on the other corner at a rate of 10.93 percent, and a changeup -- also to the arm side -- 8.73 percent of the time. By being in the first-base side, his release point is in the middle of the rubber and plate, but the batter must figure which side the ball will run to and how far.

Earlier in his career, Oberg also threw a curveball, but the Rockies thought he would be more effective without it. A 15th-round pick out of the University of Connecticut in 2012, Oberg dropped the curve (in all but a few instances, such as multiple-inning outings) before the '16 season.

"It's hard to take a pitch that's a good pitch away from a pitcher, but he's a very coachable guy," said Mark Wiley, the Rockies' director of pitching operations. "When you explain things to him and they make sense, he has no problem getting invested in it.

"For a bullpen guy, he's how we like to develop our young kids and hope that they can turn out."h, 2017

With his pitch mix settled and a strong 2017 finish behind him, Oberg offers options for manager Bud Black. Last season, he held opponents to 3-for-15 with the bases loaded and has 17 strikeouts with runners in scoring position, so he has no issue entering with runners on base. Black also said he may stretch Oberg out this spring so he can be used in multiple innings when lefty [Chris Rusin](#) isn't available.

"It's going to take all of our parts to get 27 outs, every single baseball game," Oberg said. "For me, it doesn't really matter when I take the ball. Just get outs, help the team win. When we bring in guys like Shaw and Davis, it's just another opportunity to learn from some of the better relievers in the game."

**Murphy flashes power in bid to make roster**  
By Thomas Harding MLB.com [@harding\\_at\\_mlb](#)  
Mar. 6th, 2018

PEORIA, Ariz. -- When Rockies catcher **Tom Murphy** relaxes, the ball flies.

Murphy launched a low **Mike Leake** fastball beyond the 410-foot mark in center field in the fourth inning of the Rockies' **3-2 Cactus League victory** over the Mariners on Tuesday night.

"It seems like the less effort that I put into my swing, the more the ball seems to do that," Murphy said.

It was the second spring home run for Murphy, who is vying for opportunities behind veteran **Chris Iannetta**. Murphy hit .257 and demonstrated power with three homers and a .543 slugging percentage in 11 games during his first callup in 2015, but he suffered a broken wrist and forearm when accidentally struck by a bat last year during Spring Training.

After he regained his health, Murphy pressed and struggled, hitting .255 with four homers and 56 strikeouts in 141 at-bats at Triple-A Albuquerque and going 1-for-24 in 12 Major League games.

A third-round pick out of the University of Buffalo in 2012, Murphy thought he was applying pressure to meet perceived expectations. He vowed to stay calm this spring.

"That's probably been the most successful part of my spring, regardless if anybody knows that or not," Murphy said. "It's one of those things that's going to be personal and internal. I feel my internal clock is working well, and I will be successful."

Manager Bud Black said he and Rockies bench coach and catching instructor Mike Redmond have been working with Murphy to improve his defense and are seeing results.

"Just the way he is receiving the ball, the way he's moving behind the plate, is much better -- different setup, different stance that we felt was very important for him," Black said. "Offensively, he's a tireless worker in the cage with our hitting coaches. Hopefully, he'll bounce back."

**Electric stuff**

Rockies starter **German Marquez** struck out four in three innings, giving up one run on three hits against the Mariners on Tuesday night. After not being happy with his velocity in his first spring outing, Marquez hit 97 mph with a fastball, mixed in four changeups (a developing pitch) and several curves and finished strikeouts with some nasty pitches. One was a curve that bounced and skipped past Murphy to let **Cameron Perkins** reach. Marquez also threw a fastball that cut -- by mistake rather than design -- to strike out **Nelson Cruz**. That one sailed past a surprised Murphy, who retrieved and threw to first in time.

"I'm going to keep working on my changeup and the slider," Marquez said. "I want those pitches to be really good in the season."

### **Expanding skills**

Righty-hitting **Daniel Castro**, a non-roster player hoping to earn Major League time as a utility player, went 3-for-3 on Tuesday and is batting .368 this spring. Castro appeared in 80 games with the Braves in 2015 and '16, but he spent all of last season with the Rockies' Triple-A Albuquerque squad.

But Castro, 25, made the most of the time in Albuquerque. Castro has classic range at shortstop, and with fellow non-roster player **Shawn O'Malley** nursing a broken left hand, he could be a fill-in option if the team finds itself without **Trevor Story**. But after hitting .217 with the Braves, Castro knew he needed to improve his offense to be a feasible big league option.

Working with Albuquerque hitting coach Darin Everson, Castro eliminated a leg kick, which helped his timing. The Rockies liked him enough to prevent him from leaving as a free agent.

"I felt with this team, I have the best opportunity to get back to the big leagues," Castro said in Spanish. "They saw me play last year and wanted me back."

### **Injury update**

Righty **Carlos Estevez** (left side injury) reported feeling increasingly good throwing long toss, but he'll need bullpen sessions and a simulated game without a screen before being a candidate for a Cactus League game.

## Position competition

- Outfield hopeful **Mike Tauchman** lashed an RBI triple into the right-field corner and scored on the play when the Mariners' Cameron Perkins spiked the throw and watched in horror as the ball bounced over the fence and out of play. Mariners pitcher Mike Leake noted: "He said he was about to throw it, but he had some dirt in his hand. So he didn't want to throw it and next thing you know, it was spiked. That was a five-story spike." . 6th, 2018
- Looking fully back from 2016 Tommy John surgery, righty reliever **Jairo Diaz** struck out two of the three hitters he faced Tuesday and has three scoreless innings with four strikeouts.
- Ryan McMahon, trying to prove he's ready to play first base, got the start at third base Tuesday and went 1-for-3. He is hitting .393, with a few hits like Tuesday's dribbler up the middle, but some solid passes, as well.

