



MEDIA CLIPS – Sept. 7, 2018

5 pressing questions in NL West

**By Matthew Leach MLB.com @matthewhleach
Sep. 6th, 2018**

There's no need to manufacture drama or reasons to watch the National League West this year. It's been -- from top to bottom -- arguably baseball's most consistently watchable division over the past five months.

It may be down to a three-team race with 3 1/2 weeks remaining (though don't tell the Giants that), but there are things to keep an eye on with all five clubs. Here is one question to be answered down the stretch for each team.

D-backs

The question: What do they do in the late innings?

The D-backs thought they had one of baseball's best late-inning duos in **Brad Boxberger** and **Archie Bradley**. In the first half, they may have been right. Lately, that's not so clear.

Both pitchers have had strange and similar second halves. Both have seen their strikeout rates go up some, their walk rates go up a bit and their home run rates stay more or less steady. They've both experienced massive jumps in BABIP, which should be encouraging, but patience is rarely a trait shown with late-inning relievers on contending teams.

If both get sorted out, as the numbers suggest they should, Arizona's late relief is strong. If not, Torey Lovullo will have to figure out some alternative options quickly.

Dodgers

The question: Whither Kenley Jansen?

The problem is that it's not entirely clear what exactly the right question even is regarding Jansen. Is his health the primary concern? Or is that in the past? And if that's the case, we still haven't entirely established how effective he'll be.

The Dodgers' lineup is deep and dangerous from both the left and right sides. Their rotation has front-line talent and plenty of depth. And in the middle innings, they have more quality options than you might think. But then there's the ninth, which should be the most cut-and-dried aspect of the whole club.

Until and unless Jansen turns in a string of outings that show that he's both healthy and effective, the Dodgers will have to wonder.

Giants

The question: Can the kids play?

At their peak earlier this decade, the Giants masterfully combined the ability to stay competitive with the ability to cycle in talented young players. The past couple of years, neither of those has gone quite so well.

As this season approaches a close, they'll give a long look to two of their better prospects, outfielders Chris Shaw and **Austin Slater**. Shaw, the Giants' **No. 4 prospect** per MLB Pipeline, has flashed power throughout the Minors and may have more upside, but he also comes with the risk of being strikeout-prone. Slater, meanwhile, has the better bat-to-ball and on-base skills, and he has held his own at the big league level for a while now.

The club must find out as much as it can as to whether these two promising youngsters can be contributors to a competitive 2019 team.

Padres

The question: What do they do with Francisco Mejia?

Mejia, **baseball's top catching prospect**, makes his first Padres start on Thursday. He's known for his bat, while the Padres already have one of the game's most talented young defensive catchers, **Austin Hedges**, to compete for playing time.

So San Diego must start figuring out where Mejia will play. He could well split time at catcher with Hedges or even emerge as the long- (and possibly short-) term starter, but he's also played third base and outfield in the Minors. If the bat plays, or

if Hedges forces the issue, Mejia could see much of his time at other positions. We'll start getting some idea soon.

Rockies

The question: What will they get from Nolan Arenado?

As recently as a few weeks ago, Arenado may have been the leading candidate for the NL MVP Award. He could still take the trophy, but a recent slump can't be helping his chances. Arenado has two home runs since Aug. 6, a stretch over which he's slugging .385. He's driven in 12 runs in that span and scored 14, so it's not like he isn't contributing, but he's this team's most important player.

That's in large part because this Rockies team is not the offensive juggernaut of some past Colorado teams, and it needs Arenado playing like an MVP. A right shoulder problem cost him a little time early last month, and though Arenado has said the discomfort does not affect his swing, it's hard not to wonder a little bit.

Rockies Insider: Colorado boasts trio of strikeout artists in starters German Marquez and Jon Gray, reliever Adam Ottavino

All have career-best marks in whiff percentage this season; Marquez, Ottavino likely to finish with single-season club records

By KYLE NEWMAN | knewman@denverpost.com and JEFF BAILEY | jbailey@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
PUBLISHED: September 7, 2018 at 6:00 am | UPDATED: September 7, 2018 at 7:36 am

By the eye test, the standard stats or the sabermetrics, Colorado boasts a trio of strikeout artists.

Jon Gray has held this label for a while, ever since howling to a club-record 16 Ks against the Padres in a Coors Field stuff-of-legends outing two Septembers ago.

But fellow right-handers German Marquez and Adam Ottavino each joined him this season and a dive into the numbers reveals just how tough it's been to put the ball in play against each pitcher. All three have career-best marks in whiff percentage this season, as Ottavino (33.3), Gray (30.0) and Marquez (26.5) are all better than the league mean of 23.9. Whiff percentage is the percentage of swings and misses on all pitches.

The strikeout percentages tell an even more elite story. Ottavino's 37.0 percent strikeout rate is seventh among all major league relievers and second in the National League to Milwaukee's Josh Hader (45.0). Meanwhile, Marquez's 26.6 percent K rate is sixth among National League starters, and Gray, at 25.2 percent, is eighth in the league.

Plus, the actual strikeout totals underscore what the sabermetric numbers are saying. Ottavino recorded his 100th strikeout of the season while earning the save in Wednesday's sweep-clinching win over San Francisco. He is one of only four relievers in the major leagues with at least 100 Ks, and is on pace to break Curt Leskanic's club record for a reliever, 107, set in 1995.

Marquez, who with his last start became the first Rockies' pitcher to fan 11 or more batters in consecutive outings, has a career-high with 184 strikeouts this season. His strikeout per nine inning rate is 10.08 — up significantly from 8.17 last season — and a mark that currently stands as the best single-season K/9 rate in Rockies' history. That rate also ranks the Venezuelan sixth in the NL, and the Gray Wolf is right behind him, ranking seventh at 9.63.

Together, the right-handers have combined for seven double-digit strikeout games this season while Ottavino's two-strike video-game slider has embarrassed more hitters than one can count.

Long live Colorado's strikeout artists, through September and into Rocktober.

