



MEDIA CLIPS – April 9, 2018

Freeland bit by home run ball, lack of support

Thomas Harding / MLB.com | April 8, 2018

DENVER -- Over two starts, Rockies left-handed pitcher Kyle Freeland has thrown 181 pitches. But because four were knocked over the fence, he has two losses to show for otherwise solid efforts.

With no safety net because of shutout work by Braves starter Sean Newcomb for six-plus innings, and the bullpen for the rest, Freeland gave up three runs -- two on solo homers -- in a 4-0 loss at Coors Field on Sunday afternoon.

Freeland gave up seven hits in six innings and struck out five against two walks. But two of the hits were consecutive home runs by Nick Markakis and Dansby Swanson. In Freeland's last start, at San Diego, he was charged with four runs in 5 1/3 innings, but the only runs that scored with him in the game were two of Christian Villanueva's three home runs that night.

Freeland matter-of-factly counted a Ozzie Albies ground-rule, RBI double in Sunday's fifth inning among his pitches to lament.

"That's kind of been the story over the last two starts -- it's come down to four or five pitches, really," Freeland said. "They're mistakes. Those two pitches were left over the plate, and they put good swings on them."

Putting Freeland's work into perspective, he has, for the most part, spotted his fastball, slider and cutter. Two fastballs sailed over the wall on Sunday, and it was a changeup and a slider in his last start. The changeup, a potentially good pitch, still is too firm -- sometimes just 5-7 mph slower than the fastball.

What counts for manager Bud Black is that Freeland, who tied with teammate German Marquez for the National League lead in rookie wins last year with 11, is clear-headed about what's going right and what isn't.

"We saw a lot of maturity last year from Kyle, and Kyle will continue to understand that his game is down," Black said. "Get the ball inside, at times elevated, but not many pitchers can live at the top of the zone."

"I'm not concerned about Kyle losing confidence or anything of that nature."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

They had their chance: The Rockies had three first-inning hits and had no idea they would manage so little off Newcomb. But with two on, Newcomb froze Ian Desmond on a 1-2 fastball on the upper-outside quadrant. Desmond gave plate umpire Tony Randazzo a questioning look, but strike-zone imaging showed that Randazzo was not out of line on the borderline pitch. It was the first of 16 straight Newcomb would retire. Newcomb struck out nine and gave up five hits in six-plus innings, and Shane Carle forced an Desmond double-play grounder and a Gerardo Parra fly ball after Nolan Arenado and Trevor Story opened the seventh with singles against Newcomb.

Newcomb (1-1) displayed a solid fastball and curve in two starts against the Rockies last season, and on Sunday augmented that with an effective changeup.

"His fastball is kind of heavy, he was locating pretty good, his changeup, he was keeping it down," Rockies second baseman DJ LeMahieu said. "We just couldn't get much going off him."

It's the little things: The game was scoreless when Ender Inciarte drew a two-out walk from Freeland, then alertly stole second. Albies followed with a ground-rule double, allowing Inciarte to score the game's first run.

Albies homered in the seventh off Chris Rusin.

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

It was the Braves' first shutout at Coors Field since April 14, 1997, when future Hall of Famer Tom Glavine threw a complete game in the 14-0 victory.

BATS NOT SHOWING UP

In dropping 2-of-3 in the Coors Field-opening series, the Rockies managed just six runs, and on Sunday barely threatened after the three-hit first inning against Newcomb.

"There are times when a guy pitches a really good game; I think we saw that today," Black said. "He was locating the fastball. He had a devastating changeup and he was mixing his curveball."

LeMahieu was in no mood for panic with a .500 record after 10 games.

"It's not the best we've played, for sure, over the past couple of years, but I feel like we've played pretty well," he said. "I know we have a really good team and we're about to get hot here at some point."

On Sunday, LeMahieu (1-for-4) hit leadoff and catcher Chris Iannetta (0-for-4) celebrated his 35th birthday by batting second, usually LeMahieu's spot. Usual leadoff man Charlie Blackmon, who left Saturday night's 3-2, 10-inning Rockies victory, "might have been available" if Sunday's game had been a marathon, Black said.

DAHL SITS

Triple-A Albuquerque outfielder David Dahl sat out the last two games, after driving in four runs in a 3-for-5 night with a double Friday in a victory over Salt Lake, but it's not for the reason that some are speculating.

"I have a little stomach virus -- feeling better today, and hopefully will be in there tomorrow," Dahl said Sunday evening.

His absence sparked speculation that the Rockies ordered him held out of the lineup to determine what was happening with Blackmon's back. Dahl -- who hit .315 with seven homers in 63 Major League games in his 2016 debut but didn't appear in the Majors last season because of a rib issue -- said Blackmon was not connected to his absence from the Isotopes' lineup. Of course, he could be among the Rockies' options if he becomes healthy and Blackmon's injury lingers.

Dahl said he is "feeling good at the plate." Now he has to feel better away from it, so to speak.

WHAT'S NEXT

Rockies righty Jon Gray (1-1, 2.45 ERA) enjoys the strategy battle, and he has one. Five days ago, he held the Padres scoreless through seven innings on four hits, with seven strikeouts and no walks. He faces the Padres and lefty Clayton Richard (0-1, 4.50) again Monday at Coors Field at 6:40 p.m.

Hoffman sets sights on return to Rox rotation

Right-hander set to begin rehab assignment with Lancaster

Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Apr. 8th, 2018

DENVER -- Right-hander Jeff Hoffman will begin an injury rehab assignment on Tuesday at Class A Advanced Lancaster as he attempts to push his way into the Rockies' rotation.

The Rockies shut Hoffman down after two Cactus League appearances to allow right shoulder soreness to calm. Now that he is healthy, Hoffman will pitch for Lancaster Tuesday against San Jose, then continue his rehab at Triple-A Albuquerque. Rehab assignments for pitchers are a maximum 30 days, but Hoffman has Minor League options.

But Hoffman, the ninth overall pick in the 2014 MLB Draft and the key to the 2014 trade that sent shortstop Troy Tulowitzki to the Blue Jays, arrived at Spring Training considered a competitor for the season-opening rotation.

"Jeff knows what's ahead of him," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "But like all guys in the Minor Leagues, we're hoping that they all do great, continue to grow and try to improve, and Jeff is one of that group of players that's trying to get back to the big leagues."