## Up next

Righty **Antonio Senzatela** will throw four innings and righty **Peter Lambert** -- the club's **No. 5 prospect**, according to MLB Pipeline -- is scheduled for two innings in his third A-game Wednesday at 1:10 p.m. MT against the Rangers at Salt River Fields. Closer **Wade Davis** and bullpen righties **Scott Oberg** and **Adam Ottavino** also are scheduled.

Additionally, righty starter **Chad Bettis** will start against the Angels in a 10 a.m. "B" game at the Rockies' complex. Also scheduled are lefty relievers **Mike Dunn** and **Jake McGee**, righty non-roster reliever **Brooks Pounders**, who has four strikeouts in four innings, and No. 14 prospect, righty **Jesus Tinoco**.

**The postseason, they hope, starts now for the Rockies. Bud Black just needs to get them off the roller coaster.**  
*The postseason is not a pipe dream, so Black is prepping them as such.*  
By **NICK GROKE** | [ngroke@denverpost.com](mailto:ngroke@denverpost.com) | **The Denver Post**  
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PEORIA, Ariz. — Nothing much was at stake here Tuesday night in the Mariners' spring stadium off the Agua Fria Freeway, except perhaps the drive-thru line at In-n-out Burger next door. But Bud Black managed the Rockies like they were playing Game 7 of the World Series.

He did not implore them to win one for a Gipper or embrace great moments from great opportunities. It was the 12th game of the Cactus League with 23 days until opening day. And nobody wants a blowhard screaming at them now with more than seven months still to play.

And yet the Rockies' entire season was laid out before them in one March game.

"One of my messages is to treat a spring training game, a game in April, July, October, it's the same game," Black said.

"You talk to players who've played in big games, across the board, all sports, talk to psychologists, coaches, people who've done this for a long time, they'll say you can't just turn it up when you want. That's not how it should be done.

"There should be a high-level of intensity every game you play. And then the bigger game becomes just another game that you play."

In their 25-year history, the Rockies have never returned to the playoffs in a second consecutive season. But there are reasons to believe it could happen this year: A young and healthy starting pitching staff was tested under fire last year and survived; their general manager crafted one of the deepest bullpens in the league this winter; and two MVP candidates will hit in the middle of their order.

The postseason is not a pipe dream, so Black is prepping them as such. In the case of the Rockies, who fielded the youngest pitching rotation in the majors last season, Black is trying to teach them that World Series are won in the pattern and drill of every day, not by ramping up all of a sudden in September.

“You can’t ride that roller coaster,” Black said. “It’s natural to wonder, ‘Is this the most important game of the year?’ At the end of it all, you can look back and say, ‘Hey, that was a critical game or a series.’ But you can’t do that every single game.”

The Rockies nearly learned this in a disastrous way. A once first-place team faded in the dog days, losing 11 of 15 games in August. A collapse seemed imminent. Seven years had passed since the Rockies last tasted the postseason and their naiveté was showing.

So Black called a series of late-season clubhouse meetings. He determined his team was trying too hard.

“We found guys pressing, making too much of certain moments and not performing to their capabilities,” Black said. “So we had a couple meetings internally and we told the players, ‘This is the same game we played in April and May, let’s get back to doing what we do. Relax and enjoy it.’”

“They understood it. Just because of the heightened moment, you can’t try any harder. You do what you’re capable of doing.”

Suddenly, the Rockies started rolling, winning eight of nine games in September, including a four-game sweep in Los Angeles against the Dodgers that propelled them into a wild-card game. The lessons only got more difficult. Jon Gray, in his first postseason appearance, pitched through just four outs, leaving in the second inning with four runs against him.

“I got outside myself,” he said. “It stinks when it happens that fast. A lot of regrets. It’s tough emotionally.”

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts had prepped his team in similar fashion. But his team was familiar with the postseason.

They have won the NL West five years running. Clayton Kershaw has pitched in 23 more playoff games than Gray. He knows what to expect.

But Roberts treats Kershaw in similar fashion to the way Black will prep Gray and the Rockies.

“Every game is important,” Roberts said. “It manifests in preparation — your ability to focus for long periods of time, in certain moments, in every moment. In the postseason, things have a tendency to speed up and emotions get involved. If you play with a certain mentality all year, that kind of translates more to the postseason instead of trying to play harder or better in the postseason.”

Consistency is key. Black learned his lesson working with Mike Scioscia, Joe Maddon and Ron Roenicke in Anaheim. Black was the Angels' pitching coach then. They came up with a theory: Every game should be played at one, high-pitched level, no matter the date.

As a pitcher with the Royals in 1985, Black saw how George Brett, Frank White, Willie Wilson and Hal McRae had battled the New York Yankees in the playoffs year after year. By 1985, they were playing through the dog days with a casual confidence that was learned under fire.

Now it is Black's charge to pass that idea to a Rockies team still trying to find its way as an annual threat.

“That's how you truly become conditioned to playing the game properly, the right way,” he said.



## **Rockies send a young roster to Peoria and four bubble players respond in kind against Seattle**

*Up next: Rockies vs. Rangers, at Salt River Fields, Wednesday at 1:10 p.m.*

**By NICK GROKE | [ngroke@denverpost.com](mailto:ngroke@denverpost.com) | The Denver Post**

**March 6, 2018**

PEORIA, Ariz. — The Rockies sent a roster full of prospects and bubble players on the road Tuesday night, their first game under the lights this spring. It gave four of them a chance to put marks on the positive side of their pro-con breakdown.

Right-handed reliever Jairo Diaz touched 99 mph on an overpowering fastball, striking out two in one inning of hitless work. In the fifth, he struck out John Andreoli, got Dee Gordon to ground out to shortstop, then struck out Jean Segura on three pitches. The Segura at-bat started with fastballs, at 98 and 99 mph, then finished with a 90-mph slider.

