



MEDIA CLIPS – Aug. 8, 2018

Blackmon gets 1,000th hit; Bettis roughed up

Right-hander allows nine runs in 4 2/3 innings in return from DL

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Aug. 7, 2018

DENVER -- Once the Pirates' **Jordy Mercer** swatted a three-run, fourth-inning homer off righty **Chad Bettis**-- ineffective in his first big league game in five weeks -- the Rockies were forced to turn to the big picture in Tuesday night's 10-2 loss at Coors Field.

On a windy night when the temperature dropped some 15 degrees between first pitch and the middle innings, the Rockies let some pitchers take on some water in hopes they will sail later. The Rockies entered the night two games back of the D-backs in the National League West, and endured just their third loss in their last 16 home games.

The game became lopsided quickly while Bettis (5-2), who returned from a blister on his right middle finger, struggled through 70 pitches in 4 2/3 innings, and gave up nine runs and eight hits. Also, relievers **Jake McGee** and **Bryan Shaw** each received work to try to overcome difficult patches.

Bettis and Pirates starter **Jameson Taillon** each survived **bouts with testicular cancer last season**, and each dealt with blisters this season. The game was much better for Taillon (9-8), who scattered 10 hits while throwing his second complete game of the season and of his career. Taillon struck out just three, but became the only National League pitcher with multiple complete games this season.

Additionally, it was the first complete game at Coors since the Rockies' **Jon Gray** did it on Sept. 17, 2016, against the Padres. It was the first nine-inning complete game by a visiting pitcher at Coors since the Dodgers' **Clayton Kershaw** blanked the Rockies, 8-0, on July 2, 2013.

"He got all his pitches working and we weren't able to score a bunch of runs on him," said **Carlos Gonzalez**, who drove in the Rockies' only runs on his two-run double in the sixth. "And he went the distance."

Mercer's sixth homer of the season made it 5-0. It didn't get better for Bettis, who also gave up a first-inning homer to **Starling Marte**. The outing deteriorated after a walk to **Gregory Polanco** -- after an 0-2 count -- to open the fourth inning. **Francisco Cervelli** also walked during the four-run inning that included Mercer's homer.

"I was really upset about those two walks in the fourth and the home run to Mercer," Bettis said. "Really, just those three at-bats there, I didn't execute the pitches I wanted to there. I have to learn from it and get better."

The Rockies hope Bettis, who had a 3.20 ERA before the blister problems hit in May, returns to being a rotation leader. With righty **Antonio Senzatela** on the 10-day disabled list with right shoulder inflammation until at least Aug. 15, Bettis' turn figures to come up again as long as he is healthy between starts.

Bettis gave up four hits in Pittsburgh's five-run fifth.

"At that point [going into the fifth] it was 5-0, the game was not even halfway over yet, and his pitch count was down," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "He threw a mistake pitch to Mercer -- that was a back-breaker, no doubt. We have a chance to come back in that game."

But when it got away, it was a chance for work for McGee and Shaw, both of whom have struggled in the first season of their three-year, \$27 million contracts. Results were mixed.

McGee has found consistent velocity recently, but key pitches are an issue. He worked to 2-2 against **Josh Harrison**, who extended the at-bat to seven pitches before lifting a homer to left field. McGee struck out one in a scoreless sixth, but has given up runs in three of his last four appearances.

"Even though Jake gave up the home run to Harrison, I thought the fastball had some life to it -- I saw some 93's, 95's, 97's," Black said.

Shaw struck out one and gave up a hit in the scoreless seventh, and has been scoreless in six of his last eight outings.

Shaw is vying to be included with what has been a mostly solid right-handed lead-protection group -- **Scott Oberg**, **Seunghwan Oh**, **Adam Ottavino** and closer **Wade Davis**.

"Bryan had a pretty efficient inning ... I thought Bryan made some good pitches," Black said.

BLACKMON REACHES MILESTONE

With a single into left field in the sixth inning, Blackmon became the seventh Rockies player to reach 1,000 career hits on Tuesday night.

Pirates catcher Cervelli held up the game for a few seconds as the 31,000 at Coors Field gave Blackmon a standing ovation.

"That was really neat," Blackmon said. "I really enjoyed it. I wish the circumstances of the game had been a little different, but it's nice to see Denver so supportive."

While acknowledging that 1,000 hits is "pretty good," Blackmon was quick to move forward and not dwell on the accomplishment.

"I'm very grateful to be on the field and have the opportunity to get a bunch of hits, and I'm very thankful for that," he said.

"But I really want to get a bunch more."

Blackmon had been in an August slump -- 1-for-23 since the beginning of the month after his third-inning strikeout -- and had a day off in Monday's 2-0 win. But his milestone hit sparked the Rockies to a two-run inning, cutting into their deficit. **DJ LeMahieu** followed Blackmon with a single, and Gonzalez brought them both home -- LeMahieu on Blackmon's heels -- with a double. Blackmon went 2-for-4 on Tuesday night.

SOUND SMART

Rockies catcher **Chris Iannetta** entered with a 20 at-bat hitless streak. It was tied with teammate and fellow catcher **Tom Murphy** (sent down to Triple-A Albuquerque on Tuesday) for the fourth-longest in the Majors among non-pitchers. But Iannetta ended it with a single to left field to lead off the second inning.

UP NEXT

Right-handed pitcher **German Marquez** (9-8, 4.70 ERA) will face newly acquired Pirates right-hander **Chris Archer** (3-5, 4.49) at 1:10 p.m. MT Wednesday. Marquez has gone seven innings in his last two starts, and he is 4-0 with a 2.95 ERA in his last six starts since June 30. Marquez has struggled at home this season (4-5, 6.63 ERA), but has made quality starts in his last two home starts -- 2-0 and a 2.63 ERA.