Hoffman went 6-5 with a 5.89 ERA in 23 games (16 starts) last season. Hoffman posted a 2.25 ERA and .205 batting average against in his first six appearances. But as the season progressed, fastball command eluded Hoffman, which meant he couldn't set up his swing-and-miss curveball.

Hoffman felt he was spotting the fastball well before the soreness appeared.

"I feel a lot better than what I was feeling when I went down," Hoffman said. "I feel a lot stronger, how I'm supposed to feel. I'm not feeling the bad soreness in my rotator cuff."

Hoffman threw a live batting practice Thursday in Scottsdale, Ariz., and did his throwing program at Coors Field on Sunday, with coaches and trainers watching.

Roundup: Keller, Craig lead Altoona to win

Mike Rosenbaum / MLB.com | Apr. 8th, 2018

Neither the cold weather nor Double-A Akron's hitters stood any chance against Mitch Keller on Sunday in his season debut for Altoona.

Taking the mound with a game time temperature of 34 degrees, Keller, Pittsburgh's No. 1 prospect (No. 15 overall), burned through the RubberDucks' lineup, allowing just two hits in six scoreless innings to pace Altoona in a combined three-hit shutout. He struck out eight and issued two walks.

Keller allowed leadoff hits in the first and third innings, both singles, before retiring nine of the final 10 batters he faced as he capped his performance with swinging strikeouts of Bobby Bradley and Tyler Krieger, Cleveland's Nos. 3 and 25 prospects. Seven of the 22-year-old's eight strikeouts were of the swing-and-miss variety and he induced another six outs via ground balls, ultimately throwing 49 of his 77 pitches for strikes in the start.

Pacing the Curve's offense was Will Craig, as the Pirates' No. 23 prospect connected on a two-run shot in the fifth inning for his second home run in as many days in the 4-0 victory. Shortstop Cole Tucker (Pirates' No. 5) also had a strong game, going 2-for-4 and scoring a run out of the leadoff spot. Bryan Reynolds (No. 6) went 1-for-2 with an RBI double.

The rest of the best performances from top prospects Sunday

- No. 3 overall prospect Vladimir Guerrero Jr. (Blue Jays' No. 1) belted a tape-measure solo home run for Double-A New Hampshire, his first at the Double-A level. It was the 19-year-old third baseman's lone hit in four at-bats, while 20-year-old shortstop Bo Bichette (No. 13 overall, Blue Jays' No. 2) collected two hits for a third straight game after an 0-for-4 season debut. On the mound for the Fisher Cats, starter Sean Reid-Foley (Blue Jays' No. 10) did not allow a hit after the first inning en route to completing six scoreless frames. He struck out seven and walked three in the outing, throwing 52 of his 84 pitches for strikes.

- No. 5 overall prospect Gleyber Torres (Yankees' No. 1) played the hero for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, hitting a go-ahead two-run single in the top of the ninth inning that proved to be the difference in the RailRiders' 5-4 win against Syracuse. The hit was one of four collected by the 21-year-old infielder, who finished the game 4-for-5 one day after connecting on his first 2018 home run.

- No. 29 overall prospect Juan Soto (Nationals' No. 2) finished a double short of the cycle as he powered Class A Hagerstown in a 6-2 win over Rome. The 19-year-old outfielder hit a solo homer in the first inning -- his second this season -- cleared the bases with a triple in the second and went on to add a pair of singles to finish 4-for-5 with four RBIs. One of the better pure hitters in the Minors, Soto owns a .363/.418/.552 batting line in 87 career games.

- No. 38 overall prospect Jack Flaherty (Cardinals' No. 2) allowed one earned run on five hits and struck out 11 over seven innings to record the win in his season debut for Triple-A Memphis. The 22-year-old righty broke camp in the big leagues, where he posted five innings of one-run ball with nine strikeouts in a fill-in start for injured Adam Wainwright. Pacing the Redbirds at the plate was none other than Tyler O'Neill (No. 94 overall, Cardinals' No. 4), who blasted his fourth two-run home run in as many games. He finished the game 3-for-4 with three RBIs, accounting for much of the offense in the Redbirds' 4-1 victory over Round Rock.
- D-backs No. 24 prospect Brian Shaffer recorded nine of his 14 outs via strikeout in a no-decision for Class A Kane County. Working 4 2/3 innings, the 6-foot-5, 200-pound righty allowed as many hits as walks (two), while throwing 56 of his 85 pitches for strikes.
- Dodgers No. 6 prospect DJ Peters went 2-for-5 with two solo home runs as Double-A Tulsa defeated Midland in Texas League play. The 2017 Class A Advanced California League MVP had three multi-homer games last season, when he finished third in the circuit with 27 homers.
- Marlins No. 12 prospect Brian Miller doubled and scored two runs to finish 4-for-5 as Class A Advanced Jupiter walked off against Palm Beach, 8-7. Selected No. 36 overall in last year's Draft, the 22-year-old outfielder is batting .412 (7-for-17) through four games so far after slashing .322/.384/.416 over 57 games with Class A Greensboro during his pro debut.
- Make it four straight games with two hits for Josh Naylor. After starring in both games of Double-A San Antonio's doubleheader sweep Saturday, the Padres' No. 16 prospect smashed his third home run this season, highlighting a 3-for-6, three-RBI performance by the 20-year-old first baseman. Overall, Naylor sports a .563 average with 10 RBIs through four games.
- Rockies No. 5 prospect Peter Lambert matched Reid-Foley with six scoreless frames of his own. The 20-year-old right-hander scattered five hits with one walk while striking out five and generating another eight outs on the ground.
- Royals No. 3 prospect Seuly Matias homered for a third straight game and the fourth time this season, as his three-run shot in the second inning proved to be the difference in Class A Lexington's 7-4 win in game one of a doubleheader versus Charleston. The 19-year-old outfielder added a triple in the nightcap, giving him five extra-base hits in 15 at-bats through four games after homering seven times in 22 at-bats last season with Rookie-level Burlington.
- Royals No. 1 prospect Khalil Lee hit a triple and walked twice while going 2-for-3, though it wasn't enough to keep Class A Advanced Wilmington from falling to Potomac, 3-2. It was the 19-year-old outfielder's second multi-hit performance in four games, each of which he's now recorded at least one hit and one run. Blue Rocks starter Gerson Garabito (No. 28) was impressive in a no-decision, tossing six scoreless innings of one-hit ball with nine strikeouts.