Rockies 2018 postseason ticket information for the wild card through the World Series

Single-game tickets can be acquired by entering the club's drawing, or fans can also put down a deposit for 2019 season tickets

By KYLE NEWMAN | knewman@denverpost.com | The Denver Post

PUBLISHED: September 6, 2018 at 4:18 pm | UPDATED: September 6, 2018 at 4:34 pm

With the Rockies in first place in the National League West as the Dodgers roll into town this weekend, the potential of another Rocktober is within grasp. Here's information on how to get tickets for each round of the postseason, should Colorado qualify.

Single-game tickets can be acquired by entering the club's postseason drawing. Fans must [register on the Rockies' website](#) in order to enter the drawing; if selected, fans then have the opportunity to purchase tickets.

The registration deadline for the wild card and divisional round passed on Wednesday, with the winners to be notified sometime next week. So while the secondary market will be the best bet for the opening rounds, there's still ample time to register before the deadlines for the NLCS (Oct. 4) and the World Series (Oct. 11).

Fans can also lock down the opportunity to buy postseason tickets by making a deposit on season tickets for the 2019 season. It's an \$800 per seat (four seats maximum), non-refundable deposit, and the deposit must be used for a full 81-game plan.

Another option is a \$400 deposit on a "mini-plan" for 2019. Mini-plan holders will have the option to purchase up to two tickets for a wild-card game, a divisional series game, and two games in both the NLCS and the World Series.

Rockies' red-hot Trevor Story takes MVP credentials into Dodgers series

Story is hitting .298 with 31 home runs, 39 doubles, 95 RBIs and a .920 OPS

By PATRICK SAUNDERS | psaunders@denverpost.com | The Denver Post

PUBLISHED: September 6, 2018 at 3:05 pm | UPDATED: September 6, 2018 at 3:12 pm

It was Carlos Gonzalez who brought up "MVP" in the Rockies clubhouse late Wednesday night.

"He's just of one of those kids who just wants to get better, and continues to get better every year," Gonzalez said. "He's definitely in the MVP conversation now. He's been carrying the team. Plus, he's been playing tremendous defense. He can do it all."

The "kid" is Trevor Story, the Rockies' 25-year-old shortstop who blasted his way into the national baseball consciousness by bombing three home runs in the Rockies' 5-3 victory over San Francisco, including a 505-footer that ranks as the longest in Coors Field history, as well as the longest in Rockies history.

"As soon as it came off the bat, I said, 'Oh man, that's going to hit the scoreboard and it's going to go straight to my Lamborghini in the parking lot,'" quipped Gonzalez.

The Rockies' win was their fifth consecutive, keeping them in first place in the National League West, 1 ½ games ahead of the Dodgers.

Entering the weekend showdown against the Dodgers at Coors Field, Story is hitting .298 with 31 home runs, 39 doubles, 95 RBIs and a .920 OPS. He also has 25 stolen bases, making him the fifth shortstop in major-league history to hit at least 30 home runs and steal 25 bases in a season. The last to do so was the Marlins' Hanley Ramirez in 2008.

With five more stolen bases, Story would have a 30-30 season, making him the first Colorado player to join the 30-30 club since Gonzalez did it in 2010.

Story received a prolonged standing ovation from the crowd Wednesday night and popped out of the dugout for his first curtain call. Very cool, Story acknowledged, but he clearly has his mind on the pennant race.

"That's one of those things that you kind of dream about when you're a kid," he said. "I've been blessed to play this game, and thank God that happened to me. It's something cool that you can look back on when the season's over, but I'm honestly more excited about the win at this point."

Story has five multi-homer games this season, including two this week. He's become Colorado's offensive powerhouse, taking up the slack for third baseman Nolan Arenado, who's mired in a deep slump, batting .111 (4-for-36) over his past nine games.

Just a few weeks ago, it was Arenado who was an MVP candidate, but he's hit just two home runs since Aug. 6, a stretch during which he's slugging .385.

"We have been able to win games over the last couple of weeks because we are getting contributions from a lot of different guys," manager Bud Black said. "For us to be a productive team and get where we want to go, we need a number of guys to get going. But Nolan is going to be there, trust me."

Longest homers since 2015

1. 505 feet — Trevor Story, 9/5/18 (Coors Field)
2. 504 — Giancarlo Stanton, 8/6/16 (Coors Field)
3. (tie) 495 — Aaron Judge, 6/11/17 (Yankee Stadium)
3. (tie) 495 — Kris Bryant, 9/6/15 (Wrigley Field)
5. (tie) 493 — Gary Sanchez, 8/22/17 (Comerica Park)
5. (tie) 493 — Nelson Cruz, 9/24/16 (Target Field)
5. (tie) 493 — Michael A. Taylor, 8/20/15 (Coors Field)
8. 491 — Nomar Mazara, 5/25/16 (Globe Life Park)
9. 490 — Joey Gallo, 9/17/17 (Angel Stadium)
10. 489 — Franchy Cordero, 4/20/18 (Chase Field)

Source: Statcast

Looking ahead

Dodgers LHP Clayton Kershaw (6-5, 2.40 ERA) at **Rockies RHP Jon Gray** (11-7, 4.70), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Los Angeles trots out its ace for the series opener, and the three-time Cy Young winner has seen plenty of Colorado over his 11-year career. The Rockies are hitting .262 against the left-hander, with Nolan Arenado (.327 with three home runs)

and Gerardo Parra (.342), having the most success against him. Carlos Gonzalez has taken Kershaw deep three times but also has 21 strikeouts in 44 at-bats. Meanwhile the Dodgers are also well-versed on Gray, and battered him for four runs in five-plus innings in his lone start against them this season, at Coors Field on Aug. 10. The right-hander has been cruising since his short midseason demotion to Triple-A, with a 3-0 record and a 3.33 ERA in eight starts since the all-star break.

