



MEDIA CLIPS – June 12, 2018

Arenado leads NL third basemen in ASG voting

Blackmon, Story also crack top five in first All-Star ballot update

Anne Rogers / MLB.com | June 11, 2018

Rockies third baseman Nolan Arenado leads the way among National League third basemen in the first 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot update, released Monday. Outfielder Charlie Blackmon and shortstop Trevor Story also made appearances among the leaders their positions.

Arenado is edging out Cubs' Kris Bryant in votes and offensive numbers. Arenado has 527,683 votes to Bryant's 305,062, and the Rockies' star is slashing .314/.407/.549 compared to Bryant's .293/.402/.500 marks. The other top third basemen in the NL All-Star race are the Braves' Johan Camargo (152,260), Reds' Eugenio Suarez (87,659) and Dodgers' Justin Turner (87,387).

Blackmon is fourth in outfield votes at 309,099, roughly 42,000 votes away from the Dodgers' Matt Kemp (351,780) in third place.

Blackmon is slashing .288/.369/.513 with 13 home runs this year, compared to Kemp's .338/.368/.564 line with 10 home runs. The top two outfield leaders are the Nationals' Bryce Harper (498,189) and the Braves' Nick Markakis (494,206).

Story, coming off a hot series with the Diamondbacks, is fifth in shortstop voting behind the Giants' Brandon Crawford (466,021), Braves' Dansby Swanson (225,182), Cubs' Addison Russell (210,764) and Nationals' Trea Turner (158,252).

Story went 8-for-12 with three home runs against the Diamondbacks last weekend. This season, he's slashing .259/.337/.519.

Fans may cast votes for starters at MLB.com and all 30 club sites -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online using the 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Ballot until Thursday, July 5, at 9:59 p.m. MT. On smartphones and tablets, fans can also access the ballot via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps. Each fan can vote up to five times in any 24-hour period, for a maximum of 35 ballots cast.

Following the announcement of this year's All-Star starters, reserves and pitchers, fans should return to MLB.com and cast their 2018 Camping World MLB All-Star Final Vote for the final player on each league's roster. Then on Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans may visit MLB.com to submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 MLB All-Star Game MVP Vote.

The 89th Midsummer Classic, at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage. For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, please visit AllStarGame.com and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

TA30: It's a tight race at the top of the MLB power rankings — and even tighter at the bottom

Levi Weaver / TheAthletic.com | Jun 11, 2018

Welcome back to TA30. I'm your host, Levi Weaver, and I'll be walking you through the majestic tapestry of Major League Baseball as it stands on June 11, 2018. I'll start with the good stuff, a lavish feast of the finest that baseball has to offer.

Then I'll drone on a bit in the middle, once the cracks start to show, in hopes that you get bored before we get to the dark underbelly of the 2018 season, where a two-legged cat is fighting a sentient bucket of painkillers for the last morsel of week-old snakeskin jerky. Here we go!

1. Boston Red Sox (last week: 1)

44-22, Run Differential: +95

They're only 5-5 in their last 10 games, but the Red Sox maintain their death grip on the No. 1 spot in the rankings, where they have resided for seven out of the eight weeks this column has existed. J.D. Martinez is cruising, and oh by the way:

Terrifying eidolon Chris Sale has added triple-digit heat to his arsenal.

2. New York Yankees (last week: 3)

42-19, Run Differential: +89

They're 8-2 in their last 10 games, and back atop the AL East by a half-game, but perhaps that is tempered by the fact that they were beating up on the hapless Mets, and the Happ-ful [Ed. note: ... sorry] Blue Jays. Masahiro Tanaka is the latest anecdotal evidence that the NL needs to adopt the DH rule, and there are other aches and pains, but long-term, the Yankees are in great shape.

3. Houston Astros (last week: 2)

42-25, Run Differential: +127

The rotation is dominant, despite Dallas Keuchel's recent speed bumps. The bullpen is still an enigma, but so long as the Astros are willing to part with a few prospects, there are always back-end relievers available at the deadline. Meanwhile, the Astros made draft week a little more sentimental by drafting another Bregman and another Correa.

