



---

## MEDIA CLIPS – March 5, 2018

***Arenado puts brakes on contract-extension talk***  
**Rockies third baseman eligible for free agency after '19 season**  
**By Thomas Harding MLB.com @harding\_at\_mlb**  
**Mar. 4th, 2018**

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- Rockies star third baseman **Nolan Arenado** said he and the club will not discuss the possibility of a contract extension until after the 2018 season.

Considered one of the game's top stars at his position, Arenado refuses to let his possible free agency after the 2019 season become a distraction to a club that is coming off its first postseason appearance since 2009. Sunday morning, he made that clear.

"I don't think anything's going to happen until after the season," he said. "We have a good team and our focus is on winning -- as it should be -- and that's what everybody wants."

Arenado is due \$17.5 million in '18 to complete his two-year, \$29.5 million deal, and is eligible for arbitration after the season.

Arenado arrived at camp open to talking about a contract -- meaning an extension into his free-agency years -- but warned then that he was not going to let it be a distraction.

Neither will two core players in the last year of club control -- second baseman **DJ LeMahieu**, playing on an \$8.5 million one-year deal, and center fielder **Charlie Blackmon**, due \$14 million on his one-year agreement.

"I don't think it's really a factor, honestly," LeMahieu said. "Charlie and I have talked about it quite a bit, together, about the future. We came to the conclusion we have a really good team this year and we want to have a great year as a team."

***Rockies provide joy for young cancer patients***

**Club hosts Children's Hospital Colorado for game, workout, Q&A session**

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

**Mar. 4th, 2018**

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- The laughter and fun Saturday and Sunday at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick echoed all the way across the country.

The Rockies hosted 27 patients from Children's Hospital Colorado's Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders at Saturday's home game against the Brewers, and for a meet-and-greet on Sunday morning before the team's stretch period and early workout before their game against the Angels.

And in Cardinals camp in Jupiter, Fla., relief pitcher **Jason Motte** could barely contain his emotion when the stories came his way. He loved that the children even conducted video interviews with the Rockies' own cancer survivor, **Chad Bettis**.

"What me and my wife do from a foundation standpoint, that's one thing, but to see Chad, what he's been through and where he is ..." Motte said. "He's had it. He's fought it. He's beat it. He's now back pitching at the highest level. He gives hopes to these kids that can't even be described."

Motte was with the Rockies in Spring Training last year, and the trip was arranged through his Jason Motte Foundation. Motte and his wife, Caitlin Motte, have raised awareness and money and assisted with all cancer-related causes since 2010. Motte was designated for assignment by the Rockies at the end of last spring, but he still kept the Children's Hospital Colorado patients in mind.

"We did the check presentation for this year's Spring Training trip," Motte said. "The hospital, they had no idea we were doing it."

In fact, Motte was paying forward. The Rockies had traded shortstop **Troy Tulowitzki** to the Blue Jays in 2015, but Tulowitzki made sure the children could make the trip in 2016. So no longer being with the Rockies was no obstacle for Motte.

When Bettis was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2016 and learned he had to undergo chemotherapy treatments before last spring, Motte was an advisor, confidante and -- above all -- friend. Motte was with the Braves, who happened

to be the Rockies' opponent when Bettis made his Aug. 14 return, throwing seven scoreless innings. During the trip, Bettis and Motte made a trip to the hospital.

Jason and Caitlin Motte formed their foundation when Caitlin's grandfather, Lynn Doyle, was a cancer patient at the West Clinic in Memphis, Tenn. And during his career, Motte has seen cancer up close several times.

"I was fortunate enough to play in Chicago with two guys, **Jon Lester** and **Anthony Rizzo**, who had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and beat it," Motte said. "You have guys like **Jameson Taillon** with the Pirates and **Daniel Norris** with the Tigers. To be able to talk to those guys inspired me to make more of a difference. It's not just those guys. Those kids are an inspiration to me.

"It's about fighting. It's about staying positive with anything, especially something like that. Once negativity creeps in, you're beaten."