Murphy optioned; Rockies down to 2 catchers

Colorado seeking increased production from backstops

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Aug. 7, 2018

DENVER -- **Chris Iannetta** felt his swing and his comfort in the batter's box return when he ended an eight-pitch at-bat with a sacrifice fly in the Rockies' 2-0 victory over the Pirates on Monday night. It's a good time for Iannetta to feel good.

The Rockies went from carrying three catchers to two on Tuesday when they optioned rookie **Tom Murphy** to Triple-A Albuquerque to make room on the roster for Tuesday's starting pitcher, righty **Chad Bettis**. That leaves the right-handed hitting Iannetta and lefty-swinging **Tony Wolters**.

Iannetta had started just five of 12 games before Monday, with Murphy receiving the bulk of the playing time. Now Iannetta, 35, will receive more regular playing time during an important stretch, as manager Bud Black divides the opportunities based on matchups or trends with the starting pitcher.

In the first year of a two-year, \$8.5 million contract, Iannetta hasn't complained about playing time when it has been sporadic, and feels healthy and ready for more regular opportunities.

"I've been ready all year to do that," said Iannetta, who made his 70th appearance, which defensively was his 61st overall and 58th start. "I take care of myself. I work really hard so I'm ready to play, whatever they need.

"I signed on to play between 60 and 120 games, not caring what the number was and just totally focused on finding a way to contribute and winning -- if that meant contributing on the field, if that meant mentoring off the field, whatever I could possibly do. I'm at the stage of my career where it's about winning, not about numbers."

Iannetta entered Tuesday batting .214 with seven homers and 23 RBIs. He hit .265 with five homers and 13 RBIs from April 30-July 4, but has had trouble gaining traction overall.

"Right now, I feel the best that I have since Spring Training, and that just started yesterday," Iannetta said. "I finally felt back to normal, even though the numbers were a lot better early in the early part of the year. I feel better mechanically, seeing it, pitches finally started slowing down. I'd felt like everybody was throwing 110 [mph]."

The plan had been to have Iannetta or Murphy available to pinch-hit when not catching, but both struggled with the bat during a 2-5 road trip. Murphy also struggled in the ninth inning of Sunday's eventual 5-4 victory at Milwaukee, with a catcher's interference, a third strike from **Adam Ottavino** he couldn't corral (a play that would have ended the game) and a wild pitch that ticked off his glove on the fly.

"There are some adjustments he has to make with the swing," Black said. "On the defensive side, he's gotten a lot better from two years ago. Setting up the target, blocking, mechanics, positioning, but he still has to work on it.

"But if you look at Murph, he's got power, he's got arm strength. I love the way he calls the game."

Wolters was playing sparingly, usually in defensive situations.

While the catching is one reason the Rockies have had one of the Majors' best starting rotations for much of the season, the club needs more with the bat. The .620 OPS from that position ranked 26th in the Majors going into Tuesday.

The need for control

Wolters has made a highlight package's worth of defensive plays, but also has had a couple of major mistakes that came from trying to do too much with his sparse playing time. A throw to an uncovered third base (**Nolan Arenado** was in a shifted position) in a game at Arizona, and last week's inexplicable throw to second in a third strike at St. Louis (in a game when he made a standout play on an infield ball and cut down a basestealer at second) in the dirt are prime examples.

The good part is Wolters isn't tentative. His athletic ability can change games. Still, he realizes he must play under control.

"When you play random, you want to show out, but it's hard -- I made a really hard play and I made a really dumb play," Wolters said. "I have to keep reminding myself, 'You can show out, but keep the game slow.' Deep breath, know your information, and I can still show out."

Hurdle remembers friend, inspiration Baylor

Tuesday marks one-year anniversary of former player, manager's passing

By Owen Perkins / Special to MLB.com | Aug. 7, 2018

DENVER -- Tuesday, Aug. 7, was a date weighing heavy on Clint Hurdle's mind as he prepared for the middle game of a three-game set in Colorado. The day marked the one-year anniversary of the death of the Rockies' first manager, Don Baylor, whom Hurdle has called "an inspiration" in the past.

Baylor died at the age of 68 in 2017, following a 14-year battle since being diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2003. He managed the Rockies from their inaugural year in 1993 through 1998 and the Cubs from 2000-2002. After managing, he also coached for the Braves, Mets, Rockies, Mariners, D-backs, and the Angels, his last coaching job, finishing with them in 2015.

"He was the manager that gave me my first Major League coaching opportunity, so I'm forever grateful," Hurdle said before Tuesday's tilt. "There's times, during the season and other times, I remember things he did and things he said that still resonate, have meaning. There's still enough people within the game that I'll see from time to time that we were connected. His spirit lives."

Baylor brought the Rockies to the postseason in their third year of existence, taking the first National League Wild Card berth in 1995. It would be 12 years before the Rockies got back to the postseason, winning the NL pennant under Hurdle in 2007.

"One of the coolest things I was able to do is after we won the championship," Hurdle said. "That year, and he was in another place, but conversations would come up from time to time and he'd follow the team. And the next year, going to the All-Star Game, I reached out to [MLB executive] Katy Feeney. I asked for permission to have Don added to our staff. Just based on my feeling, my appreciation for him. It was able to get worked out."

"One of the coolest things was for Don and I to be able to be back together at the All-Star Game to represent the Rockies in 2008 at Yankee Stadium, the last All-Star Game played there. ... I never thought my name would be connected to Don Baylor's in any context, shape, or form. To get a call from him one day and say, 'Hey, yeah, I want you to be my Major League hitting coach,' it's still pretty crazy."

Hurdle credits Baylor with establishing the character of the Colorado club during his early years managing the expansion team, bringing instant credibility to the franchise and instilling his values across the organization.