Saturday: Dodgers LHP Walker Buehler (6-4, 2.92) at Rockies LHP Kyle Freeland (13-7, 2.96), 6:10 p.m., ATTRM

Sunday: Dodgers LHP Alex Wood (8-6, 3.37) at Rockies LHP Tyler Anderson (6-7, 4.80), 1:10 p.m., ATTRM

Monday: Diamondbacks RHP Zack Godley (14-8, 4.51) at Rockies RHP German Marquez (11-9, 4.05), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Front-running Rockies chasing after first NL West title

By **PAT GRAHAM** – Yesterday / AP Sports

DENVER (AP) — The scorecard in the archives of the Colorado Rockies' history stands like this: World Series appearances 1, NL West titles 0.

No divisional crowns is a particular figure that All-Star shortstop Trevor Story and his teammates are keenly aware of and hope to remedy, especially with the Rockies climbing into a place they've rarely been this late in the season: All alone at the top of the NL West. The Rockies haven't occupied first place this late in the year since 1995.

Colorado began an off day Thursday with a 1 ½-game divisional lead over the Los Angeles Dodgers and 2 games over the Arizona Diamondbacks. The Rockies (77-62) start a pivotal stretch by hosting the Dodgers for three games starting Friday and then Arizona for four more.

Buckle up. These last 23 games reckon to be quite a ride. [Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

"A division title would be huge, obviously, since we've never done that," said Story, who crushed three homers Wednesday, including one that went a Coors Field-record 505 feet according to Statcast. "We're very confident we can do it. We're going for it."

The Rockies are a little bit of an anomaly among division-leading team. Consider this: The Rockies are a minus-8 in run differential. For comparison, the front-running Boston Red Sox are plus-223 in the AL East and the defending World Series champion Houston Astros a plus-235 in the AL West.

Colorado doesn't even have the best odds of making the postseason out of its division. According to ESPN, the Rockies have a 48.2 percent chance, while the Dodgers check in at 77.6 percent.

"I still think we are the best team and I know when we are doing things right and playing the way we should," said right-hander Jon Gray, who pitches Friday as the Dodgers counter with ace Clayton Kershaw. "We are going to be where we need to be at the end of the season."

Fresh off a sweep of the Giants, the Rockies find themselves a season-best 15 games above .500. They trailed by eight games after play on June 28, but have since gone 39-20 — including 5-0 in September.

“We’ve been playing these kinds of meaningful games for a long time now,” Story said.

The last time Colorado was in sole possession of first at this juncture of the year was 1995. That happened to be the season the team moved into its new digs at Coors Field and was led by players such as Dante Bichette, Larry Walker, Andres Galarraga and Vinny Castilla, who’s currently the team’s special assistant to the general manager. They were leading until Sept. 27 when they lost to a Dodgers team that would go on to win the division by a game.

Colorado earned a wild-card spot that season. Over the team’s history, they’ve appeared in the postseason four times — all as a wild-card. The Rockies rode a wave of momentum to the 2007 World Series, before being swept by Boston. Last season, they lost a one-game playoff to the Diamondbacks in their first playoff appearance since ’09.

“There hasn’t been any rah-rah talk, no pep talks,” Gray said. “We know what needs to be done. Maybe that was needed last year. But not this time.”

Story and Nolan Arenado are pacing the offense with NL MVP-caliber seasons. Story is hitting .298 with 31 homers, 95 RBIs and 25 stolen bases. He’s also playing Gold Glove-worthy shortstop. Despite a recent slump, Arenado is batting .297 with 31 homers and 93 RBIs. He’s going for his sixth straight Gold Glove at third base.

The team added even more of a veteran presence by bringing in slugger Matt Holliday, who joins a lineup that includes second baseman DJ LeMahieu, outfielder Charlie Blackmon, converted first baseman Ian Desmond and outfielder Carlos Gonzalez. Younger players such as David Dahl and Ryan McMahon have been coming up clutch, too.

On the pitching side, left-hander Kyle Freeland is among the leaders in ERA (2.96), while German Marquez is coming off back-to-back double-digit strikeout performances. The bullpen has been shaky at times this season, but Adam Ottavino has 100 strikeouts to go with a 1.96 ERA and closer Wade Davis leads the NL with 38 saves.

After finishing their current 10-game homestand, the Rockies hit the road for nine straight. At 40-32 away from home, they’re one victory away from tying their mark for most wins on the road in a season (2009, ’17).

“This team knows what needs to be done,” Gray said. “We are on the same page and we are feeling it happen.”

The Team That Figured Out How to Win on the Road

For all the talk of the challenges that plague the Colorado Rockies at Coors Field, the problems used to start when they left town

By Jared Diamond - Sept. 7, 2018 7:00 a.m. ET | Wall Street Journal

The Colorado Rockies haven't won very much in their 25 years of existence, never claiming a single division title, let alone a World Series championship. They also play half of their games at 5,200 feet above sea level, an environment that doesn't allow for anything resembling normal baseball.

These two objective facts have naturally led to a lot of justifications, rationalizations and excuses. The Rockies lose, the common narrative goes, not because of their lack of ingenuity and talent, but simply because of their hometown.

But for all the talk of the challenges that plague them at the launching pad known as Coors Field, the Rockies actually have fared pretty well there. The problem starts when they leave town.

"We would lose all the time on the road," star third baseman Nolan Arenado said. "We would be so bad."

Which brings us to 2018, where the Rockies find themselves in unprecedented territory: sitting atop the National League West standings with about three weeks to go in the season, largely because of their success outside of the Mile High City.

As they prepare for a crucial home series against the rival Los Angeles Dodgers this weekend, the Rockies own a record of 40-32 on the road. That puts them on a pace to finish with their best ledger away from Denver in franchise history by a wide margin. Never before have the Rockies finished better than 41-40 away from home, a feat they accomplished in 2009 and 2017, coinciding, not accidentally, with their last two appearances in October.

Even more unusual for the Rockies, they entered Friday having played better on the road than they have at home. They've only done that once before, during the strike-shortened campaign of 1994, when they performed at a sub-.500 level regardless of location. The Rockies qualifying for the playoffs that way would represent an entirely new paradigm for a franchise that has spent decades battling not just its opponents, but its place of residence.