- Tigers No. 11 prospect Mike Gerber continued his red-hot start for Triple-A Toledo by connecting on a two-run homer in the first inning that proved the difference in a 2-1 win over Louisville. The 25-year-old outfielder has gone deep twice in three games and owns a .586 average (7-for-12) thanks to multiple hits in each contest.

Kyle Freeland tosses a quality start but the Braves blow by the Rockies behind Ozzie Albies' "sock"
Atlanta gets a 4-0 victory in front of 42,031 fans at Coors Field

Nick Groke / TheDenverPost.com | Apr. 8, 2018

Wind rushed in from the west Sunday at Coors Field like an insurance policy for Rockies left-hander Kyle Freeland, blowing toward the bats of Braves hitters. Nothing, it seemed, would travel far, even the pitching mistakes.

Until 5-foot-8, 21-year-old wunderkind Ozzie Albies came to the plate for Atlanta in the fifth inning. In the face of strong currents he put the game's first run on the board with a double as the Braves went on to a 4-0 victory in front of 42,031 fans.

"For a littler fella, he's got some sock," Colorado manager Bud Black said.

Albies' ground-rule double to left-center put the Braves up 1-0 and opened a barrage. Two innings later, Albies smacked a solo homer off reliever Chris Rusin making it 4-0. Atlanta got back-to-back homers off Freeland in the sixth, from Nick Markakis and Dansby Swanson.

The Rockies dropped to 5-5 after a series loss to Atlanta. Freeland, who dropped to 0-2, has been undone in two starts by the home run. The Padres also hit two off him last week in San Diego.

"That's kind of been the story over the past two starts. It's come down to four or five pitches, really," Freeland said. "They're mistakes."

The wind seemed to only cause problems for the Rockies, who struck out nine times against second-year Atlanta left-hander Sean Newcomb in six-plus innings. Only Nolan Arenado reached second base against Newcomb, in the first and seventh innings, after Trevor Story singled him along. Only Pat Valaika reached third base for the Rockies, in the eighth.

BOX SCORE: Braves 4, Rockies 0

The Rockies were shut out at home for the first time since May 27 of last year — and in their past four games, they've managed just nine runs.

"No concerns," Black said of his club's offense.

The Braves, on the other hand, are the best hitting team in baseball in the early going, with a majors-best 62 runs and a .285 team batting average. Freeland was handling them adeptly until Albies came to bat for the third time. Freeland had walked Ender Inciarte with two outs and on a full count Albies fished out a low slider to deep center that bounced over the wall.

"They have their hitting shoes on," Black said.

Freeland got through six innings with just three runs allowed, often a path to victory at Coors Field for a starting pitcher. But the home runs in the sixth were elevated missteps and the Braves built a healthy lead.

"You saw the first couple innings, the wind played havoc with the ball," Black said. "But as the game went on, the wind ate at some of these balls hit in the outfield."

Newcomb, like Freeland, is in his second major league season. He struggled through just 4 1/3 innings of his debut last week but rebounded to shut down the Rockies with control and variance.

His changeup was "devastating," Black said. His fastball was "heavy," second baseman DJ LeMahieu said. Newcomb did not walk a batter and he gave up just five hits in six innings. He is just the third pitcher to throw at least six shutout innings with at least nine strikeouts and no walks in the 23-year history of Coors Field, joining Jon Gray (2016) and Randy Johnson (2007).

"We didn't swing it great today," LeMahieu said. "But we have a really good offense and I'm not worried about it."

Charlie Blackmon sits with back spasms; Dick Monfort on spending; Jeff Hoffman set for Rockies rehab stint

Rockies manager Bud Black says Blackmon's back issue is day-to-day

Nick Groke / TheDenverPost.com | Apr. 8, 2018

Charlie Blackmon was out of the Rockies' lineup Sunday for the first time this season, but he deflected any concern — even after an odd situation in his team's extra-inning victory the night before.

"It's not something I would consider an injury," Blackmon said. "It's more of a spasm situation."

Rockies manager Bud Black said Blackmon's back issue is a day-to-day situation.

"It was a little bit tight for most of the game and kept getting tighter," Blackmon said. "I've dealt with it before and been all right."

Blackmon, the defending National League batting champion, twice tried to bunt in the ninth inning with two runners on base and no outs, in a tie game. His second attempt popped into a foul-ball out. Black then removed Blackmon for the 10th inning, replacing him with Mike Tauchman in center field.

Black later said that he didn't want Blackmon swinging in that at-bat.

"I was trying to get a run across to win the game," Blackmon said. "That's a bunt situation."

Tauchman started in center field Sunday. DJ LeMahieu replaced Blackmon as the leadoff hitter.

Spending spree. Rockies owner Dick Monfort reiterated that he isn't afraid to boost player payroll, even after a \$106 million winter spree on three relievers and a new \$108 million deal for Blackmon.

"Sometimes it doesn't look like we are, but we are," Monfort, in an interview with KOA radio, said of his interest in winning every year. "We've got a couple things going for us. We have a very strong farm system. We have an opportunity to get good and stay good for a while."

With all-star third baseman Nolan Arenado approaching free agency in 2019, the Rockies might be in line for even more spending. To that end, Monfort said his relationship with general manager Jeff Bridich remains strong.

"Jeff and I get along great," Monfort said. "Jeff is pretty protective, but we see things pretty much similar. And if we don't see things similar, he usually wins. That makes it easier for him."

Hoffman update. Jeff Hoffman, who missed the final month of spring training because of a shoulder injury, threw a successful bullpen session Saturday at Coors Field. So the Rockies will start the right-hander on a minor-league rehab assignment Tuesday.

Hoffman will first pitch for Single-A Lancaster, then report to Triple-A Albuquerque if he remains healthy, Black said.

Footnotes. Tony Wolters' walk-off walk in the 10th inning Saturday extended a streak. The Rockies' last three walk-off wins came from walks. The last team with three walk-off wins earned without a hit was Toronto, in 1997. ... The Rockies hadn't played an extra-inning game at Coors Field since Oct. 2, 2016.

Looking ahead...