"Obviously, Don Baylor being the first manager was such a great selection for so many reasons," Hurdle said. "To represent the organization and put his personality and his belief system, a lot of different things he brought to the game, on the organization. They're still highly thought of in a lot of different ways now."

Pirates rout Rockies with two big innings, spoiling Chad Bettis' return to the rotation

Pittsburgh's four-run fourth and five-run fifth turned the second game of the homestand into a prolonged snoozer

By Kyle Newman / Denver Post | Aug. 7, 2018

Rockies manager Bud Black said Monday that he was confident in where Chad Bettis was, health-wise and stuff-wise, as the right-hander returned to the majors from a finger blister that had sidelined him since July 3.

But Tuesday's blowout at the hands of Pittsburgh showed Bettis — slotted back into the starting rotation in the wake of Antonio Senzatela's shoulder soreness — hadn't quite shaken off the rust indicated by the stat line of his last rehab start, a four-run, six-inning outing last week for Triple-A Albuquerque.

The result was a 10-2 loss at Coors Field that was decided by two explosive Pirates innings, a four-run fourth and a five-run fifth, which turned the second game of the homestand into a prolonged snoozer.

"Chad, when he's on, he hits the glove," Black said. "I don't think we saw the best of Chad today hitting the glove."

Pittsburgh got on the board quickly in the first inning via Starling Marte's 17th home run of the season to take a 1-0 lead, but Bettis put up zeros in the two innings after that as the clubs entered the fourth still separated by just one run.

But as Pirates right-hander Jameson Taillon cruised on his way to the first nine-inning complete game by an opponent at Coors Field since the Dodgers' Clayton Kershaw in 2013, Bettis came undone in the fourth.

Josh Harrison started the bleeding in the inning with a sacrifice fly to make it 2-0, and then Jordy Mercer hit a three-run homer 443 feet to center field to make it 5-0.

"I was really upset by those two walks in the fourth there that led to the home run by Mercer," Bettis said. "Really, in those three at-bats, I didn't execute the pitches that I wanted to."

The tourniquet was only just being unraveled, however, after Black trotted Bettis back out for the fifth inning.

"The game wasn't even halfway over yet, his pitch count was down and he threw a mistake pitch to Mercer — that was a back-breaker, no doubt," Black said of the decision. "But down 5-0 after four, we have a chance to come back in that game. We don't know what's going to happen in the fifth, because we don't have a crystal ball... (The thinking is) we send him back out, and hopefully he puts up a zero or two."

But the results were less than ideal, as the right-hander surrendered three additional runs before being spelled by Jake McGee with two outs.

Before McGee could get the Rockies out of the frame, Harrison furthered the damage by hitting a two-run dinger to push Pittsburgh's advantage to 10-0 and send many purple-clad fans immediately streaming for the exits.

Taillon then continued to work around traffic, as Colorado finished 1-for-12 with runners in scoring position while leaving seven runners stranded. One of the lone bright spots was Charlie Blackmon's 1,000th career hit, a single in the sixth.

"He had all his pitches working all night — a great running fastball going away from lefties and into right-handers at mid-90s, a great cutter with a slider and a good curveball," Carlos Gonzalez said. "We were able to put up a lot of traffic, but pitched a really good game and he was still able to go the distance because he didn't use a lot of pitches."

The Colorado offense finally produced in the eighth, but Gonzalez's two-RBI double in the frame was far from enough to get the Rockies (60-53) back into the ballgame.

"It's a tough loss, but tomorrow we have an opportunity to win a series," Gonzalez said.

Journal: Emergence of Kyle Freeland, Rockies' rotation brings Coors Field double standard to the forefront

Trevor Story: "Hitters get knocked for playing at elevation, but our pitchers don't get any extra credit for doing really well here."

By Kyle Newman / Denver Post | Aug. 7, 2018

Coors: A brand of beer and, in baseball, the worst kind of label.

The Rockies have dealt with the consistent criticism that their offensive numbers are inflated by the mile-high altitude of Coors Field, and that label has been dropped time and again to discredit the merits of the club's former and current sluggers.

But since it's clear the Coors label is going to subsist as a pejorative by which both the national media and the average Twitter Joe devalue Colorado players offensively, then shouldn't it also be used as a compliment to pitchers who have, relatively speaking, tamed the beast?

"Hitters get knocked for playing at elevation, but our pitchers don't get any extra credit for doing really well here," shortstop Trevor Story said. "So yeah, there's a double standard, because our starting rotation has carried us the past month-plus and there's no extra attention there, really, even though they did a lot of that at home."

Alas, the Coors Field double standard — irrelevant for much of the franchise's 25-year history simply because of the dearth of quality starting pitching in Denver — is being brought into the bright warm LoDo sunlight this season, as clear as day for everyone to see.

"Over the course of time of the Rockies, there haven't been as many quality pitchers who put up numbers like so many of the hitters here have," southpaw Kyle Freeland reasoned.

"Dante Bichette, Larry Walker, Todd Helton and now Nolan Arenado, Chuck (Blackmon), DJ (LeMahieu) — there are all those guys from the 1990s until now who have put up monster numbers here, and I think people are kind of blinded by that. They don't look at the pitcher's side of it, which had been understandable seeing as historically the numbers are lopsided toward hitters' success here."

But this season, it's the hometown kid himself — Freeland is a 2011 graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School — who has underscored the general oversight of a talented Colorado rotation that manager Bud Black calls "really unfair."

“If a pitcher is pitching well in a ballpark that is hitter-friendly — and there’s a number of them — that shouldn’t go unnoticed,” Black said.

Freeland has emerged as Colorado’s best starting pitcher, and with a home ERA of 2.18, the 25-year-old left-hander is on pace to break Jorge De La Rosa’s club record for the best single-season ERA at Coors Field. De La Rosa’s 2.76 mark in 2013 marked the only time a Rockies starter has posted a sub-3.00 ERA at Coors Field.