"We knew the only way we could make it to where we want to go is that we had to be able to compete on the road," Arenado said.

When Bud Black took over as manager before last season, he knew all about the Rockies' longstanding road stigma. From 2011 through 2016, they posted a .496 winning percentage at home versus .368 everywhere else, the largest disparity in the major leagues.

The topic loomed over the organization. Over time, the Rockies' inability to solve the problem developed into the source of internal consternation and plenty of uncomfortable questions for which they couldn't provide adequate answers.

Like so many before him, Black couldn't offer a solution as he arrived for his first spring training. Nonetheless, he decided to address the situation head-on, gathering everybody together early in camp to deliver a speech.

"It was a simple message," Black said. "It doesn't matter where we play—road, cold, wind, rain, heat."

In reality, nobody can deny that the Rockies must deal with issues on the road unique to them.

Certain pitches move differently at Denver's high altitude, forcing pitchers to adjust depending on the site of the game. Batters, accustomed to their fly balls at home cutting through the air like a hot knife through butter, must deal with hitting in settings where baseballs behave more like baseballs and less like pinballs. Perhaps most important, Colorado's reduced oxygen levels lead to fatigue and slow recovery.

But all of that only distracts from a simple truth: The Rockies pitching stunk. Not just at home, but everywhere. They ranked 27th in the majors in road ERA from 2013 through 2016, bad to the point that nobody could reasonably blame Coors Field for their failures.

Over the past two seasons, that has changed dramatically. Bolstered by a young, talented group of starters, the Rockies since 2017 rank 10th in baseball in road ERA. General manager Jeff Bridich called the rotation a "true foundation and bedrock of the team"—a sentiment that few thought could ever describe the Rockies.

"Going to back to those years when we were all about offense and getting pounded around and trying to out-slug the other team every time to get wins, you never thought about this time," outfielder Carlos González said.

González, a member of the Rockies since 2009, remembers the dark days, when the team embarked on wild experiments to unlock the secret to growing pitchers equipped for Colorado.

They pinned their hopes on high-priced free agents—ask anybody on Blake Street about the horrors of Mike Hampton and Denny Neagle. They all but banned curveballs for a while. They tried going with a four-man rotation and limiting their starters to 75 pitches. None of those ideas panned out.

Bridich, the Rockies' GM since October 2014, took another approach, building a staff not with tricks, but but by attempting to acquire and develop the best pitchers he possibly could.

"We committed that we're not going to buy into this, 'We can't pitch here,'" he said.

In 2013 and 2014, with Bridich serving the organization's senior director of player development, the Rockies drafted a pitcher with a top-10 pick, netting them Jon Gray and Kyle Freeland. They signed Antonio Senzatela out of Venezuela in 2011 and in 2016 traded for German Márquez, then still a prospect. Lefty Tyler Anderson was also a Rockies first-round pick.

Freeland in particular has emerged as a gem. A 25-year-old lefty, he posted a 4.10 ERA in 33 appearances last season as a rookie. Now he has turned into one of the NL's top pitchers, putting up a 2.96 ERA through his first 28 starts. With a strong stretch run, he could set the record for the best ERA ever for a Rockies pitcher with at least 20 starts, surpassing Ubaldo Jiménez's 2.88 in 2010. He attributed his improvement to tweaking the grip on his changeup, which has generated more grounders.

In spite of all this, some holes for the Rockies still exist. Their bullpen, a problem they thought they conquered this winter when they invested \$106 million in relievers Wade Davis, Bryan Shaw and Jake McGee, remains a major weakness. They entered Friday having scored eight fewer runs than they have allowed, typically an indication of overachievement.

But with mere weeks to go, the Rockies find themselves on the cusp of the playoffs. Nothing else matters.

"Everybody is like, 'Denver will never have an ace or the Rockies will never have a good pitching rotation,'" González said.

"Well, it's happening.

The Never Ending Story of the Emergence of Trevor Story
TRACY RINGOLSBY - SEPTEMBER 6, 2018 | InsideTheSeams.com

To call Trevor Story understated is an understatement.

The Rockies shortstop is one of those stand-up guys, always available at his locker at a game, always willing to discuss the status of the franchise, but always in a very calm manner.

How understated?

Rockies Player	Date	Opp	HR
Nolan Arenado	7/19/2017	SD	3
Charlie Blackmon	8/12/2016	Phi	3
Vinny Castilla	6/5/1999	Mil	3
Jeff Cirillo	6/28/2000	SF	3
Andres Galarraga	6/25/1995	SD	3
Jason Giambi	5/19/2011	Phi	3
Carlos Gonzalez	5/30/2012	Hou	3
Carlos Gonzalez	6/5/2013	Cin	3
Todd Helton	5/1/2000	Mon	3
Todd Helton	5/29/2003	LA	3
Todd Hollandsworth	4/15/2001	Ari	3
Mike Lansing	9/22/1998	Ari	3
Jose Ortiz	8/17/2001	Fla	3
Trevor Story	Wednesday	SF	3
Larry Walker	4/5/1997	Mon	3
Larry Walker	4/28/1999	StL	3
Larry Walker	6/25/2004	Cle	3

Well, in the Rockies 5-3 victory over the San Francisco Giants on Wednesday night, which pushed the Rockies to a 1 1/2 game lead in the NL West on the second-place Dodgers and Diamondbacks, he delivered the 17th game in Rockies history in which a player hit three home runs, the 10th at Coors Field.

And he did it in style, without any personal fanfare.

There was that two-out blast off Giants starting pitcher Andrew Suarez in the first inning, Story falling on his behind as he swung, which gave the Rockies a 2-1 lead.

"It was a little different," he said. "I never fell down like that. I had two strikes on me. I was not trying to hit a home run. I was trying to hit something hard."

There was that blast in the bottom of the fourth, again off Suarez, that tied the game at 3-3 and was officially measured as the longest home run in Coors Field history, and the longest in any ballpark in the Statcast Era with a distance of 505 feet, one foot longer than the old record that Giancarlo Stanton, with the Marlins at the time, hit on Aug. 6, 2016, also at Coors Field.