“It was coming in hot,” Rockies manager Bud Black said. “It’s powerful.”

Catcher Tom Murphy, who is trying to overtake the No. 2 spot from Tony Wolters, smacked a solo home run to center field in the fourth off Mariners veteran Mike Leake. It was Murphy’s second homer this spring.

Infielder Daniel Castro, playing third base, went 3-for-3 at the plate in a bid to earn a utility spot on the roster if Pat Valaika (oblique strain) cannot return in time for opening day.

And right fielder Mike Tauchman, who has made a mark for himself defensively in recent games, lined an RBI triple in the third on a weird sequence. Tauchman was sprinting around second base when Mariners right fielder Cameron Perkins fielded the ball in the corner.

But Perkins tossed the ball into the stands when it slipped out of his hand trying to relay a throw to the infield. Tauchman made it all the way home, but the play was scored as a triple and an error and a not-quite inside the park home run.

On the mound: German Marquez, without much fuss, pitched the kind of three-inning outing that will lock in a spot on the opening day roster. He struck out four and, more importantly, walked none. He gave up three hits but the only run that

crossed was Gordon, after Robinson Cano singled him in in the first inning. Marquez threw 53 pitches; his velocity topped at 97 mph. ... Lefty longman Chris Rusin gave up a leadoff, line drive, solo homer to Mike Zunino in the fourth.

**At the plate:** Raimel Tapia, David Dahl and Jordan Patters, hitting second-third-fourth in Colorado's lineup, respectively, combined to go 0-for-9.

**Worth noting:** Carlos Estevez (oblique strain) is not near returning to the Rockies bullpen, Black said. He needs bullpen sessions, then a simulated game, before a Cactus League return... Colorado is being similarly cautious with Valaika (oblique strain). "We're not going to push things with Pat," Black said. ... Veteran outfielder Ichiro Suzuki had a jersey hanging in a locker in the Mariners' clubhouse Tuesday, but he has not yet finalized a deal to return to Seattle. ... Chad Bettis is scheduled to throw four innings in a "B" game Wednesday at Salt River against the Angels. Mike Dunn and Jake McGee will also pitch.

## **Rockies front office under Jeff Bridich aggressive in two areas**

*Under Bridich, the Rockies have spent early in the offseason and have been willing to trade prospects*

**Eric Garcia McKinley@garcia\_mckinley**

**Mar 7, 2018 | Purple Row**

Last year's state of the position about the front office was about the "dual hallmarks" of the Jeff Bridich era. Under his leadership, the Rockies' front office has exhibited two major traits since taking over in 2014, one a strength and one a weakness. The strength is the ability to identify minor-leaguers who will turn into major-league contributors, such as Germán Márquez. The weakness is the reverse. Bridich's free agent spending on veterans like Gerardo Parra and Ian Desmond has turned out poorly so far.

At the moment that analysis still holds. The strength was evident during the 2017 season, but a better understanding of the weakness will have to wait until Bridich's most recent has a chance to prove or disprove the narrative.

### **Prospects aren't untouchable**

When the Rockies included Kevin Padlo in the trade to the Rays for McGee and Márquez, it signaled that Bridich was willing to trade from the team's pool of prospects. Padlo wasn't, and isn't, a great prospect, but he was well thought of and displayed excellent on base ability. The Rockies actions during the 2017 season suggest even more that Bridich will trade prospects as win-now moves.

On July 26, the Rockies sent three prospects to Philadelphia for reliever Pat Neshek. The package included 20-year-old shortstop José Gomez. Then, on July 31, the Rockies traded for catcher Jonathan Lucroy for a player to be named later. That player ended up being 19-year-old outfielder Pedro González. Like Padlo, neither Gomez nor González are currently great prospects, but they do have organizational value. Unlike previous regimes, Bridich will trade good prospects.

There's also an indication that Bridich will trade certain types of prospects. Gomez and González both have large range of possible outcomes, and they're also both far away from the majors. It makes sense for a team seemingly entering a competitive window to trade low-level prospects, but it's also not unheard of for those same teams to trade major-league ready prospects. The Brewers, for example, traded top 20 prospect and ready contributor Lewis Brinson to the Marlins for Christian Yelich.

If the Rockies are once again in the thick of a playoff race come the trade deadline, don't be surprised if the Rockies trade players like Will Gaddis or Tyler Nevin to strengthen the major-league club. The splashiest the Rockies would get is probably Colton Welker or Ryan Vilade.

### **Spend early and often**

The Rockies under Bridich appear to know what they want to accomplish during the offseason and take action early to do it. The Rockies signed Ian Desmond relatively early in between the 2016 and 2017 seasons. While it was a December signing, the Rockies inked him to play first base while there were still several other more proven first basemen on the market. Signing Desmond wasn't a misreading of the market since Desmond was not thought to be a part of the first base market. But the first year of the contract went about as badly as it could, and Desmond is not due to make \$22 million in 2018, the peak of the contract. About a week after the Rockies signed Desmond, they inked left-handed reliever Mike Dunn to a three-year contract.

This offseason, the Rockies wanted to either recreate their 2017 bullpen or identify other free agents that will approximate it. The Rockies then committed \$106 million to three relievers over the next three seasons—Wade Davis, Jake McGee, and Bryan Shaw, and they did it before the calendar turned to 2018. In a typical year, that timeline wouldn't be called early. But in this glacially moving offseason, it can be. Earlier in the offseason the Rockies offered Greg Holland the same three-year/\$52 million contract they gave eventually gave Davis, but Holland turned it down.