4. Chicago Cubs (last week: T-4)

37-25, Run Differential: +89

The Cubs have been on a roll, winning eight of their last 10. This is in spite of not getting a heck of a lot of production from their big free-agent acquisition Yu Darvish, who might not be back until the All-Star break. They stick at the No. 4 spot in the rankings, even though they have spent a total of three days in (or tied for) first place in the NL Central.

5. Milwaukee Brewers (last week: 7)

39-26, Run Differential: +42

You know who has spent a lot of time in first place in the NL Central? These guys. They jump from No. 7 to No. 5 this week, and frankly, they should be higher, if for no other reason than this excellent video:

On the one hand, the Braves dropped two spots this week after two losing series against the Padres and Dodgers. On the other, they're still ranked ahead of the Nationals, with whom they are tied for first place in the NL East. The kids are getting the attention, but Freddie Freeman is a legit early favorite for NL MVP.

7. Seattle Mariners (last week: 8)

41-24, Run Differential: +20

The Mariners are tied for first in the AL West with the Astros, despite trailing the Astros 127-20 in the run differential column; Robinson Canó being on the shelf with an injury/suspension; and an entire franchise history that suggests not getting one's hopes up. If they pull off the improbable, it might be the most fun story of 2018.

8. Washington Nationals (last week: 6)

36-27, Run Differential: +53

The Capitals finally broke the D.C. curse. Will the Nats be able to follow suit? They're back in (a tie for) first place in the NL East, but Stephen Strasburg is on the DL with shoulder inflammation. Brandon Kintzler is there too, but Adam Eaton (finally) isn't, and Daniel Murphy might not be there for much longer. The talent is there in D.C., but health is going to be the big question.

9. Cleveland Indians (last week: 9)

34-29, Run Differential: +32

So, Corey Kluber has just decided to stop walking hitters. No, really. He hasn't walked anyone since May 8, a stretch that spans 35 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings.

T-10. Arizona Diamondbacks (last week: 13)

35-29, Run Differential: +36

The Diamondbacks seem to have plugged the hole in the ship's floor. They're back in first place in the NL West, Zack Godley seems to have found his best self, and the front office got a head start on the trade deadline by bringing in Jon Jay.

T-10. Los Angeles Angels (last week: 11)

37-29, Run Differential: +36

Well, crap.

12. St. Louis Cardinals (last week: 12)

35-28, Run Differential: +19

In lieu of a Cardinals blurb this week, I'll just ask you to go read Bernie Miklasz's beautiful tribute to Red Schoendienst, who passed away this week at the age of 95.

13. Los Angeles Dodgers (last week: 14)

33-32, Run Differential: +48

Banished a few weeks ago all the way down to No. 20 in the standings, the Dodgers have been slowly working their way back into the good graces of The Athletic's baseball writing staff. In completely unrelated news, Ross Stripling is literally their only fully healthy starting pitcher, so perhaps the Dodgers will kick off the trade season soon.

14. Philadelphia Phillies (last week: 10)

33-30, Run Differential: +12

Man, the Phillies are a weird team. They strike out an awful lot, but they're still only three games out of first place in the NL East, and the postseason isn't a pipe dream. Here's a fun debate: Who wins a championship first, the Sixers or the Phillies? Mark me down for the Sixers.

15. Oakland Athletics (last week: 15)

34-32, Run Differential: +10

I'm not sure "draft a quarterback" was the expected move this week, but you do you, Billy Beane. Here's a weird stat: the A's—who play on Rickey Henderson Field—are on pace to steal just 30 bases this season.

16. Colorado Rockies (last week: 16)

32-33, Run Differential: -42

The Rockies were tied for first place in the NL West as recently as June 6. They are now in fourth place, ahead of only the Padres. The bats are back, but now the pitching is struggling. Fortunately, the division is tightly packed; they're only 3.5 games back.