Padres LHP Clayton Richard (0-1, 4.50 ERA) vs. Rockies RHP Jon Gray (1-1, 2.45), 6:40 p.m. Monday, ATTRM; 850 AM

Colorado Rockies starting pitcher Jon Gray ...Alex Gallardo, The Associated PressColorado Rockies starting pitcher Jon Gray throws to a San Diego Padres batter during the first inning of a baseball game in San Diego, Wednesday, April 4, 2018.

A pair of No. 1s will face off again after Gray bested Richard last week in San Diego. They could face each other again this month when the Padres return to Denver for a third series in three weeks against the Rockies. Gray's last outing put him back on track; he pitched seven scoreless innings with seven strikeouts and posted his first win. Better still, Gray didn't allow a walk. The Rockies, on the flip side, pounced on Richard for five runs on eight hits over five innings. Nick Groke, The Denver Post

Tuesday: Padres LHP Joey Lucchesi (0-0, 2.79 ERA) vs. Rockies LHP Tyler Anderson (0-0, 7.56), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Wednesday: Padres RHP Luis Perdomo (1-1, 6.00) at Rockies RHP German Marquez (0-1, 6.52), 1:10 p.m., ATTRM

Thursday: Rockies RHP Chad Bettis (1-0, 2.53) at Nationals TBD, 5 p.m., ATTRM

Sean Newcomb dazzles, Braves beat Rockies 4-0

Associated Press / ESPN.com | Apr. 9, 2018

DENVER -- The surprising Atlanta Braves surged behind their bats through the first week of the season. Now, they're getting some nice starting pitching, too.

Sean Newcomb pitched into the seventh inning, Nick Markakis and Dansby Swanson hit back-to-back homers and the Braves beat the Colorado Rockies 4-0 on Sunday.

"Every day it's someone new that's contributing," Newcomb said.

It was his turn in Denver.

Newcomb (1-1) allowed three hits in the first inning before retiring the next 16 batters to help the Braves take two of three in Colorado's home-opening series. The left-hander followed strong starts from Brandon McCarthy and Anibal Sanchez, tying his career high with nine strikeouts while not issuing a walk.

"He was locating the fastball and he had a devastating changeup and he mixed in his curveball," Colorado manager Bud Black said. "So, when you're throwing 93, 94 mph, and you come from a high arm slot at 6-foot-5, he's got a great angle. The changeup is coming in there at 85, 86 mph, with some action to it, it's tough to solve. And we just didn't do it today."

Newcomb left after allowing consecutive hits to Nolan Arenado and Trevor Story to begin the seventh. Shane Carle, Sam Freeman and Arodys Vizcaino pitched in relief to preserve the shutout.

Kyle Freeland (0-2) allowed three runs, struck out five and walked two in six innings for the Rockies. The Denver native had one out in the sixth before giving up deep balls to Markakis and Swanson that made it 3-0.

An inning earlier, Ozzie Albies had an RBI double off Freeland. He then homered off Chris Rusin in the seventh to put Atlanta up 4-0.

The Braves have scored 62 runs through their first nine games of the year. Colorado, meanwhile, scored only six runs in the series and was shut out at home for the first time since May 27, 2017, against St. Louis.

The Rockies had a runner in scoring position in the eighth, but third baseman Charlie Culberson helped thwart the threat with a catch that took him over the rolled-up tarp and into the stands.

"I'm not worried about it," second baseman DJ LeMahieu said. "We'll get on a roll."

GOING, GOING . GONE?

Colorado fill-in centerfielder Mike Tauchman did his best to help out Freeland in the sixth, jumping into the wall as he tried to pull back Markakis' shot. The crash, however, knocked Tauchman on his back and catapulted his glove over the wall.

There was some momentary confusion afterward.

"I didn't know what happened," Markakis said. "I didn't know if he caught it or what happened. I looked at the umpire and I saw him signaling, so I knew it was good."

The centerfield gate had to be opened to return Tauchman's glove.

LITTLE GUY WITH BIG POWER

Albies, who roped a ground-rule double and his third homer of the season, provides more power than his 5-foot-9, 165-pound frame would have one believe.

"I would probably say he and (Astros second baseman Jose) Altuve are probably pound-for-pound, might be the two strongest guys in the major leagues," Atlanta manager Brian Snitker said. "He's not tall but he's strong, big."

COORS FIELD CLUB

Newcomb became the third starting pitcher to toss at least six scoreless innings with no walks and at least nine strikeouts at Coors Field. Jon Gray and Hall of Famer Randy Johnson are the only other two to accomplish the feat.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Braves: 3B Johan Camargo (oblique) is expected to continue his rehab assignment through Wednesday and could be back by next weekend's series with the Chicago Cubs.

Rockies: OF Charlie Blackmon, who left Saturday's game in the 10th inning, was out of the starting lineup with back stiffness. "Charlie will be fine," Black said. "A day-to-day situation." ... RHP Jeff Hoffman (shoulder) threw a bullpen session Sunday and is expected to pitch for Class A Advanced Lancaster on Tuesday.

UP NEXT

Braves: Julio Teheran (0-0, 10.13 ERA) faces the Washington Nationals and three-time Cy Young Award winner Max Scherzer on Monday.

Rockies: On Monday, Jon Gray (1-1, 2.45) will face the San Diego Padres for a second straight start after tossing seven shutout innings against them five days ago.

Freeland: A Daytime Delight, Home and Road

Tracy Ringolsby / Insidetheseams.com | Apr. 8, 2018

Some things are just better off accepted than explained.

Things like Rockies lefthander Kyle Freeland's daytime success, particularly at Coors Field.

Freeland gets the start for the Rockies in Sunday's series finale against the Braves.

Big deal? Could be. A win gives the Rockies a series win. The two teams split the first two games of the series, the Rockies pulling out a 3-2, 10-inning walk on Saturday night when Tony Wolters drew a bases-loaded walk.

And who better to turn to in that situation than Freeland, who on the Sunday before the All-Star Break, had a no-hitter for 8 1/3 innings of a Coors Field day time start against the White Sox.

Crunch these numbers:

-- Freeland was 6-3 with a 2.53 in 10 starts at Coors Field last season, the Rockies going 7-3 in those games. Overall, he was 9-4 in day games, the Rockies going 11-4 when he started a day game.

-- In day games started by someone other than Freeland, the Rockies were 24-19 overall, but just 9-10 with a 5.81 ERA at Coors Field.