While the spend early on the market act resembled the previous offseason, where the Rockies spent the money was new. The Shaw signing can be viewed as an approximation of the Dunn signing, but investing in McGee and Davis is a new act. Remember, when the Rockies signed Holland, it was extremely low risk. He only had \$6 million guaranteed. He ended up making more money, but that was because he hit his incentives. This time around, the Rockies are making the commitment outright. How well this relief trio does will tell us a lot more about how well Bridich plays the free agent market. We only know for sure that he's willing to act early.

The outcomes from Bridich's previous actions have created a pattern, and that pattern has turned into narrative. If the Rockies once again have the best bullpen in the National League, thanks to the free agent signings, the weakness could

look like a strength. Similarly, if Bridich and team starts missing on assessing the potential of minor-leaguers (internal or external), then the strength could start to look like a weakness. For now, Rockies fans can just hope that those two characteristics can strike a balance on the field and lead to competitive baseball for a few more seasons.

**Colorado Rockies: Is Ian Desmond a cause for concern?**  
by Aaron Hurt / Rox Pile | March 7, 2018

*Spring training stats and records mean very little for obvious reasons. Spring is for veteran players to work on mechanics and for younger/fringe roster players to showcase their abilities. Starting pitchers are limited to a couple innings as they work up arm strength and regulars see a couple at-bats per game.*

*That is why the Rockies' current 3-7 (1 tie) record is nothing to worry about. But what could be worrisome is that Ian Desmond has struggled mightily in his early Cactus League contests.*

**Ian Desmond** has only appeared in 5 games which gives us a small sample size to go off of. The scary thing is he has managed only 1 single in 13 at-bats including 4 strike outs.

In order to jump start Desmond, Rockies manager **Bud Black** had him DH in Monday's game against the Cubs to no avail. Typically, this wouldn't be a cause for concern if you compare him to the likes of Nolan Arenado, who has struggled at the plate hitting 4-for-18.

***What the problem with Desmond really is***

The problem is that Ian Desmond is coming off an injury plague season where he appeared in 95 games, hit .274 with 7 HRs and 40 RBIs instead of an MVP caliber season. After signing a lucrative 5 year, \$70 million contract, the Rockies desperately need to see a return on their investment especially when he is making \$22 million this year alone.

To make matters worse, if he doesn't live up to his contract, that will be a lot of wasted money that could have used to re-sign MVP candidates Arenado and Blackmon.

This could be making a mountain out of a mole hill but if Desmond doesn't turn things around, he could become the biggest Rockies free agent blunder since **Mike Hampton**. Unfortunately, this time it could be a lot more costly.

There is still three more weeks until the Rockies open up the season at the Arizona Diamondbacks. Hopefully, Desmond can find his swing before March 29th and live up to his large contract.

**Colorado Rockies: Thoughts on a bullpen cart in Denver**  
by Kevin Henry / Rox Pile | March 7, 2018

***SCOTTSDALE — On Tuesday, the Arizona Diamondbacks announced that they were bringing back the bullpen cart as part of their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. With the Colorado Rockies celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> season this year, it begs the question of whether the bullpen cart will be making a return to Coors Field or not.***

Is there any indication a bullpen cart is coming to Denver? No, but it's fun to think about, right? Sure, it would be "retro cool" to have the bullpen cart as part of the game at 20<sup>th</sup> and Blake, but, if it were to happen, what shape would that cart actually take? There are several options.

Of course, the golf cart look is a possibility, and there are plenty of folks who come to Colorado to hit the links. But there are also plenty who come to Denver and head straight up I-70 toward the mountains. What if the Rockies bullpen cart had some resemblance to a snowmobile? Using a purple snowmobile to come out of the bullpen would be something to see, wouldn't it?

One of the most Colorado things we see every day (no offense to Kyle Clark and our friends at 9News with that reference, of course) are Subarus driving around everywhere. Maybe some type of Subaru could be worked in as the bullpen cart sponsor and provider. It seems to be the unofficial car of Colorado, right?

With the trees and water near the bullpen area, what if we get a little nature-friendly with the bullpen cart? A jacked-up 4x4 that could drive over any boulder near Boulder (or anywhere else)? An eco-friendly car that could save on gas while zipping in from the bullpen?

I am sure there is some way to work a marijuana reference in with the bullpen cart as well. It is Colorado after all, right? Plenty of smoke coming out of the back, vape style?

Rockies reliever Adam Ottavino has an idea if the bullpen cart were to ever come to Coors Field.

"I would take it in Denver. I've had plenty of experience jogging to the mound and being a little out of breath or not having any saliva to speak of," Ottavino told Rox Pile. "What I'd really be interested in is us having it and the other team not having it."

For reliever Mike Dunn, it's more about questions.

"It'll be interesting. How long does it take to get the cart out and get the cart there? I've never done it before so it would be weird and a change," Dunn told Rox Pile.

And what would Colorado manager **Bud Black** think of having the return of the bullpen cart?

"I came through an era when there were bullpen vehicles," Black, who pitched from 1981-1995, told Rox Pile. "I'm OK with it. I'm a traditionalist at heart but I'm OK with some of the funny business. I'm OK with it."



**Colorado Rockies: Bud Black and Tyler Anderson on his Monday start**  
by Noah Yingling / Rox Pile | March 7, 2018

***On Monday, Colorado Rockies starting pitcher Tyler Anderson was shelled in two plus innings of work in his spring debut in the Rockies 5-4 loss to the Chicago Cubs.***

Tyler Anderson did not have a good start to his spring as, on Monday, he made his Cactus League debut and did not pitch well. He went 2 innings (he pitched to one batter in the third), allowed three hits, two runs (both earned), and three walks on 52 pitches.

After his outing, he spoke with the media, including our own Kevin Henry, about his outing. He said that it was a “a lack of command” that was his main issue but he felt that his delivery to the plate also felt like that it “wasn’t very repeatable” and “in sync of what it usually feels like.”