Rockies manager Bud Black has kept his hand in such causes, as well. He managed the Padres, whose field staff, players and front office have a long-standing involvement with Rady Children's Hospital San Diego.

"To see these kids, the cancer patients, come down here this weekend and interact with the players is such a cool thing for everybody," Black said. "It's a treat for the players. It's wonderful for the kids to meet Nolan [Arenado], meet DJ [LeMahieu], meet Charlie [Blackmon], meet **Wade Davis**. It's very uplifting, and for the nurses and doctors who are down here and see these kids smile, have fun and get out of the hospital for a couple days to come down here to Arizona to this environment."

***Blackmon could be dangerous batting third***  
**Rockies slugger expects to swing at more first pitches**  
**By Thomas Harding MLB.com @harding\_at\_mlb**  
**Mar. 4th, 2018**

TEMPE, Ariz. -- Defending National League batting champion **Charlie Blackmon** could become a more unpredictable hitter should the Rockies' experiment with him hitting in the No. 3 position hold.

Blackmon batted .331 and set career highs in multiple other categories last year while hitting leadoff. Of his NL-high 725 plate appearances, just 38 ended with the first pitch. Of his 15 first-pitch hits, two were homers, three were doubles and two were triples.

Blackmon noted Sunday that his reluctance to swing at the first pitch had to do with working a count to give his teammates more looks at the pitcher or, if a Rockies pitcher had run hard on base, giving him extra time to rest. But, say, a speedy player such as **Raimel Tapia** or **Ian Desmond**, or a heady runner such as **DJ LeMahieu** is on base in front of him, it may be good to take advantage of a pitcher and defense with attention divided.

"If I don't hit leadoff, there will be fewer team takes," said Blackmon, who went 1-for-1 with a hit-by-pitch and a walk in his fourth Cactus League start -- none at leadoff -- in Sunday's 7-6 loss to the Angels. "If you're hitting in the middle of the order, that happens a lot less."

And Blackmon doesn't mind letting people know that he's prepared to hack.

"I want them to be scared to death that I'm going to hit that first pitch over the fence," he said.

With **Gerardo Parra** expected back soon from hamate surgery on his right hand, it's possible the parts won't fit for Blackmon to bat third. Then again, it's possible manager Bud Black can use Blackmon a significant amount at leadoff and third.

"The hardest thing is to move into the leadoff spot, so having some from the leadoff spot I think I'll be just fine," Blackmon said.

**More unpredictability**

Righty **Jon Gray**, who gave up two runs (one earned) on four hits with two strikeouts, wildly varied his times releasing the pitch from the stretch.

Gray also played with his windup. After spending last season with his shoulders nearly perpendicular to home plate, much like in the stretch, he faced home plate more Sunday. He wasn't totally comfortable, but he'll continue to work on it.

Testing against a non-division foe and putting it out there for advance scouts that he has something new works to his advantage, Gray said.

"Two years ago, it was adding the curveball," Gray said. "Last year, I worked on my timing from the stretch. I want to do a new delivery that I felt a little out-of-whack with today, and maybe I'll stick with it. It could change everything for the hitter while still keeping my strengths."

### **Injury report**

Black said rotation competitor **Jeff Hoffman** was scratched before first pitch because of right shoulder soreness as a "precaution." Asked how long he'll be out, Hoffman said, "Just a day, for right now." Hoffman has given up one run on one hit in four Cactus League innings. ... Righty reliever **Carlos Estevez**, who has made just one spring appearance because of a tweaked muscle on the left side, threw long-toss at 180 feet and expects to pitch from the mound soon. ... Parra said he will take batting practice either Monday or Wednesday. In his swings, he doesn't feel any pain at the injury spot, just some soreness where the hand contacts the knob of the bat.