Yet Freeland drew little all-star chatter outside of Denver, and even as his surge continued into the second half, you probably won’t find him the subject of ESPN specials or hyped in many national columns despite the fact that Sabermetrics rank him among the best starting pitchers in all of baseball.

Per Baseball Reference, Freeland is sixth in the MLB in WAR (wins against replacement) and ninth in adjusted ERA. And according to Fangraphs, the left-hander’s WPA (win probability added, which gives an idea of which players helped their teams the most during the most important parts of a game) ranks fourth in the National League.

The three pitchers he trails in that category — the Mets’ Jacob deGrom, the Nationals’ Max Scherzer and the Phillies’ Aaron Nola — were all all-stars, and the NL Cy Young will probably be decided between Scherzer and Nola. But while those three East Coast arms soak up plenty of ink, don’t expect Freeland’s profile to skyrocket even if he continues to pitch like an ace down the stretch of the season.

After Freeland, the performances of fellow southpaw Tyler Anderson, as well as right-handers German Marquez, Antonio Senzatela, Chad Bettis and Jon Gray, have also catalyzed the team back into the divisional chase. As a unit, Colorado posted a 1.71 home ERA during July, a franchise record low for a single month.

And even though the rotation’s collective ERA (4.24) ranks in the middle half of the NL, the Rockies are first in the league in team WPA, and their park-adjusted ERA for starters is third in the NL.

“People are going to look at things like ERAs, and we don’t rank very high in ERA,” reliever Adam Ottavino said. “But if you look at the big picture (for Colorado starters) — and there are some stats out there that do — it’s pretty favorable.”

Footnotes. As Black announced Monday, Chad Bettis made his return to the Rockies’ rotation Tuesday, and with that Colorado correspondingly optioned catcher Tom Murphy to Triple-A to make room for the right-hander on the roster. Murphy, 27, hit .227 (20-for-88) in 31 games with Colorado since being recalled June 12. He has batted .220 in 72 career games with the Rockies dating to 2015, and Black noted the catcher knows what he needs to improve on back with the

Albuquerque Isotopes. “We talked long and hard, Murph and I and the hitting coaches, about the strikeouts and the strikeout-to-walk ratio,” Black said. “Adjustments have to be made with the swing. On the defensive side, he’s gotten a lot better from two years ago. ... But the setup, the target, the blocking, the mechanics, his positioning — there are things he still has to work on.”

Looking ahead

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

In just his second start for Pittsburgh since being dealt from Tampa Bay at the trade deadline, the right-hander looks to improve upon his five-run, seven-hit outing in 4.1 innings against the Cardinals last week. Archer has made just one start against Colorado, surrendering two runs in six innings back in 2016, so he’ll basically be a whole new look for the Rockies’ lineup. Meanwhile, Marquez has fared decently in three career starts against the Pirates, posting a 3-0 record with a 2.50 ERA while also racking up 17 strikeouts. The Colorado right-hander has turned in back-to-back quality starts, and quality starts in five of his last six outings. — *Kyle Newman, The Denver Post*

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

Friday: Dodgers RHP Kenta Maeda (7-7, 3.73) at Rockies RHP Jon Gray (9-7, 4.73), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Saturday: Dodgers RHP Walker Buehler (5-4, 3.63) at Rockies LHP Kyle Freeland (10-7, 3.04), 1:10 p.m., ATTRM

Kiz vs. Saunders: What must Rockies' Nolan Arenado do to be named MVP of NL?

The mile-high stigma is tough to overcome

By Mark Kizsla & Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Aug. 8, 2018

Question: What must Rockies' Nolan Arenado do to be named MVP of NL?

Kiz: Rockies third baseman Nolan Arenado is the best player in the National League. Period. Isn't that obvious to anyone who lives in Colorado and watches Arenado blast loud home runs and make jaw-dropping plays with his glove? But it's the rest of the country I worry about. What does Arenado have to do in order to overcome the bias against Coors Field and be crowned the most valuable player?

Saunders: I think the Rockies will have to win the National League West or, at the very least, stay in the race until the final week of the season. I do think a lot of voters have seen enough highlights to appreciate Arenado, but the mile-high stigma is tough to overcome. After all, Arenado's home OPS is 1.120 vs. .847 OPS on the road.

Kiz: A year ago, Arenado finished fourth in the MVP voting, in no small part because Charlie Blackmon enjoyed the best season of his career and split support with his Colorado teammate. So with Chicago Cubs infielder Javy Baez a legit MVP candidate in 2018 on a team not only bound for the playoffs but a fixture on television, should I begin to worry shortstop Trevor Story has played so well for the Rockies that he will "steal" votes from Arenado this season?

Saunders: I don't think so. Story has been the Rockies' best player since the all-star break, and he's coming off a fantastic series in Milwaukee, but he doesn't have the pedigree that Arenado does. When I travel to opposing ballparks, Arenado is usually the player the writers seek out, or the player they ask manager Bud Black about the most.

Kiz: While Arenado could lead the league in home runs, his detractors will shout that his .259 batting average on the road makes him a product of baseball at altitude. So there's only one way Arenado can prove his true value to skeptics. He must lead the Rockies to a playoff berth by hogging center stage during big victories in August and September. Anything less, and voters will find a reason to give somebody else the MVP.

Saunders: We are in agreement on this point, for sure, and there are 50 games left for this to play out. I think Arenado's prime competition will come from Atlanta first baseman Freddie Freeman, who is the ringleader for the resurgent Braves, and St. Louis' sizzling-hot Matt Carpenter. But you're right, voters are going to dock Arenado for his home/road splits (he has hit 16 home runs at Coors vs. 13 on the road), but I hope voters will consider his defense. It wins games — home and away.