However, as he noted, it is something that is common with it being the first time facing other teams in months. He said that “it’s definitely not an excuse, but it’s still something that needs to be worked on.”

He noted that he thought his pitches were not the problem, just the delivery and the overall command.

### ***Black on Anderson’s start***

Rockies manager Bud Black also spoke with the media about a few things about the day, including Anderson’s start. He said that his main issue was with pitch command and, more specifically, his fastball command and he was locating it up and not locating it well low in the zone.

He also said that “when you throw thirty pitches plus in an inning, you’re getting a work out.” Anderson threw 31 pitches and faced seven batters in the first inning.

### ***Final Thoughts***

It was obvious that it was Anderson’s first outing of the spring and he was a bit rusty and as Bryan Shaw and Bud Black said about spring results, you really can’t put much behind it (especially for players that you know are going to be on the team no matter what).

Anderson will start to lengthen his starts a bit as the spring goes on and the Rockies and he will be able to figure out his delivery and location issues as time progresses.

**Colorado Rockies: What Jeff Hoffman's injury means for him  
by Noah Yingling / Rox Pile| March 7, 2018**

On Sunday, Colorado Rockies pitcher Jeff Hoffman was scratched from his scheduled appearance due to shoulder issues. However, with the injury, it may not bode well for him by the end of spring training.

Jeff Hoffman was scratched from his scheduled appearance on Sunday due to lingering shoulder issues.

Rockies manager Bud Black spoke to the media on Monday, including our very own Kevin Henry, about Hoffman's recovery, among other things, and Kevin asked him how Hoffman was doing.

Black said that Hoffman was "a little better than he was yesterday and he'll be doing a little better tomorrow than he is today." Black added that they will "have him on a little bit of a slow program here [in the] next couple of days" and that he thinks that Hoffman will not see any game action for "a week to ten days".

Black also admitted that the injury hinders his chances at getting a starting rotation spot. This is partially because he'll be out of game action for a while and also, since it's still early, he will probably have to ramp back up to where he was so that will probably have to start from scratch and be much further behind than the other starters.

Personally, I think that he would be on the outside looking in even if he was healthy as the Rockies have about seven guys competing for the five rotation spots (more on that tomorrow). With the injury, I think that the writing is on the wall that Hoffman will not be in the Rockies starting rotation on opening day.

Also, Hoffman still has two minor league options so he can very easily be optioned to the minors. In addition, he had the highest ERA of anybody who made a start for the Rockies last year and he had the highest ERA of anybody who pitched than four games other than the albatross of a season that Jordan Lyles had before he was released by the Rockies so it could easily be argued that he needs more minor league seasoning anyways.

Either way, I personally think that Hoffman, especially with the injury, will not be making the Rockies opening day rotation.

## **NL West Has Deep Depth with Return of Giants as Factor Tracy Ringolsby / Inside The Seams | March 7, 2018**

The National League West is MLB's sleeping giant. It's not just about the Dodgers and the Giants anymore. From top to bottom, the division is starting to flex its muscles.

Yes, the Astros -- from the American League West -- are the defending World Series champions, thanks to knocking off the Dodgers in the full seven games.

However, the NL West had the best overall winning percentage (.517) of the six divisions last year, with the Dodgers, D-backs and Rockies compiling three of the five best NL records. The NL West claimed both NL Wild Card slots as the D-backs and Rockies joined the division-champion Dodgers in the postseason.

And the division has been aggressive this offseason, maintaining at the top and improving at the bottom, showing no signs of taking a back seat in 2018.

### **Consider:**

- The Dodgers will be favored to repeat as division champions in their quest to win their first World Series championship since 1988. Given the fact they have a young nucleus -- six position players 27 or younger, one starting pitcher going into the spring older than 30 and a bullpen led by 30-year-old Kenley Jansen -- the Dodgers haven't felt pressured to make major offseason additions.
- The D-backs won more games (93) in 2017 than any NL teams other than the Dodgers and Nationals. Former first-round draft pick Archie Bradley moved from the rotation to the bullpen a year ago, and he created confidence he can handle a late-innings role. Arizona added insurance by acquiring Brad Boxberger, who had 41 saves as a closer with Tampa Bay in 2015 before being limited in availability the past two years.
- The Rockies benefited from pitching depth in the farm system, and featured as many as four rookies in the rotation for more than two months. The four rookies -- German Marquez, Kyle Freeland, Antonio Senzatela and Jeff Hoffman -- were a combined 38-28 and Colorado won 53 of their 93 starts. They are the focal point of a rotation that opens the spring with seven candidates, all in their 20s, and only one of whom has three years in the Majors -- Chad Bettis. The Rox also bolstered the bullpen, acquiring Wade Davis and Bryan Shaw.

- The Giants suffered a wake-up call, losing an NL-most 98 games last year on the heels of a seven-year stretch in which they not only made the postseason four times, but won three World Series championships. Left-hander Madison Bumgarner was injured in a dirt bike accident during an April off-day in Colorado and was limited to 17 starts and four victories. And Mark Melancon, signed as a free agent last offseason to handle the ninth inning, was bothered by a right forearm problem that limited him to 32 appearances and 11 saves in 16 opportunities before undergoing surgery in September. San Francisco added Sam Dyson from Texas last July, and he converted 14 of 17 save opportunities to give the club support for Melancon in the late-inning role. Then the Giants made bold moves this offseason to reinforce the offense, swinging a deal with the Rays for third baseman Evan Longoria and acquiring outfielder Andrew McCutchen from the Pirates, giving them reason to believe they will be a factor again in 2018.