### **Camp battles**

The Rockies' **No. 1 prospect**, per MLB Pipeline, middle infielder **Brendan Rodgers**, started at second base and launched a two-run shot to dead-center field off Angels starter **Matt Shoemaker**. Middle infield-center field prospect **Garrett Hampson**, ranked seventh, followed with a solo shot to left. Both are likely ticketed to Double-A, but they hit for average and power and have physical tools that could have them in the Majors quickly. ... **Zac Rosscup**, trying to work into a bullpen that already projects three left-handers, gave up two runs on one hit and two walks. ... After home runs in his last two games, outfield competitor **David Dahl** was 1-for-3 with an RBI.

### **Up next**

Lefty **Tyler Anderson**, a solid member of the rotation, will make his second Spring Training start on Monday against the Cubs at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick. It will be the Rockies Cactus League debut for righty reliever **Bryan Shaw**, signed for three years and \$27 million over the winter. Righty No. 10 prospect **Yency Almonte** (one run, two hits in five innings) also is scheduled to pitch as he tries to become a part of the Rockies' starting pitching depth. Follow the game on Gameday.

## Shohei Ohtani brought a six-man rotation to the Angels. Would it work for the Colorado Rockies?

*"I want to be out there every five days," Jon Gray said.*

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

PUBLISHED: March 4, 2018 at 6:15 pm | UPDATED: March 4, 2018 at 6:19 pm

TEMPE, Ariz — Fans flocked to Diablo Stadium through the first few weeks of spring training looking for a glimpse of the major leagues' newest international star. Even if they found his face only on souvenir shop trinkets, Shohei Ohtani already is leaving his mark on the game.

In his first season with the Angels, Ohtani, a trumpeted Japanese star and a phenomenon of pitching and hitting, will lead an experimental six-man pitching rotation, an idea that incubated in baseball for years but never was adopted in full.

As a thought exercise, the idea of a six-man staff could alleviate issues that long plagued teams looking for a sweet spot of effective pitching and arm health — especially the Rockies. But it would be a radical change. And not everyone likes the idea.

"I want to throw 200 innings," said Rockies right-hander Jon Gray. "I want to be out there every five days. I really want to. I know I can handle the workload."

Last year, the Rockies used four rookie pitchers who could not quite survive their first full seasons. The only pitcher among them who was effectively available for the playoffs was German Marquez, but he started the season in the bullpen.

Would a six-man rotation have made them fresh and strong through an entire season? Would a less burdensome assignment take away the ever-present danger of Tommy John elbow reconstruction surgery? Would the Rockies consider a move to six?

"Not right now," manager Bud Black said. "Because I still think where our starters are at, mentally and physically, I don't think they need an extra day's rest."

The reasons behind Black's reluctance, though, may reveal more about the unique circumstances of pitching in Colorado than a shyness about chasing trends.

Ohtani is a unique case. He moved to the U.S. and signed with the Angels in December after they paid \$20 million to his former team just for the right to talk to him. They have quickly tried to maximize his potential. The Angels' six-man rotation will allow Ohtani to pitch once a week and play as a designated hitter in the other games.

“With a six-man (rotation), it will take a little bit of the burden off guys to have to bounce back,” Angels manager Mike Scioscia told the Los Angeles Times. “It will not only pay dividends for Shohei, but for the rest of our staff, to hopefully keep them effective and strong through the whole season.”

The Rockies’ reasons for using five starters runs deeper than those in Anaheim. They have become dependent on an eight-man bullpen to help negate the demanding offensive environment at Coors Field. A sixth starter would mean a three-man bench. And in the National League, where pinch hitters and double switches come into play, three is not enough. Ohtani’s versatility gives the Angels a sixth starter and a four-man bench.

Rockies history shows that the team hasn’t been shy about experimenting with pitching rotations. In 2012, the Rockies attempted an unconventional four-man “piggyback” rotation that limited the starters to 75 pitches and relied on an extra reliever. Four-man rotations were common as recently as the early 1970s. But in Colorado, it was a flaming disaster and the Rockies finished last in the NL West.