17. San Francisco Giants (last week: 21)

33-32, Run Differential: -27

Madison Bumgarner is back, which is good news for baseball but generally bad news for its hitters. The Giants are 8-2 in their last 10 games, and have crept back into a tie with the Dodgers for second place in the division. The voters are still keeping them in the bottom half of the league for now, but they do jump four spots. Also, this Julian McWilliams piece is worth your time.

18. Detroit Tigers (last week: 19)

31-36, Run Differential: -31

The Tigers finally have a lock-down reliever in Joe Jiménez. That's excellent news; once they nab their lock-down catcher, first baseman, second baseman, shortstop, third baseman (Jeimer Candelario is fine), right fielder, center fielder, left fielder, five lock-down starters, and a handful of other lock-down relievers, life is going to be reeeeeeal nice in Detroit.

We're getting close to the cat-vs.-painkillers part, by the way. If you're wanting to avoid that, here's where you pull the ripcord.

19. Pittsburgh Pirates (last week: 17)

32-33, Run Differential: +7

The Pirates have a better record than a few of the teams ranked ahead of them, but the early-season pixie dust seems to have worn off, and things are decidedly not bangarang in Pittsburgh. Perhaps you're thinking to yourself: "Did he just use a movie reference that is older than Jamison Taillon?" Yes. I did, and I'm not sorry. It's a classic and I will stan for "Hook" until I die.

20. Minnesota Twins (last week: 23)

28-34, Run Differential: -11

Good: José Berrios.

Bad: Well, it's a lot.

21. Tampa Bay Rays (last week: 18)

29-35, Run Differential: -14

It's time to let the kids play. Speaking of kids, and uh... specifically the creation thereof, and the, ummm— look, I'm not sure how to say this, but Carlos Gómez and Jake Bauers probably both needed ice packs after this.

22. Toronto Blue Jays (last week: 22)

30-35, Run Differential: -19

They didn't call up Vlad Guerrero Jr. and now he's injured. Nobody is happy about this, but Canada has taken more than enough grief from this side of the border this week, so we will not pile on.

23. San Diego Padres (last week: 24)

31-36, Run Differential: -46

LOOK OUT RED SOX, the Padres have moved up a spot this week. Take a gander at our Padres coverage, and even if you didn't know the team's record, the number of articles about the draft and prospects would give you a pretty good clue how things are going. Read up: 2021 will be here before you know it.

24. New York Mets (last week: 20)

28-34, Run Differential: -35

The Mets were ranked fifth the first week we did these rankings. They've been on a bender ever since; their beard is in that weird in-between stage, and their collar is missing a button. That's not Pepsi in the paper bag they're wielding as they threaten a bodega operator, and what is that in their jacket pocke— oh no, it's the two-legged cat! Great. Here we go.

Here's the thing, though: their starting pitching has been great. They released Adrián González, and Jose Reyes might not be far behind.

25. Texas Rangers (last week: 25)

27-41, Run Differential: -70

The Rangers embarrassed the visiting Houston Astros this week... in a cow-milking contest. The Astros won all four baseball games, though.

26. Chicago White Sox (last week: 30)

22-41, Run Differential: -78

Reynaldo López is fun. So is Carlos Rodón. So are Yoán Moncáda, Luis Basabe, and Daniel Palka. Add it up, and what do you get? Eh? Eh?

...A really, really bad baseball team, honestly. But again, 2021 is creepin' up on us.

27. Cincinnati Reds (last week: 26)

23-43, Run Differential: -75

The Reds don't even win in commercials.

28. Miami Marlins (last week: 29)

23-42, Run Differential: -108

The Marlins finally did something right. Unfortunately, it was temporary.

29. Kansas City Royals (last week: 27)

22-44, Run Differential: -110

The Royals have never been ranked higher than 26th in this poll, but have somehow thus far avoided spending even one week in the No. 30 Slot of Shame. Perhaps if they follow through on their current pace to allow more home runs than any pitching staff in AL history, they'll finally get there.

30. Baltimore Orioles (last week: 28)

19-45, Run Differential: -108

The Orioles have precisely one more win than Manny Machado has home runs. The Orioles have exactly as many losses as they have strikeouts from Alex Cobb and Chris Tillman, combined. That's either a lot of losses, or not very many strikeouts— [puts finger to ear] I'm sorry, I'm being told that it's both; both things are true.