- The Padres have made bold bids to shake up their roster, but they have come up short in efforts that included the pursuit of Shohei Ohtani, the two-way player from Japan who wound up with the Angels. Their major off-season addition was the signing of free agent first baseman Eric Hosmer, which does mean they will try to get by moving incumbent first baseman Wil Myers to the outfield. They also brought back third baseman Chase Headley from the Yankees with the hope he can provide a veteran influence on a lineup that does not have a projected starter who is 30.

## **If not Charlie Blackmon, who should bat leadoff for the Rockies?**

By [Casey Light](#) / Mile High Sports | March 7, 2018

With each passing Cactus League game, it seems more and more likely that [Charlie Blackmon](#) will be moving out of the leadoff spot in [Bud Black's](#) lineup and bat third for the Colorado Rockies.

Blackmon set a MLB record with 103 RBI from the leadoff spot (104 total) and led baseball with 14 triples in 2017. He won the NL batting title with a .331 average. In moving Blackmon to the third spot in the lineup, Black can surround the centerfielder's already dangerous bat with a pair of All-Star hitters in [Nolan Arenado](#) and [DJ LeMahieu](#). The latter has hit above .300 in each of his last three seasons, including a NL-best .348 in 2016, and the former has hit 37-plus home runs and driven in at least 130 runs over each of the past three seasons. The move also allows Black to go right-left-right with his 2-3-4 hitters.

The move has the potential to help LeMahieu, Blackmon and Arenado push their combined numbers even higher in 2018, but it will require a capable hitter in the leadoff role to get on base for that trio to do their damage.

So far in Spring Training Black has experimented with several options atop the lineup, yielding mixed results.

[Ian Desmond](#) seems a logical option; however, an icy start to the spring could complicate his candidacy.

A three-time Silver Slugger, Desmond is as versatile in the lineup as he is in the field. Just like he can play virtually any position outside of the battery, Desmond has the potential to be effective anywhere in the lineup.

He has not been effective in any role, however, through five Cactus League games in 2018.

Desmond is just 1-for-13 through five starts this year, with no runs scored and no walks. He has struck out four times. It's a somewhat disconcerting start for the two-time All-Star who is coming off a disappointing first season in Colorado complicated by a hand injury suffered in Spring Training.

Black doesn't put much stock in Cactus League stats, but Desmond's four strikeouts in just 13 at-bats do not bode well. He struck out looking to lead off his last game, a 5-4 loss to the Cubs on Monday. His next two at-bats were no more productive — a ground out to lead off the third inning and lining into a double-play to shortstop to end the fifth.

For his career, Desmond is a .267 hitter and his strikeout-to-walk totals (110:42) are much higher than Blackmon's (156:41) on a 162-game average basis. Desmond has been a consistent base-stealer throughout his career, though, averaging 22 steals to only six caught per 162 games.

Desmond as a leadoff hitter has 434 career plate appearances (less than 10 percent of his career PAs), with a .272 average and .303 on-base percentage. His numbers when leading off an inning are right around his career average — .268 / .317 in 1,069 PAs.

None of that is particularly inspiring when compared to Blackmon's recent stats, but that comparison may be a bit unfair given Blackmon's proficiency of late. He was a .287 hitter out of the leadoff spot prior to his breakout seasons of 2016 and '17.

Matching that prior average of .287 seems within reason for Desmond, although the Rockies would love to see that number climb closer to .300 — a mark Desmond has never reached for his career.

Gerardo Parra, who is coming off his first season hitting above .300, presents the next most logical case among Black's choices for batting leadoff. The problem with Parra is that he has yet to take an official at-bat so far this spring.

The left-handed outfielder not only turned in a Gold Glove finalist performance in the field in 2017, he also had his one of his best statistical seasons at the plate. His .309 average and .341 OBP were both career highs, as were his 71 RBI.

Unfortunately, he has been unable to try and build off that campaign as he recovers from surgery to remove a bone from his hand. Parra was already at the team facility in February when pain in his right (bottom) hand revealed a broken hamate bone. The timeline for his return should have him back before Spring Training ends, but he will have limited time to get up to regular-season playing speed.

Parra has more experience in the leadoff role than Desmond, logging 954 plate appearances there over his nine-year career. That's just under 22 percent of his career PAs. He has a career .281 average out of the leadoff spot, and has hit .318 as the first batter of a game for his career.

Parra doesn't bring the same base-stealing prowess that Desmond would — the lefty averages just 10 stolen bases and six caught stealing every 162 games — but his strikeout to walk numbers (102:35) on a 162-game average are mostly in

line with what Desmond offers (110:41). Parra cut down his strikeout total in 2017 with 67 in 115 games, a 162-game average of 94.

Us Parra in the leadoff role also keeps a left-handed bat atop the lineup and allows Black to go left-right-left-right through his first four hitters. Of course, Parra has to get back to full health in order for that to happen.

Black has limited options in his starting lineup beyond Desmond and Parra.

Shortstop Trevor Story, a right-handed hitter, strikes out far too much (he led the National League in 2017). Rookie first baseman Ryan McMahon (left) will need the protection of more established hitters around him. And Chris Iannetta (right) is a catcher.

Beyond the aforementioned players, Black will have at least one — possibly two — players on his Opening Day roster who would slot in nicely in a leadoff capacity; however, that would mean putting either Desmond or Parra on the bench.

Raimel Tapia, David Dahl and Mike Tauchman are all battling for the fourth outfielder position, and another could end up on the bench depending on how Black decides to utilize his fourth bench spot.

Tapia has the long-term potential to be a prototypical leadoff hitter for Colorado — think Dexter Fowler but hitting strictly left-handed. Dahl and Tauchman, who also hit left-handed, profile much more like Blackmon — power-hitters but also capable of posting high averages and runs scored.