Pirates 10, Rockies 2: Big innings cost Rockies in blowout loss

This one got away and stayed lopsided.

By Hayden Kane / Purple Row | Aug. 7, 2018

The **Colorado Rockies** got blown out by the **Pittsburgh Pirates** by a final score of 10-2 on Tuesday night. It was cool to see **Chad Bettis** on the mound against **Jameson Taillon** given their respective journeys, but the Pirates' starter ultimately cruised while his counterpart got roughed up.

Taillon throws a complete game

For however much the perception of Coors Field goes over the top sometimes, it is still hugely impressive to go into that park and throw a complete game. Taillon gave up just two runs but it he had to navigate some traffic. He scattered 10 hits, but he forced enough weak contact to limit the damage and keep himself in the game to go the distance. Obviously the huge lead helped too.

Big innings

The Pirates scored four runs in the fourth inning and five runs in the fifth inning to put this out of reach. They did a lot of their damage by hitting the ball out of the park. **Starling Marte**, **Jordy Mercer**, and **Josh Harrison** all went deep. **Bettis** was ultimately charged with nine runs as he and **Jake McGee** teamed up to let this one get out of hand.

It is always great to see Bettis on the mound, but when it comes down to it he might not be one of the five best starters for the Rockies if they are going to stay in the playoff race. That will be a decision for the team moving forward.

Looking ahead

The Rockies will try to win the rubber match against the Pirates on Wednesday afternoon with **German Marquez** on the mound against **Chris Archer**.

Colorado Rockies morning after: We need to talk about Chad Bettis

By Kevin Henry / Rox Pile | Aug. 7, 2018

Chad Bettis made his return to the Colorado Rockies rotation on Tuesday night. It was anything but a triumphant return.

The Pittsburgh Pirates had their way with Bettis at the plate, jumping to an 8-0 lead before chasing the **Colorado Rockies** starter with two out in the top of the fifth on their way to a 10-2 decision. It was part of what has been a troubling pattern for Bettis, who has surrendered five or more runs in six of his last seven outings that have lasted four or more innings.

After posting an 8.54 ERA in June and not pitching since an abbreviated start in Los Angeles on July 1 because of blister issues, Bettis had hoped a new grip would serve him well upon his return. However, velocity and location did not.

Bettis opened the game firing four-seam fastballs to **Corey Dickerson** measuring 89.3 and 89.1 miles per hour according to **BaseballSavant.com**. The fastest pitch he threw on Tuesday night was a fourth-inning four-seamer to opposing pitcher **Jameson Taillon** which clocked in at 92.6 miles per hour.

Pittsburgh's first run of the game came on a solo homer from **Starling Marte** in the top of the first. It came in at 91.1 miles per hour and the location **was anything but ideal**. Neither was the location of the 90.4 mile per hour fastball that ended up being a three-run homer off the bat of **Jordy Mercer**. **Look where it ended up over the plate.**

Simply put, that's batting practice for the Pirates ... and they took advantage of it. Bettis, however, thought his location was where it needed to be in the game's opening stages.

"I felt like it was pretty good early," Bettis told Rox Pile and other reporters after the game.

Colorado manager **Bud Black** painted a different picture.

"It looked to me just the way Chris (Iannetta) was catching certain pitches, it looked like his command was off," Black said.

"He wasn't locating the fastball. I think it started in the first inning. The pitch to Marte was up over the plate. It was intended to be down. The pitch to Mercer, which I told Kyle (Newman of *The Denver Post*) was a back-breaker, was intended I think to be inside, in on his hands, or off the plate. I think that ball was out over the plate."

Black said what he saw on Tuesday night was not indicative of the type of pitcher he believes Bettis to be.

Colorado Rockies: Why Nolan Arenado owns a New York Jets jersey

By Kevin Henry / Rox Pile | Aug. 7, 2018

Among the contents of Nolan Arenado's locker inside the Colorado Rockies clubhouse is a New York Jets jersey.

That, on the surface, may seem strange for a Southern California guy who is an All-Star third baseman for the **Colorado Rockies** (and playing in the heart of Denver Broncos country) to be the owner of an East Coast football team jersey.

However, there is a story behind it. You see, it's more about the player's name on the jersey and the connection with him than the team itself.

Not long after Sam Darnold was **drafted third overall by the Jets** in the 2018 NFL draft, Arenado made the purchase of a Darnold Jets jersey. So what's the connection? It all goes back to southern California and Arenado's support of Darnold, a graduate of San Clemente High School, just over 18 miles from Arenado's alma mater of El Toro High School.

"I'm rooting for him. I don't really have a favorite team, but I really want to see him do well," Arenado said on Tuesday afternoon before the Rockies faced the Pittsburgh Pirates in the second game of a three-game series at Coors Field.

Southern California guys stick together, especially when it's a guy like Darnold who went on to star at the University of Southern California. It just so happens that Arenado, who calls himself a "huge Trojans fan," was in the stands for the 2017 Rose Bowl when the Trojans nipped Penn State as the clock expired with a 46-yard field goal to post a dramatic 52-49 win. In that game, Darnold threw for five touchdowns and 453 yards.

Check out the video below of Arenado in the Rose Bowl stands wearing a Trojans jersey and celebrating the USC win roughly halfway through the interview that aired on Intentional Talk.

Now past his short holdout to open training camp, Darnold is locked in a battle to win the starting quarterback role for the Jets as a rookie. There is no doubt that a certain Platinum Glove-winning third baseman is pulling for him to not only get the job but also conquer the AFC East and beyond.

Colorado Rockies: Three roster changes they need to make

By Olivia Greene / Rox Pile | Aug. 7, 2018

The Colorado Rockies are playing in a highly competitive division and still have a chance at contention. With that being said the Rockies should really look over making some roster moves in order to help them to the road to contention.