So it's not that Coors Field is a monster easily tamed in the daytime. Freeland, who makes his first daytime start of 2018 Sunday, has enjoyed abnormal success.

"I wish I could offer an explanation," Rockies pitching coach Steve Foster said. "I don't think there is any secret behind it. The guy wakes up and he's ready to go. He's young and he's energized when he gets up in the morning."

What would seem to come into play is that Freeland isn't intimidated by the reputation of Coors Field.

He is, after all, a native of Denver, born 39 days after the Rockies first-game ever, against the Mets at Shea Stadium on April, 5, 1993, just a couple of miles away from Mile High Stadium, which the Rockies called home in their first two years of existence.

The Thomas Jefferson High School graduate was the eighth player taken in the 2014 draft after pitching for three years at the University of Evansville.

Sunday (April 8): Pint Removed With Injury; Hoffman to Begin Rehab

Tracy Ringolsby / Insidetheseams.com | Apr 8, 2018

Former first-round draft choice Riley Pint was removed from his start for Class A Asheville after 23 pitches with an injury. No further details were available.

Right-hander Jeff Hoffman, shut down after four innings in two appearances during the spring because of right shoulder soreness, will begin a minor-league rehab assignment on Tuesday, pitching for High-A Lancaster against San Jose in a California League game.

After that, Hoffman will join Triple-A Albuquerque. A pitcher can spend up to 30 days on a rehab assignment. Hoffman, however, still has an option so if he is not at full strength in the allotted time period he could be optioned to the minor leagues.

Meanwhile, David Dahl was out of the Albuquerque lineup for the second day in a row on Sunday with an illness. It is not considered serious.

In Sunday's games:

AAA Albuquerque (3-1) 11 at Salt Lake City 4. Sam Howard (1-0) allowed two runs on six hits, striking out four in five innings for the victory. Tom Murphy, who raised his average to .625 with a 3-for-4 effort, and Anthony Phillips both hit home runs.

AA Harford (0-4) 2 vs, New Hampshire 4. Peter Lambert started and worked six shutout innings, striking out five while giving up five hits and a walk. Logan Cozart suffered the loss in relief, allowing four runs in two innings. Cavan Biggio, son of Hall of Famer Craig Biggio, hit a two-run home run in the seventh.

High A Lancaster (3-1) 11 at Modesto 9. Roberto Ramos and Colton Welker combined to drive in all 11 runs. Ramos became first Jethawk in three years to hit three home runs in a game. After being held hitless in his first two at-bats, Ramos delivered two-run home runs in the fifth, sixth and eighth innings. Colton Welker (.667) was 3-for-4 with a three-run home run and five RBI.

Low A Asheville (0-4) 9 at Delmarva 14. Pint started but was removed with an undisclosed injury in the first inning. He was charged with giving up five runs, three earned, on two hits and two walks. Delmarva scored 32 runs in the last two games.

Sat (April 7): Hartford Faces Big-League Family Tree

Tracy Ringolsby / Insidetheseams.com | Apr. 8, 2018

Double-A Hartford found itself faced with a big-league heritage in its 4-1 loss to New Hampshire on Saturday night. Bo Bichette, son of original Rockies outfielder Dante, doubled and drove in two runs. Cavan Biggio, son of Hall of Famer Craig, singled, and Vladimir Guerrero, Jr., son of Hall of Famer Vlad Sr., doubled and scored.

Class AAA Albuquerque (2-1) 9, at Salt Lake City 4: Raimel Tapia delivered a two-run home run in the seventh and three-run home run in the eighth. Tom Murphy also had a home run. Harrison Musgrave started, but did not return to the mound after a 1 hour, 39 rain delay following the first innings.

Class AA Hartford (0-3) 1, vs. New Hampshire 4: Backing the offense of the sons of three former big-leaguers, Nick Tepsch, who has 44 big-league starts on his resume, started and won the game, and former big-league reliever Craig Breslow recorded the final two outs for the save. Jesus Tinoco (0-1) suffered the loss, allowing one run on three hits, striking out six in six innings.

High A Modesto (2-1) 9, vs. Modesto 8: Tyler Nevin had three hits, including a home run, scoring twice and driving in three runs. Nevin, Alan Trejo and Carlos Herrera each drove in runs in a four-run, game-winning rally in the eighth that was capped with Trejo scoring the final run on a wild pitch.

Low A Asheville (0-3) 3, at Delmarva 18: Erick Julio gave up seven runs, six earned, on six hits in four innings. Delmarva took control with an eight-run sixth,. Former No. 1 pick Riley Pint, ranked the third best prospect in the Rockies system by Baseball America, starts Sunday's series finale.

Offense disappears as Braves, Newcomb blank Rockies' Sunday lineup

Aniello Piro / MileHighSports.com | April 8, 2018

The Colorado Rockies lost to the Atlanta Braves Sunday afternoon at Coors Field, 4-0. The Braves took the series, 2-1, and held the Rockies to just six runs total in the set.

The Rockies' offense, which featured DJ LeMahieu hitting leadoff and catcher Chris Iannetta batting second on his 35th birthday, was in a funk all afternoon. Regulars Charlie Blackmon and Carlos Gonzalez both did not start.

Colorado recorded three hits in the first inning, the same total they had over the final eight. After allowing three hits in the first inning, Braves starting pitcher Sean Newcomb (1-1, 4.35 ERA) retired 16 consecutive Rockies through the sixth inning. Newcomb struck out nine and walked none, allowing five hits in 6.0-plus innings.

Rockies starting pitcher Kyle Freeland (0-2, 5.56 ERA) had a quality outing, logging 6.0 innings and allowing seven hits, three runs, and two walks while striking out five. Freeland was sharp through his first four innings of work, but cracked in the fifth inning when he issued a two-out walk to Ender Inciarte who would then score on a ground-rule double from Ozzie Albies to put the Braves ahead.

The Braves added two runs in the following inning via solo home runs from Nick Markakis and Dansby Swanson to end Freeland's afternoon and spoil what was a great start through four innings.

Chris Rusin relived Freeland in the seventh inning and allowed a solo home run to Albies to cap the scoring in the game.

The Rockies had a golden opportunity to get on the board in the seventh inning as Nolan Arenado and Trevor Story both reached base to leadoff the inning and chase Newcomb from the game. However, the Rockies were unable to capitalize as Ian Desmond grounded into a double-play and Gerardo Parra flew out to left field.