Of course, playing any of those three would mean benching one the established veterans, Desmond or Parra (not to mention either \$10 million in 2018 salary for Parra and \$22 million for Desmond).

With their stats being so equal, Parra seems like a better fit than Desmond simply for the fact that he is much more the “spark plug” type player both in the locker room and on the field. Plus, having that left-handed bat atop the lineup means Black can avoid going right-pitcher-right when his lineup flips (assuming Iannetta or Story hits eighth).

What seems most likely, at least to start the season, is that Black will platoon hitters atop the lineup. Desmond very well could get that chance first simply because of his health, while Parra and one (or two) of those young outfielders platoon as the established veteran gets back up to full speed.



Of course, Black could always decide to put Blackmon back into that leadoff spot if he doesn't feel completely comfortable with the alternatives. A true pro's pro in the batter's box, returning to the leadoff spot wouldn't faze Blackmon in the least.

**Mike Dunn: 'I think we can be one of the best pitching staffs in the game'**  
By [Afternoon Drive with Goodman & Shapiro](#) / [Mile High Sports](#) | March 6, 2018

The focus for the Colorado Rockies in the offseason was made clear quickly when general manager Jeff Bridich landed [Bryan Shaw](#), big-fish free agent [Wade Davis](#) and re-signed [Jake McGee](#), spending on a “super bullpen” that hopes to contribute towards something the Rockies have never accomplished in franchise history: Back-to-back postseason appearances. To do that, it will take a strong season from what reliever [Mike Dunn](#) believes can be one of the best pitching staffs in baseball.

Dunn joined the Rockies' bullpen last offseason and quietly led the team in appearances as a left-on-left specialist in 2017. His five wins out of the 'pen matched [Chris Rusin](#) and [Carlos Estevez](#) for tops amongst Rockies relievers last year, contributing to Colorado's 87 wins overall and Wild Card berth.

Dunn sat down Tuesday with Eric Goodman and Les Shapiro of [Mile High Sports AM 1340 | FM 104.7](#) inside the Rockies' clubhouse at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick to discuss the reinforced bullpen and the remarkable growth of the Rockies' young rotation.

Dunn believes experience will do wonders for the young arms that anchor the club's starting rotation.

“It's learning from what they did well last year, and learning from their mistakes as well,” Dunn said. “It's repetition; you can't perfect something if you're not out there doing it.”

“Every pitch that they throw, every inning that they get, they've got to continue to be learning and trying to get better, which this staff that we have, these guys really push each other and they're trying to get better on a daily basis, which is what you want to see, and none of them are content with where they're at right now,” Dunn said. “It's experience; the more times they're out there, the more you can learn.”

Dunn also said that, based on the growth of the staff as a whole, the Rockies can do something special this year.

“Yeah, most definitely. I'll throw our starters in there, with the way these guys have prepared and the way they looked last year, I think we can be one of the best pitching staffs in the game.”

The Rockies' inspiring playoff run — and brief appearance there — have given the team a hunger that they didn't possess before.

"It definitely fuels you. You got to the playoffs and it was one game; it was must-win and we lost," Dunn said. "It's a bad taste at the end of the year that we had in our mouths, and we want to use that as fuel to move us forward."

<https://audioboom.com/posts/6709963-afternoon-drive-mike-dunn-on-the-return-to-spring-training-and-pitching-with-new-friends?t=0>

**Woody Paige: Colorado Rockies have assembled a team to contend in present, future**  
**By: Woody Paige / Gazette | March 6, 2018**

Scottsdale, Ariz. - Memo to Rockies manager Bud Black: If you really want to make co-owner Richard Monfort ecstatic this spring, start this lineup in a Cactus League game:

1. Raimel Tapia, RF
2. Brendan Rodgers, 2B
3. Charlie Blackmon, CF
4. Nolan Arenado, 3B
5. Trevor Story, SS
6. David Dahl, LF
7. Ryan McMahon, 1B
8. Jordan Patterson, DH
9. Tom Murphy, C

***Related:***

**Chad Bettis enjoying the little things spring training offers**

The starting pitcher should be Jon Gray, followed by Kyle Freeland, Tyler Anderson, Chad Bettis and Antonio Senzatela.

The Rockies' bench that day could include utilityman Pat Valaika, infielder Garrett Hampson, outfielder Sam Hilliard and catcher Chris Iannetta. And the extra pitchers would be Scott Oberg and Ryan Castellani.

Monfort could sit behind the first base dugout, buy himself a cotton candy and beam broadly.

In the owner's mind, that specific spring squad would be an emblazoned endorsement of his franchise's "draft-and-develop" philosophy.

All 20 players are Home Grown Rox. Eighteen were drafted by the Rockies, and the other two were signed by the club as international free agents when they were teenagers.

Mostly unnoticed by the players, the manager, the coaches and the media hangers-on, Dick strolled to a back lot behind the Rox spring headquarters the other day and watched the "fishing contest" devised by a couple of veteran pitchers. Players competed for cash by casting their lines at an array of stationary targets. Charlie Blackmon arrived in a complete fly-fishing outfit - waders, net and his own gear.

Monfort was enjoying the event, and spring training more so.

"It's fun to come down from Colorado to camp and see that most of these players out here are ours. This always has been our goal."

The 59-year-old Monfort generally maintains a low public profile, but drifted further back in the shadows after he was reprimanded by the baseball commissioner four years ago for foot-in-mouth email responses to a couple of fans. He stated to one: "If you don't like the product and experience, don't come" to the games. In the other he sarcastically suggested that "maybe Denver doesn't deserve a franchise, maybe time to find a new home."

He was as frustrated as the fans were in 2014.

Finally, though, for the first time since taking over as chief executive officer of the Rockies from his brother Charlie in 2011, Dick could laugh last in 2017. The Rox made the postseason, albeit for only one game.