Send down a catcher

The **Colorado Rockies** currently have three catchers on their active 25-man roster, which seems a bit unnecessary due to the fact that neither catcher on the bench is getting adequate playing time. With all of the hot prospects playing down in Triple-A Albuquerque, they deserve to have playing time as well. As we get closer and closer to the postseason, a decision has to be made on who will be the true starting catcher for the team. Of course, you have to have a backup catcher so the real question would be who should be sent down?

Tony Wolters has been on the big league roster since April but he hasn't really made a splash that shows he's ready to take over the reigns of being an everyday starter. He currently has played in 49 games this season with over 125 at-bats. His stats batting-wise aren't that pretty, though. He has a slashline of .159/.282/.262. Obviously, that's not what you'd like to see from someone who's looking to become an everyday player.

On the other hand, you have **Tom Murphy**. His call to the show was a bit late in some people's opinions, but nevertheless, he got called up. Murphy went on a hot streak when he was called up and was on a nice roll, but has since cooled off. In the series against the Milwaukee Brewers, Murphy struck out 7 times and had no hits the entire series. His current stats are nicer to look at than Tony Wolters, but they're not too grand. Murphy has played in 31 games with 88 at-bats this leads him to a slashline of .227/.253/.398. This is a much better compared to Wolters numbers, thus leading me to think perhaps giving Tom Murphy the back-up job and sending Tony Wolters down.

Note: The Rockies sent Murphy to Triple-A before Tuesday's game against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Coors Field.

Make Adam Ottavino the closer

Wade Davis hasn't had the best season as the Colorado Rockies' closer but **Adam Ottavino** is having a career year with the Rox. Many continue to wonder during bad stretches that Davis has why isn't Otto the closer? I go over this more in-depth in an article you can find **here**. Davis' stats aren't what you want to see for a reliever being paid \$52 million. He has a 1-4 record and a high ERA of 4.98 with 32 saves (which does lead the NL) in 46 innings.

Looking at Otto's stats for comparison is one of the reasons that the Rox should make him their closer. He's got a 4-2 record, an ERA of 1.66 in 54.1 innings, and let's not forget about those 81 strikeouts he's racked up so far this season.

Now, of course, if this were to happen who would take Otto's place as the 8th inning man that holds the opposing offense from scoring. The perfect man for the job is **Scott Oberg**. His stats, like Otto's, are very good. Oberg has a perfect record of 7-0 with a 2.73 ERA and only a 1.21 WHIP.

With all these changes, that leaves another question about who would follow before Oberg and Otto. The answer to that would be literally anyone that's in the bullpen would work. There's so many guys that Bud Black could utilize if Ottavino became the closer to still make the innings work in their favor.

Move Chad Bettis to the bullpen

Chad Bettis is coming back off the DL from a blister injury. There have been many reports that he would be placed in the bullpen, but it turns out he will be starting in tonight's game against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

While Bettis was on the DL, **Antonio Senzatela** left the bullpen and joined the rotation, all in all, he's done as well as we thought he would. In his last start, which was against the Arizona Diamondbacks, he did end up the loss, but got 6 strikeouts out of it. That is one of the consistent things we've seen in his last 3 starts. Senzatela may not go that deep into games, but he can hold off runs and get guys swinging at what he wants them to.

Bettis' last start before he hit the DL is a bit concerning which is why maybe keeping him in the bullpen would work well. He only pitched 4.2 innings and gave up 8 earned runs along with walking 5 batters. That's not something you want to see from a starter and maybe him going to the DL helped, but either way, it's something many will think about if he's on the mound as a starter.

Having Chad Bettis in the bullpen could most likely help the Colorado Rockies when the rotation isn't getting the job done early on as he could provide some length as a long reliever out of the bullpen. The Rockies rotation has been doing well since the start of July but if they start to falter, Bettis could be able to help pick up the slack.

Pirates crush Rockies to even the series

By Drew Creasman / BSN Denver | Aug. 7, 2018

DENVER – On paper, the pitching matchup on Coors Field for Tuesday night was nothing short of inspirational.

Chad Bettis facing off against Jameson Taillon in a battle of testicular cancer survivors had emotions running high before even a single pitch was thrown.

No matter how you look at it, this faceoff was a testament to the enduring nature of the human spirit.

Unfortunately for those looking for a tight contest that showcased how each could return to elite form after such an ordeal, Bettis simply did not have it in his first game back after missing a month with a finger blister.

In order to combat the possibility of a recurrence of that injury, Bettis changed the grip on his fastball. Whether it was that or just a matter of rusty mechanics, he could not find consistency of any kind on the mound against the Pittsburgh Pirates who responded to getting shut out in the first game of the series with an emphatic 10-2 win.

Taillon, on the other hand, was superb, pitching a complete game with just one blemished inning.

Bettis threw only 10 pitches in the top of the first but one of them was hammered by Starling Marte deep over the high wall in right-center field for a solo home run that gave the Pirates an early advantage.

The Rockies missed a chance to answer in the bottom of the second after a leadoff double from Nolan Arenado. Trevor Story hit a hard liner but it was right at Corey Dickerson in left. David Dahl ground out to shortstop and Ryan McMahon again hit a hard line drive but Marte was positioned perfectly to run it down and prevent the Rockies from getting on the board.

Bettis found a huge heap of trouble in the fourth beginning with a walk of Gregory Polanco and a David Freese single to left. He got Colin Moran to ground out to second, but the ball was not hit hard enough for DJ LeMahieu to attempt the double play. After walking Francisco Cervelli to load the bases, but making the force out an option at each base, Josh Harrison hit a flyball to deep enough left for a sac fly.

With Bettis one pitch away from escaping any further damage, Jordy Mercer jumped all over a first-pitch fastball and crushed it over the wall in center for a three-run shot, suddenly putting the Pirates up 5-0.