A six-man rotation, on the other hand, is more well-known in Japan, where Ohtani excelled for the Nippon-Ham Fighters. And in Japan, the rate of Tommy John surgery is less than half that in America.

In each of the past two seasons, only 15 pitchers threw 200 or more innings, the fewest in baseball’s history in a nonstrike-shortened season. And among professional pitchers in America over the past five seasons, there have been more than 100 Tommy John surgeries per season on average.

For pitchers accustomed to their workload, though, the risk is worth remaining on routine.

“It would be a big change,” Gray said. “Everyone’s schedule would need to change. We’d probably feel fresh, which is a good thing. But then again, I’m a guy who likes to be on the mound as much as I can.”

Ohtani’s boon for the Angels, they hope, is extending their rotation’s effectiveness into October, where pitching becomes predominant. The Rockies hope they get that far too, but with a young staff that may have to gut it out.

“The continued look at how to deploy your pitching staff is what everybody is talking about,” Black said. “But for us, right now, we’re comfortable. These guys are conditioned for that; that’s what they’re used to.”



## Jeff Hoffman scratched with an injury as the Rockies play cautious with the right-hander

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

PUBLISHED: March 4, 2018 at 4:40 pm | UPDATED: March 4, 2018 at 5:15 pm

TEMPE, Ariz. — Jeff Hoffman's heavily-wrapped right shoulder looked like a dire signal Sunday morning at Salt River Fields. But after the Rockies scratched the 25-year-old starting pitcher from a scheduled appearance later in the day, they claimed it was only for precaution.

Hoffman was set to pitch three innings against the Angels at Diablo Stadium, following Jon Gray. He only got to watch his fellow pitchers throw bullpen sessions in the early morning and never made the bus ride to Tempe.

"He's a little sore," said Rockies manager Bud Black. "We decided to be a little cautious and not pitch him. We'll keep an eye on him."

Hoffman opened Colorado's Cactus League schedule with two no-hit innings Feb. 23. In his next start, he pitched two innings and faced seven batters, with one hit allowed. The Rockies, though, have been increasing their other starters to three innings in a second start.

Asked how long he might be down, Hoffman said: "I don't know. Just a day for right now."

The Rockies will be more careful. Black said Hoffman may throw catch in the coming days, depending on his progress, but he will not pitch in a game.

"It's going to be a few days before we see how this sets up," Black said. "But our trainers are optimistic that he'll be back in there before too long."

**Special visit.** The Rockies delayed their morning stretching routine for a welcome distraction: 26 kids and cancer patients and 15 caregivers from Children's Hospital Colorado visited spring training for the sixth consecutive year.

"The goal is to get them out of their shells," said Bob Casey, a psychologist at Children's who helps coordinate the hospital's wellness program. "The shy kids open up because they're so excited to meet the players."

Former Rockies reliever Jason Motte, now with the Cardinals, funded the trip. He helped fly them from Denver and put them up at a hotel. Troy Tulowitzki funded the trip even after he was traded from Colorado to Toronto.

Tyler Anderson took photos of children posing with Adam Ottavino. Tony Wolters talked to one wearing his No. 14 jersey. Several kids crowded around Chad Bettis, the pitcher who returned from cancer treatment last season.

"I love it," said Lorenzo Ibarra, an 18-year-old patient at Children's. "The game yesterday was the best. They're genuinely good people. They enjoy talking to us. And it's not in my bedroom anymore."

The group flew to Arizona on Friday and watched the Rockies play the Brewers on Saturday before a clubhouse visit Sunday.

"It's great for the players," Black said. "It builds character when they can see life outside of baseball. Younger guys are starting to learn about who they are and what they mean to people, the impact they can have."

**Woody Paige: Rockies pitcher Chad Bettis enjoying the little things spring training offers**  
**By: Woody Paige | March 2, 2018 Updated: March 3, 2018 at 8:51 am | Colorado Springs Gazette**

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. - The sensations of sight, sound, smell seem so stirring at The Stick in the spring.