"I first found out about that when you just told me," he said in the post-game media session. "That's pretty cool. There have been a lot of big home runs here and big power guys. I'll take it I guess."

And there was that sixth-inning shot, again off Suarez, that gave the Rockies the 4-3 lead they did not relinquish in claiming their sixth consecutive win against the Giants.

"To have a night like (Wednesday) is a great feeling," he said. ". ... I try not to outthink myself. I try to keep it simple."

The fans, however, didn't keep it simple. They gave him a standing ovation, eventually getting Story to acknowledge their support with a curtain call.

"It is one thing you dream about as a kid," he said. "I have been blessed to play the game. I thank God that it happened to me, but honestly, I'm more excited about the win at this point. Every win from here on out is huge."

But so was that home run, which was longer than any home run any other hitter has had in the Statcast Era (and one of only three of the top 10 hit at Coors Field).

Simple but impressive. Just look at the list of players behind him in terms of longest home runs of the Statcast Era.

GOING, GOING, GOING, GOING, WAY GONE

Length	Player	Date	Stadium
1. 505	Trevor Story	Thursday	Coors Field
2. 504	Giancarlo Stanton	Aug. 6, 2016	Coors Field
3. (tie) 495	Aaron Judge	June 11, 2017	Yankee Stadium
3. (tie) 495	Kris Bryant	Sept. 6, 2015	Wrigley Field
5. (tie) 493	Gary Sanchez	Aug. 22, 2017	Comerica Park
5. (tie) 493	Nelson Cruz	Sept. 24, 2016	Target Field

Length	Player	Date	Stadium
5. (tie) 493	Michael A. Taylor	Aug. 20, 2015	Coors Field
8. 491	Nomar Mazara	May 25, 2016	Globe Life Park
9. 490	Joey Gallo	Sept. 17, 2017	Angel Stadium
10. 489	Franchy Cordero	April 20, 2018	Chase Field

His teammates, however, were just as impressed as the fans.

"When (the second home run) came off the bat, I thought, `My God, he's going to hit the scoreboard, he's going to hit my Lamborghini,'" said Carlos Gonzalez. "I can't be more proud of him. He is one of those kids who wants to get better every year. And he's definitely getting better.

Player	Season	HR	SB
Alex Rodriguez	1998 Sea	42	44
Alex Rodriguez	2004 NYY	36	28
Barry Larkin	1996 Cin	33	36
Trevor Story	2018 Col	31	25
Jimmy Rollins	2007 Phi	30	41

"He's in the MVP conversation now. He's hit 30 home runs. He's close to 30-30 (home runs-stolen bases). He's close to .300. He is carrying the team. He played tremendous defense. He can do it all."

He has 25 stolen bases, giving him only the sixth season in MLB history that a shortstop had at least 30 home runs and 25 stolen bases.

It is, said manager Bud Black, a continuing illustration of the emergence of Story, who is in only his third big-league season, and is enjoying a season in which he earned his first All-Star selection.

"He might do this again," Black said. "He's capable of doing that. He's that kind of player."

And that is why as understated as Story may be he won't be underrated for long.

His abilities -- in the field, on the bases and at the plate -- will force the baseball world and baseball fans to recognize his accomplishments.

Handicapper's Guide: Headed Down the Stretch in the NL West
TRACY RINGOLSBY - SEPTEMBER 7, 2018 | InsideTheSeams.com

The Rockies head into the final 24 days of the 2018 regular season in full control of their own destiny. They are in first place in the NL West, 1 1/2 games up on the second-place Dodgers, with 23 games remaining on their schedule.

Big deal?

Most Recent Division Titles

Season	Team		
2017	Astros	Indians	Red Sox
	Cubs	Dodgers	Nationals
2016	Rangers	Royals	
2015	Mets	Blue Jays	
	Cardinals	Orioles	Tigers
2014	Angels		
2013	Braves	Yankees	Giants
	Giants	A's	
2012	Reds	D-backs	Phillies
2011	Brewers	Rays	
2010	Twins		
2008	Padres		
2005	White Sox		
2001	Mariners		
1992	Pirates		

You bet.

They are assured of waking up Saturday morning, 140 games into the season, in first place, which will be the latest (in terms of games played) they have ever been in first place. It's a step toward the possibility of winning the first division title in franchise history.

The irony is, there are only two teams to have never won a division title -- the Rockies and their expansion cousin Marlins. The Marlins have advanced to the post-season twice (and there won't be a third time is the charm this year) but did win the World Series both times. The Rockies have claimed a wild-card spot four times, and while they did advance to the World Series in 2007, they were swept by the Red Sox.

Since the Marlins and Rockies began play in 1993, there is only one other team that has not won a division title -- the Pirates, who last won a division in 1992, which was their third in a row in a stretch in which they were eliminated in the NLDS each time.

THE ROCKIES DO control their own destiny. Their 23 remain games include six against the Dodgers, who are in second place, 1 1/2 games back, and seven the Diamondbacks, in third place, two games back.

They have six of their final 23 games against a team with a losing record -- three at San Francisco, and a season-ending three-game series against the Nationals at Coors Field.

They play 14 of their final 23 games at home, the exception being a nine-game road trip that begins next weekend with three games each at the Giants, Dodgers and D-backs.

THE DODGERS PLAY 16 of their final 22 games on the road, the exception being a six-game homestand against the Padres and Diamondbacks Sept. 21-26 before a season-ending three-game series at the Giants.

Friday they embark on a 10-game road trip to Colorado, Cincinnati and St. Louis. They do have nine games remaining with teams that have losing records, but six of those games are on the road -- three each at Cincinnati and San Francisco.

THE DIAMONDBACKS BEGAN a stretch of playing 20 of their final 23 games against teams with losing records, losing the first game of that stretch at home to the Braves 7-6 in 10 innings. They do finish the season with three at San Diego.

They have 10 games remaining with their NL West competition -- seven against the Rockies, including a four-game visit to Coors Field starting on Monday, and three against the Dodgers at home Sept. 24-26.