The visitors really poured it on in the fifth. It began in odd fashion when Corey Dickerson hit a chopper over Bettis on the mound that LeMahieu attempted to barehand but it skipped by him, allowing Dickerson to reach second. Marte followed with a sharp single to center and Polanco added one to right, scoring Dickerson and moving Marte to third.

Freese then hit a line drive to right that Carlos Gonzalez made a stupendous diving catch on, though the Pirates were able to easily score on another sac fly. After striking out Moran, Francisco Cervelli turned on an inside pitch and looped it just over Arenado's head at third, scoring another run and getting all the way to third.

At that, Bud Black had seen enough and turned to Jake McGee, hoping his lefty reliever could iron out some things for the future. That didn't go quite as planned when Josh Harrison unloaded on a fastball low and away to power it out of the park and the route was on at 10-0, Pirates.

Colorado finally got some runs in the sixth thanks to back-to-back-singles from Charlie Blackmon and DJ LeMahieu, Blackmon's being the 1,000th hit of his career. Both came in on a double into the right-center field gap off the bat of Carlos Gonzalez.

Blackmon is the seventh player in Rockies history with at least 1,000 base hits.

Yency Almonte pitched the final two innings for the Rockies without allowing a baserunner, striking out four.

Colorado falls to 60-53 and are 2.5 games out of first place in the NL West.

FINAL STATS:

Chad Bettis: 4.2 IP, 8 H, 9 ER, 2 BB, 3 K

Jake McGee: 1.1 IP, 1 H, 1 ER, 0 BB, 1 K

Bryan Shaw: 1 IP, 1 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 1 K

Yency Almonte: 2 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 4 K

Carlos Gonzalez: 1-for-3, 2 RBI

Charlie Blackmon: 1-for-3, 1 R

DJ LeMahieu: 1-for-3, 1 R

WHAT'S NEXT:

The Rockies will try to win the series on Wednesday afternoon. The recently acquired Chris Archer (from Tampa Bay) will face off against German Marquez. First pitch at 1:10 Mountain Time.

Rockies Notebook: Bud Black remarks on defensive analysis and Bettis' return

By Patrick Lyons / BSN Denver | Aug. 7, 2018

DENVER – Before each game at Coors Field, manager Bud Black addresses the media in the Rockies first base dugout. The focus typically pertains to the daily goings-on of Colorado, but can oftentimes touch on varied topics around the sport. Here's a taste of what some of that discussion is focused upon:

Chad Bettis has changed the grip on his fastball to in order to reduce the rubbing on the area of his persisting blister.

-Black mentioned that Bettis had been working on this during his minor league rehab starts. The repetitions have made Bettis feel comfortable with this new grip.

Bettis is starting against Pirates starter Jameson Taillon. Both men have battled back against testicular cancer and now they face off against one another tonight at Coors Field.

-“I think it's a pretty cool life story that's happening on the baseball field. It's a highlighted story in this particular game. It's cool where we can talk about this on a different level than just the game itself.”

What the catching situation like now that Murphy has been optioned to Albuquerque and only Chris Iannetta and Tony Wolters remain?

-Black said playing time will be split and not very unlike the situation at the beginning of the season.

-“We'll look at matchups. Day games after a night game. With Tony, I want his left-handed bat against Archer tomorrow.”
Iannetta said he suddenly felt really good at the plate last night.

-It was a hard-fought at bat against a real good pitcher in Joe Musgrove.

-“Those sorts of things can get a guy going. Catchers got it a little rough on the offensive side. But man, did they catch great in July.”

What does Murphy need to do before he gets back?

-“There's a number of things that need to get done on both the offensive side and defensive side.”

-Ultimately, Murphy will need to cut down on his strikeouts, in particular, his walk-to-strikeout ratio. Adjustments can be made to swing. A few improvements need to be made on the defensive side as well. He already offers a lot, but will need to work on a few things.

Coors Field double-standard: hitters get knocked for playing here and pitchers don't often get enough credit.

-Black mentioned this bias as being something for those writing about it and make such points. Part of this bias can be unfair.

-“If a pitcher is doing well in a hitter's park, that should not go unnoticed.”

Does the coaching staff use defensive metrics?

-“I do, to a certain extent. But I would like to think that after all the years we’ve been in the game – me included, our coaching staff, people who make evaluations – what we see in Spring Training, what we see in practice, what we see in games, that maybe you can’t see from television.”

-“I still think that is the best judge of defense. I’m not going to deny that some of the advanced metrics and technology come into play. We should use technology. Like a lot of information, I think there’s a blend that can be used to formulate an opinion. That’s how I use a lot of these advanced metrics and statistics and evaluations that come from outside the human eye.”

When looking at the emerging science of defensive metrics, is there anything that isn’t measured that needs to be?

-“The television or computer cannot see what pitch is being thrown and see how an infielder might instinctively know how to lean... when you know a certain pitch is coming and you know the type of pitcher that’s on the mound and his velocity, his breaking ball, and over years you know that the hitter’s going to swing a certain way – be out in front or be behind – you can get in your defensive position and gradually move a direction and that helps.”

-“The instincts that a defensive player, an infielder, has from years of playing, that a certain pitch or certain hitter is probably going to hit the ball here. So, I’m going to cheat a little bit when the ball’s in the air so my momentum and my first step is going that way. That helps you make a play.”

Do the potential roster additions in Albuquerque have you excited for September baseball?

-“We have some talent that can help us win. You’ve got to be traditional in how you make your September move, but there are some guys in the minors that can truly help us with the roster when it expands. From a speed standpoint, from a defensive standpoint, power off the bench to potentially some arms that can help us. To answer the question: yes, I’m excited.”

Dante Bichette is being celebrated at the game tonight.