Colorado had another chance to put a run on the board in the eighth inning after Pat Valikia started the inning with a double, but Mike Tauchman, Gonzalez — who pinch hit for Rusin — and LeMahieu all failed to drive him home.

The Rockies went down in order in the ninth inning to end what was a dismal afternoon offensively.

With the loss, Colorado falls to 5-5 on the year, 1-2 at Coors Field. Atlanta moves to 6-3, 2-1 on the road.

NEXT UP: The Rockies welcome the San Diego Padres to Coors Field for the first time this season to play a three-game series starting Monday. Jon Gray (1-1, 2.45) will start for the Rockies and oppose Clayton Richard (0-1, 4.50) with first pitch scheduled for 6:40 p.m. MDT.

Charlie Blackmon and J.D. Martinez, a tale of two powerful outfielders

Blackmon and Martinez aren't so different from each other, and that shows in both their contracts and their statistics.

Samantha Bradfield / PurpleRow.com | Apr. 9, 2018

Charlie Blackmon and J.D. Martinez are similar baseball players with similar career trajectories. Both started playing in the big leagues in 2011 at ages 24 and 23, respectively, and both just signed multi-year, \$100+ million contracts. After a long wait this past offseason, Martinez signed a 5-year, \$110 million deal with the Boston Red Sox on February 26, 2018. Charlie Blackmon signed a 6-year, \$108 million (with incentives that can boost it up to \$116 million) contract with the Colorado Rockies on April 4, 2018.

Contract Breakdowns

Monetary Breakdown

Year	Blackmon	Martinez
2018	\$12 million	\$23.75 million
2019	\$21 million	\$23.75 million
2020	\$21 million	\$23.75 million
2021	\$21 million	\$19.35 million
2022	\$21 million	\$19.35 million
2023	\$10 million	N/A

Blackmon

- \$2 million signing bonus in 2018
- Increase in 2023 salary by \$2 million if he finishes in the top 3 of MVP voting in any year (2018-2022)
- Increase in 2023 salary by \$1 million if he finishes 4th or 5th in MVP voting in any year (2018-2022)
- Escalation in 2023 salary by \$5 million if he has between 400-575 plate appearances
- 2023 salary may escalate by no more than \$8 million due to incentives (max salary for 2023 is \$18 million)
- Limited no-trade clause including 10/5 rights (ten years total service time, five with his current club) after 2022 season, which means he can veto any trade from there on out
- Player options in 2022 and 2023
- Hotel suite for all road games

Martinez

- Player option in 2019 - \$2.5 million buyout
- Player option in 2020 - no buyout

- Player option in 2021 - no buyout
- Mutual option in 2021 if:
 - Martinez suffers a Lisfranc injury related to his prior Lisfranc injury. A three-doctor system will define if related to prior Lisfranc injury or a new injury.
 - Martinez spends a certain amount of time on the DL because of that old injury - specifically, if he spends 60 days on the DL in Year 3 - or 10 days in Year 3, plus a total of 120 days in Year 2 and Year 3.
- Mutual option in 2022 if:
 - Martinez suffers a Lisfranc injury related to his prior Lisfranc injury. A three-doctor system will define if related to prior Lisfranc injury or a new injury.
 - Martinez spends a certain amount of time on the DL because of that old injury - specifically, if he spends 60 days on the DL in Year 4 - or 10 days in Year 4, plus a total of 120 days in Year 3 and Year 4.

Colorado Rockies series preview: three more games with the Padres

Noah Yingling / RoxPile.com | Apr. 8, 2018

The Colorado Rockies will start a three game series to start the new week at 6:40 PM MT against the San Diego Padres. The Rockies already faced the Padres in four games in San Diego last week so the Rockies have some experiences against them this season.

Tonight, at 6:40 PM MT, the Rockies will take on the Padres in the first of a three game series. They faced them this past week in a four game series in San Diego and the Rockies won three of four in the series. So, here's the probable pitchers and some scouting reports.

Tonight, Jon Gray will face Clayton Richard. The club's aces squared off last Wednesday and the Rockies won by a score of 5-2. Jon Gray, after a rocky start (no pun intended) on Opening Day against the Diamondbacks, in which he wasn't even able to record an out in the fifth inning while allowing six hits, three runs (all earned), and three walks, pitched much better against the Padres. He went seven scoreless innings while scattering four hits (three of which were singles), walking nobody, and striking out seven.

For Clayton Richard, the Rockies roughed him up early as he allowed three runs in the first inning. He was only able to go five innings, allowing eight hits, five runs (all earned), and three walks while striking out six. All of the damage came from 1 through 6 in the Rockies lineup as, combined, they went 9-for-23 (.391 BA) against the Padres pitching staff.

Richard doesn't have stuff that will blow you away as he averages about 91 miles per hour on the radar gun with his fastball. He pitches to contact, as he averages less than seven strikeouts per nine innings in the past three seasons. As a result, he gives up a lot of hits. In fact, he led the NL in hits allowed last season so the Rockies have to compile the hits and knock them in. They were 3-for-8 with runners in scoring position in that game and they will need to continue that tonight.

Colorado Rockies history: The team's first ever win in their home opener

Noah Yingling / RoxPile.com | Apr. 9, 2018

Twenty five years ago today, the Colorado Rockies won their first game as a franchise of Major League Baseball.

For the 1993 MLB season, the city of Denver received a MLB team that would be named the Colorado Rockies. They played their first game on April 5, 1993 against the New York Mets at Shea Stadium. They would face the Mets in a two game series and they would be swept by the Mets. In fact, the Rockies only scored a combined one run in the two games.

However, after that two game series, they would come to Denver to play the franchise's first home game at Mile High Stadium against the now-defunct Montreal Expos.

For the Expos, their manager Felipe Alou started Kent Bottenfield (who would be traded to the Rockies later in the season) against the Rockies. The Rockies and their manager Don Baylor opposed with former Expo pitcher Bryn Smith.