They do have 12 of their final 22 at home -- playing three at Colorado next week, three at Houston next weekend, and those three in San Diego to conclude the 162-game schedule.

THE ROAD TO THE NL WEST TITLE

Date	Rockies	Dodgers	Diamondbacks
Friday	vs. Dodgers	at Rockies	vs. Braves

Date	Rockies	Dodgers	Diamondbacks
Saturday	vs. Dodgers	at Rockies	vs. Braves
Sunday	vs. Dodgers	at Rockies	vs. Braves
Monday	vs. D-backs	at Reds	at Rockies
Tuesday	vs. D-backs	at Reds	at Rockies
Wednesday	vs. D-backs	at Reds	at Rockies
Thursday	vs. D-backs	at Cardinals	at Rockies
Sept. 14	at Giants	at Cardinals	at Astros
Sept. 15	at Giants	at Cardinals	at Astros
Sept. 16	at Giants	at Cardinals	at Astros
Sept. 17	at Dodgers	vs. Rockies	vs. Cubs
Sept. 18	at Dodgers	vs. Rockies	vs. Cubs
Sept. 19	at Dodgers	vs. Rockies	vs. Cubs
Sept. 20	Off	Off	Off
Sept. 21	at D-backs	vs. Padres	vs. Rockies
Sept. 22	at D-backs	vs. Padres	vs. Rockies
Sept. 23	at D-backs	vs. Padres	vs. Rockies
Sept. 24	vs. Phillies	at D-backs	vs. Dodgers
Sept. 25	vs. Phillies	at D-backs	vs. Dodgers
Sept. 26	vs. Phillies	at D-backs	vs. Dodgers
Sept. 27	vs. Phillies	Off	Off
Sept. 28	vs. Nationals	at Giants	at Padres
Sept. 29	vs. Nationals	at Giants	at Padres
Sept. 30	vs. Nationals	at Giants	at Padres

A factor in the Rockies favor is they play 17 of those final 23 games at home. They did struggle at Coors Field early in the season, but their season began to turn around on June 28, when after falling eight games below .500 and into fourth place in the NL West, they won at San Francisco and then took two of three at Dodger Stadium.

They returned home on July 2 and regained that home-field advantage. Dating back to that afternoon at AT&T Park against the Giants, the Rockies have the best home-field record in the National League.

HOME, SWEET HOME (FINALLY)

Season				Since June 28			
Team	W	L	Pct	Team	W	L	Pct
Cubs	44	24	0.647	Rockies	39	20	0.661
Phillies	43	26	0.623	Cubs	40	22	0.645
Brewers	42	27	0.609	Cardinals	36	25	0.59

Season				Since June 28			
Dodgers	39	36	0.52	Dodgers	33	28	0.541
Giants	39	30	0.565	Brewers	33	29	0.532
Pirates	38	34	0.528	Braves	32	29	0.525
Braves	37	34	0.521	Pirates	31	29	0.517
Rockies	37	30	0.552	Mets	31	30	0.508
Cardinals	37	31	0.544	Phillies	31	30	0.508
D-backs	36	33	0.522	D-backs	29	31	0.483
Nationals	35	36	0.493	Nationals	28	35	0.444
Marlins	34	41	0.453	Giants	26	34	0.433
Reds	32	38	0.457	Reds	25	36	0.41
Mets	28	40	0.412	Marlins	24	35	0.407
Padres	27	45	0.375	Padres	20	39	0.339

The Diamondbacks are in third place, but based off the success they have had this season against their remaining opponents, they cannot be overlooked. While they are 33-22 against the teams remaining on their schedule, the Rockies are 26-23, and the Dodgers, in addition to facing the challenge of the road, are 33-35 against their remaining opponents.

Rockies vs.	W-L	Dodgers	W-L	D-Backs	W-L
Dodgers	6-7	Rockies	7-6	Braves	2-2
D-backs	5-7	Reds	0-4	Rockies	7-5
Giants	11-5	Cardinals	0-3	Astros	2-1
Phillies	1-2	Padres	12-4	Cubs	2-2
Nationals	3-1	D-backs	7-9	Dodgers	9-7
Total	26-23	Giants	7-9	Padres	11-5
		Total	33-35	Total	33-22

Nolan Arenado is in one of the worst slumps of his career

There's a potential bright side to the low point

By Adam Peterson@playerTBNL - Sep 7, 2018, 8:01am MDT | Purple Row

There are a lot of great things happening for the **Rockies** right now. **Trevor Story** is looking like a **legitimate MVP candidate**. **German Márquez** might be turning **into an ace**. Kyle Freeland finally got the **cheat code for Coors Field**. It's September and the Rockies are in **first place!** But it is curious how they've gotten into first place. Or, more accurately, how they haven't gotten into first place without **Nolan Arenado**.

Look, I'm not trying to be a **Debbie Downer** or anything but after an 0-for-3 night on Wednesday Nolan's season line dropped to .297/.379/.550 and an wRC+ of 130. I know what you're thinking and you're absolutely correct: that does look like a pretty spectacular year. In fact, those numbers would represent the highest OBP and wRC+ of his career and the second highest batting average. Sure, the slugging percentage is as low as it's been since his sophomore campaign, but it's not anything to worry about, right?

The concern with Nolan isn't so much that he's somehow having a bad year, but that he's been a markedly different hitter in the second half. After a two homer game in which he went 3-for-5 in the first game back from the All-Star Break, Nolan was hitting .316/.398/.603 and had an wRC+ of 150. That was the high water mark of his season so far. He had a good-not-great .863 OPS over the following three weeks before being pulled from a game on **August 10**. He left due to an **apparent shoulder injury** that, we were told, only affected his throwing.