-Black described a home run that was hit to centerfield on a changeup by Bichette when Black pitched with Cleveland. One of the longest home runs he’d ever given up. The ball landed in an area of Cleveland Stadium known as the Dawg Pound 500 feet away.

-After the pregame scrum, the exact game was uncovered: September 23, 1989. Cleveland won 4-3 in game one of a doubleheader. Black pitched 8.1 innings and lifted his record to 12-11 with the win. The game was saved by Doug Jones, current pitching coach of the Grand Junction Rockies.

Pirates explode for 10 runs, beat Rockies handily at Coors

By Aniello Piro / Mile High Sports | Aug. 7, 2018

The Colorado Rockies lost to the Pittsburgh Pirates Tuesday night 10-2, evening their series at 1-1.

The main story of the night was centered around each team's respective starting pitcher. Both Chad Bettis and Pirates' starter Jameson Taillon have recently dealt with bouts of testicular cancer, and in spite of it, have managed to stand strong atop a mound in the big leagues.

The two squared off Tuesday with Taillon having the edge — going a complete game — as the Pirates seized the victory against the Rockies.

Bettis started the game on a sour note as he surrendered a solo home run to Starling Marte in the first inning.

Bettis then managed to buckle down a bit on the mound but unraveled in fourth inning as the Pirates added four runs. Gregory Polanco worked a walk to begin the inning and then advanced to second base after David Freese hit a single to left field. After another walk later in the inning, Josh Harrison hit a sacrifice fly to score a run. Jordy Mercer then followed by hitting a three-run home run to center field which put Pittsburgh on-top, 5-0.

The Pirates added five more runs in the fifth inning, including three more off of Bettis, which resulted in his departure from the ballgame. Manager Bud Black opted to roll with Jake McGee, who has struggled all season — and did so Tuesday, when he immediately surrendered a two-run home run to Harrison, making the score 10-0.

Bettis finished with a line of 4.2 innings pitched, allowing nine runs on eight hits while walking two batters and striking out three.

The Rockies were able to plate two runs in the bottom of the sixth inning when Carlos Gonzalez hit a double to deep right field, scoring Charlie Blackmon and D.J. LeMahieu, who each singled earlier in the inning.

Besides the sixth inning, the Rockies were unable to generate any runs despite having 10 hits on the night.

The Rockies and Pirates will conclude their series Wednesday afternoon at Coors Field with first pitch set for 1:10 MST.

Taillon, Pirates beat Bettis, Rockies 10-2

By Associated Press / ESPN.com | Aug. 7, 2018

DENVER -- It was Jameson Taillon for Pittsburgh and Chad Bettis for Colorado on Tuesday night at Coors Field.

An intersection with special significance.

Taillon beat Bettis in a matchup of pitchers who battled testicular cancer last year, and the Pirates hit three homers in a 10-2 victory over the Rockies.

"I'm not going to sit here and say we're best friends and we talk on the phone all the time but we've both gone through something that is extremely similar and we both go through something similar starting pitching in the major leagues,"

Taillon said. "There's an understood bond there, something we'll share for life."

Taillon (9-8) allowed 10 hits in his second complete game of the season. The 26-year-old right-hander struck out three and walked one, helping the Pirates stop a three-game slide.

He became the first visiting pitcher to toss a nine-inning complete game in Denver since Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw shut out the Rockies on July 2, 2013.

"I've watched 1,300, 1,400 ballgames here, you don't see a lot of complete games," said Pittsburgh manager Clint Hurdle, who managed the Rockies over eight seasons. "He finished strong."

Taillon threw 107 pitches, 70 for strikes. He needed just 15 to get the final three outs in his second career complete game.

"You always hear closing out games is tough, weird things happen in the ninth so I told myself it's a 0-0 game, let's close out this inning," Taillon said.

Starling Marte hit a solo drive in the first and Jordy Mercer connected for a three-run shot against Bettis (5-2) with two out in the fourth. Josh Harrison capped Pittsburgh's five-run fifth with a two-run homer off Jake McGee.

Bettis allowed nine runs and eight hits over 4 2/3 innings in his first start after missing five weeks with a blister on his right middle finger.

"The problem was those two walks in the fourth and the home run by Mercer," Bettis said. "It really came down to those three at-bats where I didn't really execute the pitches like I wanted to."

Taillon was diagnosed with cancer last year and missed six weeks after surgery last May.

Bettis was diagnosed in November 2016. He was cleared to report to spring training before tests revealed he had cancer in his lymph nodes and he underwent treatment. He made his season debut on Aug. 14 and started nine games last year.

Colorado made it 10-2 on Carlos Gonzalez's two-run double with one out in the sixth.

REMEMBERING DON

Tuesday marked the one-year anniversary of the death of former Rockies manager Don Baylor. Baylor was Colorado's first manager and held that position for six seasons. He gave Hurdle his first job on a major league staff.

"I'm forever grateful," Hurdle said. "There's times during the season or other times I'll remember things he did or things he said that resonate, that have meaning. There's still enough people within the game that I'll see from time to time that we were connected. His spirit lives."

ARRIVAL

Shortstop Adeiny Hechavarria joined the Pirates in time for Tuesday's win. His plane landed at Denver International Airport at around 5 p.m. local time and made it to Coors Field 25 minutes before the first pitch.

He was acquired Monday in a trade with Tampa Bay.

CENTURY MARK

Rockies star Charlie Blackmon singled in the sixth inning for his 1,000th career hit. He received a short standing ovation from the crowd.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Pirates: INF Sean Rodriguez was placed on the 10-day DL -- retroactive to Monday -- with a strain to the left abdomen.

UP NEXT

Pittsburgh right-hander Chris Archer (3-5, 4.40 ERA) will make his second start since he was acquired in a trade with the Rays. He will face Rockies right-hander German Marquez (9-8, 4.70 ERA) in the series finale on Wednesday.