See a baseball game; hear the pop of the mitt, the thwack of the bat, the "strike" squawk of the umpire, the barking of "Ice-Cold Beer Here", and smell the aromas of polish sausage, kettle corn, cheesesteak and freshly-moved grass.

Is this heaven?

No, it's Salt River Fields Forever - a amalgamation of Utopia, Eden, Shangri-La. It's Mesa on a cool, cloudless Thursday, and, on Friday, it's an immaculate Scottsdale setting that belonged on a Monet watercolor. The Rockies vs. the Cubs one afternoon, the Rox and the D'Backs the next.

The Major League commissioner seeks to speed up the pace of play. Yet, at these two spring-training exhibitions, time stands stationary, and we love it. Take us out to the ball game, we don't care if we ever get back. (The game lasted over 3½ hours Friday.)

Chad Bettis was savoring all the senses when he approached the mound at 1 p.m. The Rockies' starting pitching extended the moment to gaze around Talking Stick and take in the sights, the sounds, the smells. He hadn't pitched at the park since one two-inning stint last spring.

Bettis induces four of the first five Diamondbacks into puny bouncers to second baseman Shawn O'Malley. After a scoreless second for Arizona, Bettis had a 0.0 ERA over four innings of spring ball.

However, in the third inning, the bases were crammed like a CrackerJack box, and Jake Lamb buried a ball in the slope beyond right-field. Bettis departed after allowing the not-so-grand slam.

"He pitched well the first two innings, then got the ball up in the third, especially to Lamb. Chad just had some location problems," manager Bud Black said.

It was, nevertheless, a great day at the ballpark for Bettis - considering.

A year ago, this week, an oncologist here diagnosed that Bettis' testicular cancer, which a month earlier had been pronounced cured, had spread to his lymph nodes.

He was scheduled to start a game the next night. Rather, he soon started nine weeks of chemotherapy.

One medical authority told me at the time he believed Bettis' rocky, Rockies career was over.

At 28, Bettis couldn't draw a lucky breath.

Then, on Aug. 4, 2017, after being informed he was cancer-free, Bettis returned to the mound in Denver and didn't permit a run over seven innings.

With that astonishing comeback, Bettis was named the recipient of baseball's Tony Conigliaro Award.

This is a story that begs for a happy ending, such as: Bettis wins 20 games and the Cy Young in 2018, or Bettis pitches the opening game of the World Series, or, maybe, Bettis lives happy and healthy the rest of his long life with his wife Kristina and daughter Everleigh Rae.

Bettis, who turns 29 next month, has been in the Rockies' organization since begin drafted in the second round (76th) out of Texas Tech in the 2010 draft. He was on the express track after two solid A ball seasons (18-6).

Then, shoulder surgery shelved Chad the entire 2012 season.

Upon that first comeback the next year, Bettis got a sniff of The Show with eight starters. But the Rox powers, for some silly reason, converted him to reliever in 2014, and Bettis was powerless in 21 games with a 0-2 mark and a 9.12 ERA.

He was sent down the road, literally, to the Colorado Springs Sky Sox.

Recast in the role in which he belonged, as a starting pitcher, Bettis didn't give up a run in seven innings in a start, finished 3-4 with an impressive 3.09 ERA. Back up I-25 in 2015, Bettis went 8-6.

His breakout season was 2016 - a 14-8 record (in 32 starts and 186 innings). He was on a trajectory to be an ace.

A month after the season Chad learned he had cancer.

After being removed Friday Bettis, whose salary has jumped from \$565,000 to \$2 million, bolted the clubhouse, not because he was mad, but to attend to a personal matter.

A few of us remained for the duration to revel in the Rockies' eventual 15-6 victory following a 9-5 Rox rout in the previous exhibition between the division antagonists. But these are meaningless in comparison to the Rockies' ugh, ugly 11-8 playoff defeat to the Snakes in the Desert in '17.

Repeat postseason game? The strange bedfellows at Salt River Fields like the smell, sight and sound of it.