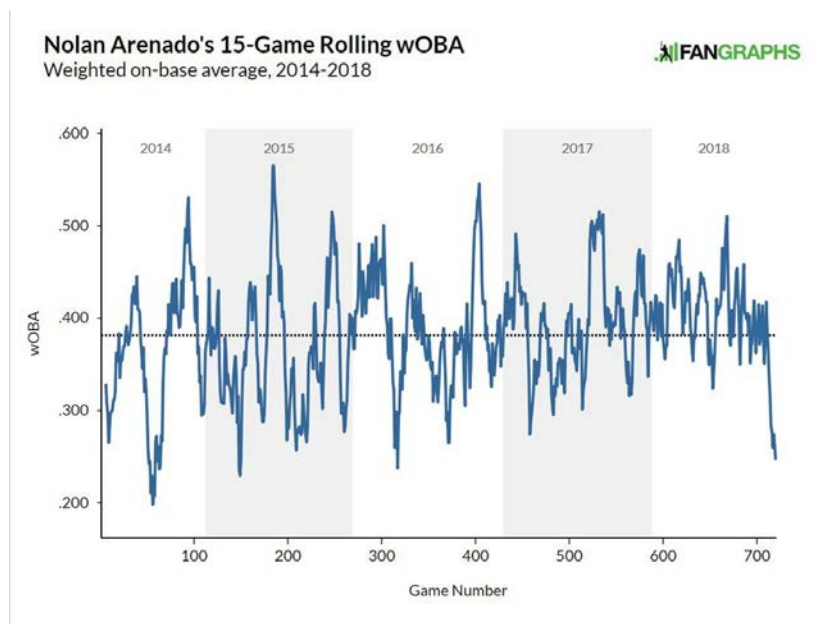
Nolan Arenado, 2018

Dates	G	PA	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	BABIP	wRC+
Mar 29-Aug 9	109	476	77	128	25	2	29	82	56	84	.308	.391	.588	.979	.325	144
Aug 10-Sept 5	22	98	11	20	4	0	2	11	10	19	.241	.320	.361	.681	.277	59

Arenado went from being 44% better than league average prior to August 10 to being 41% worse than average after it.

That's six extra base hits in the last month; he had that many between June 15 and 19. And anyone who has been watching can see it's not the same Nolan up at the plate right now.

The slump is even more stark when you look at the rest of his career. FanGraphs keeps track of a stat called Weighted On Base Average (**wOBA**, [click here to learn more](#)), which is an all batting statistic that weights extra base hits higher than non-extra base hits and scaled to resemble an on-base percentage: around .300 is decent, around .400 is excellent. The chart below tracks Nolan's 15-game rolling wOBA; every point on the graph represents Nolan's offensive performance over the previous 15 games.



Through September 5, 2018 Source: FanGraphs

There are a lot of peaks and valleys on that chart because even the best hitters in baseball go through hot and cold stretches. What's notable here is just how far Nolan has dropped off in 2018. While the decline has been less sharp than in previous slumps, it still represents the biggest drop-off since July 2015, when he posted a 51 wRC+.

So what's going on? Comparing Nolan's batted ball data pre- and post-injury a few things stand out. First of all, his BABIP went from .325 to .277 after posting a .320 in 2017. Digging a little deeper we find the likely culprit: Nolan is hitting more ground balls (37.7% to 50.7%), which are coming almost exclusively at the cost of his fly balls (39.5% to 26.9%), all while generating more soft contact (14.1% to 17.6%). When you hit fewer fly balls and more ground balls, and you're hitting the ball less hard overall, extra base hits tend to dry up quickly and outs abound. That's how you go from one of the best seasons in the league to one of the worst months of your career.

Fortunately for **Arenado**, he had quite the **lofty perch** from which to fall. But it's still a worrying trend. While he hadn't exactly maintained his blistering pace in the three weeks before being removed from that **dramatic victory** against the **Dodgers**, the correlation is pretty difficult to ignore.

At this point in the season everybody is hurt to some degree or another, so it wouldn't be hard to imagine the shoulder is still bothering Nolan. Even if the shoulder is healed (or it really doesn't affect his hitting), a day off may be in order to allow a mental reset. That's hard to do when every game and every at bat matters so much for the Rockies push to the playoffs, but it's to the point where manager Bud Black should consider whether a day off might help reset Nolan for the final push. After all, the last time Nolan got a full day off he went on to earn six extra base hits in five days.

Again, the news isn't all bad. The Rockies managed to go 17-7 over the course of Arenado's rough patch. And that might be the most encouraging part of all: the Rockies' lost most of the production of an MVP candidate and still managed to launch into first place. The team is more than its star third baseman. If they can get him back right, they just might be able to run away with the franchise's first ever division title.

Colorado Rockies: Jon Gray and the ever-evolving warrior mindset

by Kevin Henry - 4 hours ago | RoxPile

On August 22, Jon Gray threw 6.1 innings against the San Diego Padres, allowing just two runs and scattering five hits while striking out five. It was his sixth quality start in his last seven outings and helped the Colorado Rockies grab a 6-2 win.

During the game, it was obvious that the **Colorado Rockies** right-hander didn't have his best stuff. His slider didn't bite as much and his fastball command wasn't as precise as he or manager **Bud Black** would have liked. Still, Gray got the job done and helped the Rockies win a divisional game.

It was the type of game that might have had Gray on the ropes earlier in his career ... or even this season. But something clicked with Gray when he was **sent to Triple-A on June 30** in what was at the time considered by many a shocking move. Colorado's Opening Day starter was suddenly in Triple-A and people wondered what the effect on Gray might be.

The answer? The effect was a revelation and a reset.

"I was in a weird place," Gray told me in an exclusive talk inside the Colorado clubhouse. "I wasn't myself and competing out there. I was kind of going through the motions and trying to make things happen rather than just letting my natural ability take over. I wanted to clear things out and start over and feel natural and athletic."

Gray was recalled on July 14 and went on to post a 2-0 mark with a 1.66 ERA in three July starts.

Now flash forward to August 22. Gray competed and got through a somewhat tough night. It earned him a shout-out from his catcher in postgame interviews.

"I'm proud of Jon. He's such a warrior out there. He doesn't give up. He wants to keep getting better," **Tony Wolters** said that night to me and other media members.