Rockies-Phillies: Five factors in the series

Trevor Rich / MileHighSports.com | June 11, 2018

June has not been kind to the Colorado Rockies, who after being swept by the Arizona Diamondbacks at home, have now lost seven of its last nine games in total and seven consecutive games at Coors Field. Currently sitting at 32-33, the Rockies have dropped to fourth place in the NL West and own a home record of 11-19.

Now tasked with a six-game road trip, beginning in Philadelphia, PA. and ending in Arlington, TX., the Rockies will look to back to its winning ways. Otherwise what started as a promising season may quickly turn ugly for a Colorado club that spent big bucks to revamp its bullpen in the offseason.

Here are five factors for Rockies fans to keep an eye on in the upcoming series with the Phillies.

The Bullpen:

The Rockies' bullpen owned an ERA of 6.92 in three games against the Diamondbacks. Colorado's bullpen has struggled for for the majority of the season and a big reason why is that some of the biggest free agent acquisitions have not lived up to the bill.

Bryan Shaw has been an absolute disaster for the Rockies, owning a record of 2-5. Shaw's struggles have been about the only consistent thing about this bullpen, as the veteran has an ERA of 7.03. The Rockies gave Shaw a three-year, \$23 million contract with the expectation that he would be their primary setup man. The Rockies have not gotten what they paid for.

Jake McGee (1-2) has also been underwhelming for Colorado. The veteran has an ERA of 4.70 and has consistently struggled to locate his fastball all season. After being re-signed to a three-year, \$27 million extension, McGee also has not been able to prove his worth.

If Colorado wants to get back on track, McGee and Shaw need to be able to figure it out. The Rockies cannot rely solely on Adam Ottavino and Wade Davis to close out ballgames, so if they are going to have any chance at making a playoff run, two of their highest paid relievers need to be able to contribute.

Bud Black

Manager Bud Black has been highly criticized of late for his decisions with the lineup and for how he has managed the arms in the bullpen and starting rotation. His decision to use Davis in the ninth, costed the Rockies a sweep over the Reds and the veteran manager made a variety of peculiar decisions in the most recent series against the D-Backs.

Black should not be blamed for this mess the Rockies are currently in, but losing always causes a panic in the stands. With Ian Desmond, Shaw, and McGee not playing anywhere close to preseason expectations, Black has been left in a bad situation. When three of the highest paid players on the team are not producing, there is no magic decision Black could make to fix the problem.

The Rockies will not have much to work with in the bullpen in this series with the Phillies, so it will be interesting to see how the veteran manager plays the situation.

Charlie Blackmon

Charlie Blackmon was an absolute superstar for the Rockies last season, but the veteran outfielder has struggled to produce at the same level in 2018. He has still been a major part of Colorado's offense, but has not quite hit his stride.

It is not shocking that Blackmon is not producing at the same level after hitting .331 with 37 home runs and 104 RBI last year. Pitchers are being extremely cautious with the Rockies center fielder and it has caused his numbers to dip.

Blackmon is currently hitting .288 with 13 home runs and 31 RBI. His numbers are very respectable, but Colorado could really benefit if their veteran center fielder were to heat up.

A career .304 hitter, Blackmon's cerebral approach at the plate has paid off during his time with the Rockies. This six-game road trip provides a perfect opportunity for Blackmon to get things rolling. 11 of Blackmon's 13 home runs has come on the road this season and the veteran is slugging .573 away from home.

Jon Gray

Jon Gray will take the hump for the Rockies in the series opener. The start will be his 14th of the season and Bud Black will certainly be hoping the Rockies young ace will figure it out. Gray (6-6) has racked up the strikeouts this season, currently leading the club in K's but inconsistencies with his control has been a huge issue throughout the season.

Gray has an ERA of 5.66 and a WHIP of 1.514, which is not awful but definitely not good enough for the No. 1 man in the rotation and is relatively disappointing, considering Gray is coming off of a phenomenal 2017 season in which he finished the year 10-4 with an ERA of 3.67.