Here's the Expos lineup for that day:

Future Rockie Mike Lansing, 2B

Moises Alou, RF

Marquis Grissom, CF

Frank Bolick, 3B

John Vander Wal, LF

Wil Cordero, SS

Tim Laker, C

Archi Cianfrocco, 1B

Kent Bottenfield, SP

Don Baylor sent out this lineup:

Eric Young, 2B

Alex Cole, CF

Dante Bichette, RF

Andres Galarraga, 1B

Charlie Hayes, 3B

Jerald Clark, LF

Joe Girardi, C

Freddie Benavides, SS

Bryn Smith, SP

The Rockies would win by a score of 11-4 in front of 80,227 Rockies fans. The Rockies got it going early as they had a four run first inning with two home runs by Eric Young and Charlie Hayes and a RBI single by Dante Bichette.

The Rockies' fifth run scored on a single from Alex Cole and an error by Alou in the second inning and their sixth and seventh runs scored in the fourth from a sac fly by Bichette and a RBI single by Andres Galarraga, which made it 7-0.

The Rockies would have for more RBI singles from Benavides, Young, Dale Murphy (who came in the game for Bichette in the 7th), and Andres Galarraga.

The Expos would score all four of their runs in the ninth but it was too little to late since they entered the inning down 11-0.

Bryn Smith pitched very well for the Rockies as he went seven scoreless innings allowing only six hits, no walks, and one strikeout. There was only a combined four strikeouts for both teams, and one was on a foul bunt and only one was called by plate umpire Mike Winters (who's still an umpire today, best know for arguing with Milton Bradley at first base and Bradley tore his ACL while arguing (and this game was against the Rockies and it was win number eight in the Rockies' 2007 Rocktober streak).

However, it was a, what turned out to be, classic Rockies win due to offense. As mentioned, they scored 11 runs but they were also 7-for-18 with runners in scoring position, which went a long way in helping them to victory.

Colorado Rockies: Pat Valaika discusses his role and his winning ways

Brandon Ewing / RoxPile.com | Apr. 8, 2018

After a breakout season in 2017, Colorado Rockies bench specialist Pat Valaika is looking to build off his phenomenal first season with the club.

Whenever the Rockies were in a pinch or in a clutch game last season, it seemed as if Valaika was always up to the challenge. Valaika's most eye-popping stat from the 2017 campaign is the fact that he broke the rookie pinch-hitting record with collecting 16 RBI. To go along with that incredible number, Valaika hit .351 in clutch situations last year and collected eight RBI and four home runs in those clutch moments.

As great as Valaika is off the bench, another one of his greatest traits is his defensive versatility. Valika has the ability to play every infield position and even has the ability to go out to left field and play the outfield. Valaika discussed his ability to play multiple positions and how the Rockies are expecting him to play a little more first base this season in an exclusive interview with Rox Pile's Jake Shapiro.

"I'm kind of like a year into it now, so it's definitely a little easier. I have my routine kind of down getting to work at all those positions and making sure I check all those boxes. It's good they give me a heads up too and are good about upcoming where I might play. It's good I get some pretty good notice of what position might be coming up."

Valaika already showed his positional versatility last season as he started 16 games at shortstop, five at third base, three at second base, two games in left field and one game at first base. Now nine games into the 2018 campaign, Valaika has already started two games at first base and still holds a fielding percentage of 1.000.

Like most professional athletes, the work they put into the offseason is what helps them prepare to become solid players when the season rolls around. Offseason preparation is something that Valaika took a lot of pride in this offseason, and he discussed with Shapiro how it's helped not only his defensive versatility, but at the plate as well.

"Just the same stuff I always pretty much do. Trying to be consistent with my swing... working different positions, ya know I went in the outfield a little bit more, first base for sure... just the normal stuff."

Valaika's versatility and presence off the bench has been a great addition to the Rockies, but the winning mindset he brings the team has also been a breath of fresh air.

A ninth-round pick out of UCLA, Valaika was drafted by the Rockies during the same season in which he won a College World Series championship with the Bruins. Being successful in college has followed Valaika, as the Rockies made the postseason last year in Valaika's breakout season with the club. Valaika discussed with Shapiro his winning ways and how it followed him here to Colorado.

"I mean, I'm just one player. It's always better to play on good teams, that's for sure. I just try to do what I can to help the team win. I think that's everyone's goal here. Not too many, if any, selfish guys here. Everyone's kind of got the same goal and we're all kind of going the same direction and that's all we want is to win."

The positional versatility and ability for Valaika to make the big hit late in games is a special trait that the Rockies are lucky to have. It's also just an added bonus that Valaika is a winner, and it's no coincidence that, since he's been a regular contributor for the Rockies, the team has had nothing short of success.

Colorado Rockies: Injury updates on Charlie Blackmon, Jeff Hoffman

Kevin Henry / RoxPile.com | Apr. 9, 2018

On Sunday morning, prior to the Colorado Rockies taking on the Atlanta Braves in the final game of a three-game series at Coors Field, Colorado manager Bud Black spoke with Rox Pile and other members of the media regarding injury updates on outfielder Charlie Blackmon and pitcher Jeff Hoffman.

As we reported Saturday night, Blackmon left Colorado's 3-2 extra-inning win in the ninth inning with what he described as "a spasm." Blackmon was out of the lineup on Sunday, marking the first time in 2018 that the All-Star outfielder had not started for the Rockies.

"He's doing better. Still a little tight," Black said. "You see he's not in the starting lineup. Charlie will be fine. I think it's a day-to-day situation. We spoke earlier and he feels not starting is probably the best thing for him. I think maybe he's going to be ready, eventually, as the day moves on, to be a part of this game potentially."

Black met with reporters after watching Hoffman in a bullpen session at Coors Field. Hoffman was scratched from his start on March 5 with a right shoulder injury and has not seen the mound since that spring training day.

Hoffman pitched four innings in spring training, allowing just one hit over that span.

Colorado's manager said he was encouraged by what he saw out of Hoffman on Sunday but also knows he has a while until he will potentially be ready to rejoin the Rockies.

"He looks healthy. That's the main thing with Jeff," Black said. "He has to get healthy, and we think he is in a good spot physically, and mentally. He'll go out on Tuesday to (Class A) Lancaster and pitch there. Try to knock down three innings and progress from there. He'll probably will go to (Triple-A) Albuquerque and work his way back to the Major Leagues through performance.

"Jeff knows what's ahead of him. But, like all guys in the Minor Leagues, we're hoping that they do great and continue to grow and improve. Jeff's one of those group of players who are trying to get back to the Major Leagues."

Hoffman was 6-5 for the Rockies last season with a 5.89 ERA. That includes a 4-1 mark in eight starts spanning May and June.