A warrior. I asked Gray about that moniker and he smiled. He said it was a word that resonated with him, especially this season.

"It's something that's evolved over time," Gray said. "I feel like I'm making more gains now. I feel like I'm doing a better job of taking information and moving on to the next one. When things aren't going right, the bottom line is just competing."

Competing means working on getting better and Gray said there are two areas where his focus lies heading into arguably the most important month in Colorado franchise history.

“There are a couple of things,” Gray explained when asked about his focus for September. “Even when things have seemed to go good, there are those one or two mistakes that I make that could have made things go the other way or could’ve been bad. Those are the things I’m trying to clean up.

“Last week, it was not having good putaways. My 0-2s, my two-strike pitches weren’t very good. There were too many balls put into play. In a field like this, that’s probably going to create more runs. I’ve tried to work on putaways and missing more bats this week. I feel like I’m doing a better job of that.

“Another thing is the first inning and getting that competitiveness in the first inning. It’s hard sometimes because you’re trying to feel your stuff out sometimes right away. You don’t always know where things are going right away so it’s hard to be as aggressive and nasty as possible.”

On Friday night at Coors Field, Gray will take the mound opposite **Clayton Kershaw** as the Los Angeles Dodgers visit Denver to open a critical three-game series that will certainly have postseason ramifications. Gray shrugs off any additional pressure that comes with Friday’s start or any start during the rest of the regular season.

“It’s just another start for me,” Gray smiled. “It’s not something I have to bring myself up or do more for. It’s naturally going to happen. The best is going to come out in all of us at this time. We just keep doing the same thing. Strive to get better. Take small steps to get better every day and we’re going to be right where we’re supposed to be.”

Small steps to get better. The warrior mindset wouldn’t have it any other way.

Ian Desmond is Colorado's nominee for the Clemente Award
By Justin Michael - September 6, 2018 | Mile High Sports

Ian Desmond has been one of the more polarizing players on the field in terms of his performance this season. Off the field, Desmond is undeniably one of the good people in sports though.

In his second season with the club, Desmond has earned his second nomination for the Roberto Clemente Award, which honors the player who best represents the game of baseball through character and positive contributions both on and off the field.

Desmond has been working to raise awareness about Neurofibromatosis (NF), a genetic disorder that causes tumors to grow along nerve tissue. According to Owen Perkins of *MLB.com*, Desmond “developed a close friendship with a young man who suffers from NF, and he has been a key figure in raising both awareness and funds to fight the disorder.”

In May, Desmond pledged to donate \$1,000 for every run and RBI he recorded during and ended up raising \$29,000 for the Children’s Tumor Foundation. As noted by Perkins, this was \$13,000 more than his 2017 donation.

“Being nominated for this award for the second straight year is a tremendous honor,” Desmond said. “Roberto Clemente continues to be an inspiration to all professional baseball players, and his legacy pushes us to be positive contributors to the communities around us and those people within them who are in need.”

The league-wide winner of the 2018 Clemente Award will be determined by a panel that includes Commissioner Rob Manfred, Clemente’s late wife and current MLB Goodwill Ambassador, Vera Clemente. It will also include representatives from MLB-affiliated networks and *MLB.com*.

Fans can vote for the winner at mlb.com/clemente21, with the winner of the fan tally counting as one vote among those cast by the blue-ribbon panel. The winner will be announced during the World Series.

Column: The NFL season is here, but this local is locked in on the Rockies
By Justin Michael - September 6, 2018 | Mile High Sports

Denver may be a football town, but 2018 is the Year of the Colorado Rockies.

The 2018 NFL season officially kicks off tonight with the Philadelphia Eagles hosting the Atlanta Falcons on Thursday Night Football. The rest of the league, including the Denver Broncos will obviously begin their respective seasons on Sunday or Monday night.

Denver has without question, always been a football town that bleeds orange and blue. When the Broncos are doing well, the city genuinely comes to life and it does phenomenal things for the local economy.

Here is the thing though — the Rockies are currently leading the NL West by 1.5 games — and in nearly two decades of following the teams in this city, I can confidently say this is one of the most exciting Denver teams of all-time.

So, while Broncos Stadium at Mile High will be rocking for Week 1 on Sunday, the Mile High City should be painted purple over the next month.

Now, before the local football fans show up at my door with pitchforks, let me provide a few examples of how exciting this baseball season has already been and provide a little more context to this statement.

In Wednesday night's victory to complete the sweep over San Francisco, shortstop Trevor Story launched three home runs, including the longest in the history of Coors Field (505 feet).

[Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

In 138 games this season, Story has a career-best batting average of .298 and leads all MLB shortstops with 31 home runs. The third-year shortstop has 39 doubles, which is tied for the NL lead. And when the 2018 season comes to a close, Story will likely be part of the 30-30 club as he currently has 25 stolen bases.

Story is genuinely having an MVP-caliber season and the craziest part is he gets overshadowed because of the amazing things Nolan Arenado does on a nightly basis at third base.

On the other side of the infield, D.J. LeMahieu has a career-high 14 home runs, despite missing more games to injury than he has in his entire career. And Ian Desmond casually leads the National League in RBI against the division.

In the outfield, the Rockies have Charlie Blackmon, who needs no explanation. They also have a pair of Denver sports icons with both Matt Holliday and Carlos Gonzalez on the roster.

In the year 2018, there is actually potential for these two to go yard in the same game. As someone that watched every inning of the 2007 World Series run and 2009 playoff appearance, the thought of seeing these two play meaningful baseball together in this city over a decade later gives me goosebumps.

If the nostalgia angle does not do it for you, then maybe 40 comeback victories will ignite your interest. On a nightly basis this team is a rollercoaster of emotions in the best way possible. This differs drastically from the disappointing ride of pain and misery that the Broncos have put the local fans through since winning Super Bowl 50.

I understand there is reason for optimism regarding the Broncos' success this season, but trust me when I say that the Broncos will not do anything in the first half of the season that is nearly as exciting as what the Rockies do each night at 20th and Blake.

This may be a football town, but 2018 is the Year of the Rockies.