**Woody Paige: No luck for Irishman Shawn O'Malley as Rockies would-be utility player is injured**  
**By: Woody Paige March 3, 2018 Updated: March 4, 2018 at 11:10 am | Colorado Springs Gazette**

Scottsdale, Ariz. - Shawn O'Malley deserves a break.

This is not the one he wanted.

At 30, O'Malley is the personification of a career minor-leaguer. He's been on a journey, man. Shawn has played for 15 teams in a dozen seasons. He has played seven positions. He has played for Catfish, Stone Crabs (twice), Renegades, Bees, Aqua Sox, Rainiers (three times), Desert Dogs, Travelers (twice) and the Montgomery, Ala., Biscuits (no gravy) for three consecutive seasons.

"Montgomery was ... well ... interesting. I met my wife there," he tells me in front of his locker.

And he played for one of baseball's most fabled teams - the Durham Bulls.

I asked: "Did you ever feel like Crash Davis" - the fictional baseball player portrayed by Kevin Costner in the classic movie "Bull Durham" who said: "Yeah, I was in The Show. I was in The Show for 21 days once - the greatest 21 days in my life."

O'Malley replies: "Until you mentioned that, I never thought about it."

O'Malley has played 124 games in The Show - 11 with the Angels in 2014, 24 with the Mariners in '15 and another 89 in Seattle in '16. He could be called Mr. September (Call-Up).

"Never had another job. Never thought about quitting. Sometimes I hate baseball, but I get over that quick because I love playing the game.

"If I keep working hard every day, I'm going to get my break."

Shawn's had his major league moment - a home run on Irish Heritage Night at Safeco Field in Seattle in front of his Irish-American family. He's from Richland, Washington, and was all-state in football and baseball. He was drafted out of high school in the fifth round by the Rays in 2006. He has been on a long road trip ever since.

A couple of recent seasons O'Malley believed opportunity finally was at his door. First time, he broke his wrist. Last year, at spring training, he was rushed to the hospital in Arizona and underwent an emergency appendectomy. When he returned, Shawn injured his (right) throwing shoulder and had arthroscopic surgery. He didn't play a game the entire season.

After being cut on twice, he was cut by the Mariners.

Just before Christmas, the Rockies signed O'Malley to a minor-league contract and gave him an invitation to camp with the Big Boys. He reported with the catchers and pitchers last month - to get a head start and perhaps because he can play every position but catcher and pitcher.

"I'm a utility man," he says. "You want a late defensive replacement in the outfield, a shortstop who can step in, a pinch-hitter, a pinch-runner, someone who can put down a bunt or move a runner over, a second baseman, a right fielder."

Some prospects have two, three, maybe five tools. O'Malley is a 12-tool player.

He's also a switch-hitter and a DH.

Bud Black bubbled over the Irishman nobody in Colorado had ever heard of.

"I'm going to bat O'Malley leadoff on St. Patrick's Day," Black promised, with only a slight smirk.

The Rox manager said, seriously, that The Oman offered the versatility and experience perfect for a 25th roster player.

"What we're looking for is that comfort that he looks good at every position, that he can make a play in the hole from short, he can man the outfield positions and go get balls, turn a double play and, with switch-hit capabilities, get some hits, get a bunt down, hit-and-run, steal a base."

O'Malley played in five of the Rockies' first seven exhibitions - hitting (5 of 15 for a .333 average), scoring, driving in a run, pivoting well on a double play, catching all the balls, making excellent catches and doing everything but cleaning out the clubhouse.

On Friday afternoon at Talking Stick, O'Malley started at second and had assists on four of the first five infielder grounders.

Then, on a smash up the middle, O'Malley made a sensational diving grab - and was hurt. "I was hoping that it was just the shock, and I'd be OK."

He pointed at the middle of the thick wrapping on his right hand. "The third metacarpal bone. I never heard of a metacarpal."

O'Malley dropped his head and said softly: "Six weeks."