Nolan Arenado and Matt Chapman had Gold Glove starts at El Toro High in Lake Forest

Mike DiGiovanna / Los Angeles Times | Apr. 7, 2018

The line drive off Troy Tulowitzki's bat in July seemed destined for left field until Matt Chapman, the rookie third baseman for the Oakland Athletics, intervened.

Chapman sprawled to his left to make a diving stop, landing chest-first on the turf in Toronto. He rolled over and, from one knee, fired to second baseman Jed Lowrie to start a double play.

It was one of several dazzling plays in a 3 ½-month debut season that had many comparing Chapman to Colorado third baseman Nolan Arenado, the five-time Gold Glove Award winner and gold standard for the position.

"As far as hands, feet and arm strength, he's one of the best third basemen I've ever seen," Lowrie said of Chapman. "He's able to make plays most people can't. He does something every night that seems to make you say, 'Wow.' "

A certain high school coach in South Orange County will have a similar reaction if Chapman and Arenado win Gold Gloves in the same year.

Arenado was a senior shortstop and one of the nation's top prospects at El Toro High in Lake Forest in 2009. His backup on that team, an undersized sophomore who only played shortstop when Arenado pitched, was Chapman.

"One high school producing the Gold Glove third baseman in each league in the same year? I don't think that's ever happened," said Mike Gonzales, in his 18th season as coach at El Toro. "It would be a great marketing tool for our program, wouldn't it?"

Gonzales might want to start on that brochure. Chapman's path to the award eased this season with the trade of 2017 American League winner Evan Longoria from Tampa Bay to San Francisco and two-time winner Manny Machado's move from third base to shortstop.

Nolan Arenado gets set at shortstop during his senior season at El Toro High

Nolan Arenado gets set at shortstop during his senior season at El Toro High (Courtesy Mike Gonzales)

Had Chapman not been limited to 84 games in 2017, he might have won as a rookie. Among third basemen who played 700 innings or more, Chapman ranked second behind Washington's Anthony Rendon with a 10.4 overall defensive rating, according to Fangraphs. Arenado (9.0) was third.

The 6-foot, 210-pound Chapman had 19 defensive runs saved, second most in baseball. Arenado saved 20 runs in twice as many innings (1,343). Chapman's 9.2 ultimate zone rating was second behind Rendon.

Chapman is not immune to errors. He made 13 last season, and his wide, one-hop throw to first in the seventh inning Friday night allowed the Angels to score two of their five unearned runs in a 13-9 comeback win over the A's.

But even with that error — his first of the season — Chapman entered Saturday's game with a 2.3 defensive rating, best among big league third basemen.

"That's something I aspire to and something I feel I'm good enough to do," said Chapman, speaking before Friday's game, of earning the Gold Glove. "It would be cool for Nolan and I and our coach. The NL one seems pretty locked up."

Though they were teammates at El Toro, Chapman and Arenado were not on equal footing there.

Arenado, who turns 27 on April 16, was a second-round pick who made a beeline from high school to the big leagues, reaching Colorado in 2013 and establishing himself as a perennial All-Star and most-valuable-player contender.

"I always knew he was gonna play in the major leagues," Chapman said. "Did I know he'd win five straight Gold Gloves and three Silver Sluggers right off the bat? No. But I saw him play every day, and he was really good."

Chapman, who turns 25 on April 28, did not take a direct flight to Oakland. He was 5-foot-5 and 125 pounds as a high school sophomore, with great skills, a nice feel for the game and ... no position.

"I sat the bench while he played," Chapman said of Arenado. "If guys threw their helmets and got into trouble, I got to come in."

Chapman started as a junior and senior but was not drafted out of high school. It took a growth spurt and three years at Cal State Fullerton, where he added muscle to his frame and power to his game, for Chapman to develop into a first-round pick in 2014. He reached the big leagues June 15.

Matt Chapman succeeded Nolan Arenado as shortstop at El Toro High.

Matt Chapman succeeded Nolan Arenado as shortstop at El Toro High. (Courtesy Mike Gonzales)

"He was young, and he was always willing to work, but he was just really small," Arenado said before a Rockies game in San Diego last week. "He's big now. He always had tools. You could tell he had potential to be really good, and now he's turned himself into a really good ballplayer. He was a late bloomer."

Chapman was Arenado's understudy in 2009. He took ground balls with Arenado every day and tried to emulate his fielding style, throwing motion and work habits.

"Matt was like a sponge," Gonzales said. "He looked up to Nolan and ate up everything he could."

The elder shortstop clearly rubbed off on the younger one.

"I learned a lot just from watching him work, how he went about his business," Chapman said. "It was ingrained in me that if you want to achieve something, it's through hard work."

Arenado sensed Chapman's constant gaze but never felt smothered.

"He was never a pest," Arenado said. "As an underclassman, he was a good one. He didn't have a big mouth. He knew his place. There were some other freshmen and sophomores who were a little more talkative. He wasn't that guy."

Chapman is not as dangerous with the bat as Arenado, who averaged 40 homers and 131 RBIs from 2015-2017. Chapman hit .234 with 14 homers and 40 RBIs as a rookie.

But he's off to a fast start this season, entering Saturday with a .412 average, three homers — including a three-run shot off Shohei Ohtani on Sunday and a two-run shot Friday off Cam Bedrosian — and seven RBIs.

"I want to be more consistent and maybe take a page out of Nolan's book and come through more in RBI situations," Chapman said. "That's something I can work on."

Chapman and Arenado have faced each other in spring training. They will square off in the regular season for the first time July 27-29, when the A's play at Colorado.

The two have appeared on the same highlight shows, creating goose-bump moments — and a few flashbacks — for their old coach.

The left side of the El Toro infield is where ground balls went to die in 2009. Slow rollers up the middle were charged and scooped. Shots to the hole were gloved with backhand stabs. Throws to first base were firm and accurate, no matter the arm angle.

"I was fortunate enough to see the plays Nolan and Matt make now on a daily basis in high school," Gonzales said. "If they got their glove on it, it was an out."

Gonzales hopes to be in Colorado in July for the A's-Rockies series.

"It's so surreal to know those guys when they were kids playing Little League and high school baseball," Gonzales said. "And then you see them in the big leagues and how mature they are, the fanfare they get, people wanting their autographs ... it's crazy."