I've always liked Dick, even when our email exchanges were feisty, and we've had an adversarial relationship that ran hot and cold as journalist and owner.

But he was cordial as usual when we had a casual conversation last week. Then, he said: "You guys (in the media) wanted us to trade our great young prospects for veterans."

He was basically exclaiming: "Hey, look at us now."

OK.

Truth is, a slight majority of the players in camp at Talking Stick - 29 of the 57 - were drafted by the Rockies; six were international free agents signed by the Rox; nine players were obtained in trades, and 13 were veteran free agents who have signed with the Rockies.

It's highly likely that the opening-day 25-man roster could be made up of 15-16 players who were Rockies organization originals.

That achievement is remarkable for a franchise that in the past would have 16-18 players on the roster that came to Colorado from other organizations.

The big-league team could be comprised of five first-round Rox draft picks (Gray, Dahl, Story, Freeland and Anderson), four second-round selections (Arenado, Bettis, Blackmon and McMahon) and two third-round choices (catchers Iannetta and Murphy).

Add an eighth-rounder (Tapia), a ninth-rounder (Valaika) and Senzatela.

Rodgers (first) and Castellani (second) likely will be with the Rockies before the season is over.

And more top three draft choices are on the way in the next three years.

Yet, the Rockies will be top heavy in the bullpen with five or six veterans signed as free agents or acquired in deals - and still have to depend on high-ticket free agents scattered about.

Why is this man Monfort smiling?

Because his handpicked general manager, Jeff Bridich, has assembled a real team for the present that probably will vie for another wild-card berth - and a team for the future that finally may finish first in the National League West.

**Progress report: Colorado Rockies**  
**Jeff Sanders Contact Reporter/ San Diego Union Tribune | March 6, 2018**

COLORADO ROCKIES

- **2017 finish:** 87-75 (3<sup>rd</sup> in NL West; 2<sup>nd</sup> wild-card)
- **Manager:** Bud Black (87-75, 2<sup>nd</sup> season)
- **Top baseball ops executive:** Jeff Bridich, vice president and general manager (fourth season)

DOLLARS AND SENSE

- **Highest-paid player:** OF Ian Desmond (\$22 million in 2018)
- **Top returning position player:** 3B Nolan Arenado (7.2 WAR in 2017, baseball-reference.com)
- **Top returning pitcher:** LHP Kyle Freeland (3.3 WAR in 2017)

THE MOVES

- **Key addition(s):** RHP Wade Davis (free agent), RHP Bryan Shaw (free agent), C Chris Iannetta (free agent).
- **Key subtraction(s):** OF Carlos Gonzalez (free agent), RHP Tyler Chatwood (free agent), RHP Greg Holland (free agent), C Jonathan Lucroy (free agent), 1B Mark Reynolds (free agent), RHP Pat Neshek (free agent).
- **Baseball America top-100 prospect(s):** SS Brendan Rodgers (No. 22), 1B Ryan McMahon (No. 63), RHP Riley Pint (No. 99).

STORYLINES TO WATCH

- In his 10<sup>th</sup> season as a manager and first in Colorado, former Padres skipper **Bud Black** finally managed a playoff-game (one and done in the wild-card round). He got there because the Rockies pitching staff moved from 20<sup>th</sup> in WAR in 2016 (10.2) to fifth in 2017 (22.2). RHP **Tyler Chatwood** has moved on but the Rockies will need LHP **Kyle Freeland** and RHPs **Jon Gray**, **German Marquez** and **Antonio Senzatela** improve on breakthrough campaigns to keep pace in the tough NL West.
- 3B **Nolan Arenado** won a fifth straight Gold Glove and drove in 130 runs for the third straight year. His OPS has risen each year in the majors, putting him in line for a huge payday when he becomes a free agent after the 2019

season if the Rockies can't find a way to extend Arenado, who is a **Scott Boras** client. OF **Charlie Blackmon** will be in line for a big payday after *this* season if he comes close to replicating the 1.000 OPS he posted last year.

- RHP **Greg Holland** elected free agency after his 41 saves tied for the league lead in 2017. The Rockies signed RHP **Wade Davis** to a three-year, \$52 million deal to replace Holland and have further boosted the bullpen by signing RHP **Bryan Shaw** and retaining LHP **Jake McGee**. The bullpen was the strength of the Colorado's pitching staff in 2017 and could be again if Davis proves an adequate replacement for Holland.

## PECOTA PROJECTION

- 78 wins

## AROUND THE LEAGUE

### NL West

- Arizona Diamondbacks
- Colorado Rockies
- Los Angeles Dodgers (Coming March 11)
- San Diego Padres (Coming March 20)
- San Francisco Giants (Coming March 21)

### NL Central

- Chicago Cubs
- Cincinnati Reds
- Milwaukee Brewers (Coming March 13)
- Pittsburgh Pirates (Coming March 19)
- St. Louis Cardinals (Coming March 23)

### NL East

- Atlanta Braves



- Miami Marlins (Coming March 12)
- New York Mets (Coming March 15)
- Philadelphia Phillies (Coming March 18)
- Washington Nationals (Coming March 27)

#### AL West

- Houston Astros (Coming March 8)
- Los Angeles Angels (Coming March 10)
- Oakland Athletics (Coming March 17)
- Seattle Mariners (Coming March 22)
- Texas Rangers (Coming March 25)

#### AL Central

- Chicago White Sox
- Cleveland Indians
- Detroit Tigers (Coming March 7)
- Kansas City Royals (Coming March 9)
- Minnesota Twins (Coming March 14)

#### AL East

- Baltimore Orioles
- Boston Red Sox
- New York Yankees (Coming March 16)
- Tampa Bay Rays (Coming March 24)
- Toronto Blue Jays (Coming March 26)