Black would say later that the injury was "a shame. He's been playing really well and made a great catch on the play. He's a hard little kid. ... He had a real chance to be with us on opening day."

O'Malley, who will undergo a third surgery in a year this week, will miss St. Patrick's Day and the season opener - and will be back in the minor leagues for a 13th year when he comes back. No luck for the Irishman.

Bad break.

## Colorado Rockies: Charlie Blackmon reveals his baseball nightmare

by Kevin Henry 1 hour ago | Roxpile

**SCOTTSDALE — In an exclusive chat with me on Monday morning at the Colorado Rockies spring training facility, All-Star Charlie Blackmon admitted that he does have a nightmare when it comes to baseball. No, it probably is not one you would guess ... and it might even be similar to one you have had in the past.**

Blackmon has been a nightmare for Rockies opponents for years now. Last season, he put together a historic campaign from the leadoff position, posting a career-high 37 home runs and 104 RBI while posting a slash line of .331/.399/.601 and an OPS of 1.000.

His season **placed him fifth in last year's MVP voting**, one spot behind teammate **Nolan Arenado**. This spring, Colorado manager **Bud Black** has experimented with a lineup that has Blackmon hitting third, one spot ahead of Arenado.

So what is Blackmon's nightmare? It has nothing to do with batting or fielding, the All-Star center fielder said.

"You might think it's striking out with the bases loaded," Blackmon smiled. "Honestly, I'm supposed to be on deck and I can't find my equipment. And then the guy who is hitting makes an out on the first pitch and I can't find my bat and my batting gloves and my shin guard and my helmet. Everyone is waiting for me to get in the box. Just being unprepared, it's like the 'missing your college final exam.' It's the baseball version of that."

While Blackmon said it may be a nightmare, it's also not one that haunts him every night. It certainly hasn't become more prominent since all of this talk about him moving down in the lineup has taken center stage this spring, he said.

"It's funny. I think about baseball a lot but rarely dream it," Blackmon said.

If you have watched any Rockies games and Blackmon's pre-hitting ritual, you know he is always out early to gauge the pitcher and take a few swings. He is always prepared so the nightmare hasn't happened ... yet.



## **Rockies manager Bud Black: Speed helps 'balance' lineup**

**by Luke Mullins** 3 hours ago | Roxpile

**Recently, Colorado Rockies manager Bud Black talked to the media and discussed the topic of base stealing.**

Colorado Rockies manager Bud Black recently talked to the media about some things and one of the things he said was that he wants to see speed as a part of the Rockies offensive game plan, but didn't put too much stress on the idea of stealing bases.

He said the ideal lineup would combine every offensive tool.

"For me, a balanced lineup of speed and power and average is what you want."

The lineup shouldn't be one-dimensional, Black said, but should encompass all these facets.

Black acknowledged there has been an effort in recent years on the defensive side to slow the run-game down, and he said he thinks this has had an effect on base-stealing.

Black noted how, in order to prevent stolen bases, pitchers have altered their mechanics, stressing time to the plate and holding runners on.

### **Black on speed**

Despite this, Black said he thinks speed can still have an impact on the game, though that impact is not limited just to stealing bases.

"Even the *threat* of a stolen base is an offensive play," Black said.

A player with speed can put pressure on the opposing team's pitcher, catcher and defense, Black said, simply with his presence on the field.

"Speed is still a part of this game," Black said.

He acknowledged that he has seen the conversation around base stealing change during his time in the game, particularly as it pertains to pitchers' mechanics.

"I just know from my experience, ya know, all the talk of what we're talking about now wasn't talked about a generation ago."

The topic of stealing bases is growing more relevant every day this spring training as the Rockies consider **lineup changes** and prospect **Raimel Tapia** gets an **opportunity** to win an everyday role.

Tapia has been **recognized** as one of baseball's fastest players and his speed would undoubtedly cause havoc on the base paths.

If Tapia continues his spring success and earns a spot in the starting lineup, he could help provide the balance Black is looking for.