Road success

Colorado has been one of the best teams in baseball on the road this season and that is why they sit only 3.5 games back of first place in the division. The Rockies are seven games above .500 on the road this season, which is good enough for second best in the NL.

The Rockies will need another successful road trip this week if they want to stay alive in the playoff race. Colorado's inability to win games at home has been one of the more shocking details of the season, but the Rockies are remarkably still in contention.

If Colorado can go 4-2 on this road trip, the Rockies would return home with a record of 36-5 before beginning a seven-game home stand with the Mets and Marlins.

Rockies vs Phillies: Projected starters

Tues.: Jon Gray (6-6) vs. Aaron Nola (7-2). 5:05 p.m. MT.

Wed.: Tyler Anderson (3-1) vs. Nick Pivetta (4-5). 5:05 p.m. MT.

Thur: German Marquez (4-6) vs. Vince Velasquez (4-7). 11:05 a.m. MT.

Rockies Home-Grown Rotation Handling MLB Challenge

Tracy Ringolsby / InsidetheSeams.com | June 11, 2018

After a quarter of a century of experimentation, the Rockies are comfortable with the fact that they are better off with home-grown pitchers in the than trying to lure established veterans.

The players who come up through the system don't have a baseball card with established numbers that can get blurred by the challenges of Coors Field.

The players who come up through the system want to prove they aren't intimidated.

And this year, they have turned to the home-grown approach more than ever. The Rockies, who along with the Astros are the only MLB teams to have used only four starting pitchers so far this year, have four home-grown members of their rotation. And the fifth, German Marquez, pitched in the minor-league system initially after being acquired from Tampa Bay along with left-handed reliever Jake McGee in the Corey Dickerson trade.

The Rockies go into a three-game series at Philadelphia Tuesday night with a .535 winning percentage for their rotation, which would be the third best in franchise history. The Rockies rotation has had a winning record in only five of the franchise's first 25 seasons, including all four seasons in which they have gone to the post-season.

A look at this year's rotation:

Kyle Freeland, 1st round draft choice, eighth player selected overall, 2014. Denver native. Attended Thomas Jefferson High School and University of Evansville. Career ERA at Coors Field 3.52, lowest of any pitcher with at least 10 starts.

Tyler Anderson, 1st round draft choice 2011. Grew up in Las Vegas. Attended University of Oregon, which restarted college baseball Anderson's freshman year. Career ERA at Coors Field 3.73, third lowest of any pitcher with at least 10 starts, just behind Ubaldo Jimenez (3.67).

Jon Gray, 1st round draft choice 2013, third player taken overall. Grew up in Shawnee, Okla., and attended University of Oklahoma. Career ERA 4.88 at Coors Field, 15th lowest pitchers at least 10 starts. Career record 15-7, .682 winning percentage at Coors Field, sixth best franchise history at least 10 starts.

Chad Bettis, 2nd round draft choice 2010. In his return from testicular cancer, Bettis has no decision in six starts at Coors Field this year, but in his career as a starter he is 13-7 at Coors Field and the Rockies are 25-14 in games he has started.

German Marquis, acquired from Tampa Bay along with Jake McGee, in the Corey Dickerson deal in January of 2016.

Split the 2016 season between Hartford (21 starts), Albuquerque (five starts) and the Rockies (three starts, three relief appearances). Stepped into rotation last year and was 11-7 with a 4.39 ERA in 29 starts.

Team	Games	Homegrown	% Starts	Rotation	Pct.
		Starter	by Homegrown	W-L	
Rockies	65	53	81.5	23-20	0.535
Angels	66	44	66.7	25-20	0.556
Dodgers	65	43	66.2	19-17	0.528
Reds	66	38	57.6	14-33	0.298
Giants	65	37	56.9	21-25	0.457
Cardinals	63	35	55.6	24-17	0.585
Orioles	64	35	54.7	14-35	0.286
Royals	66	36	54.5	12-31	0.279
Yankees	61	33	54.1	25-12	0.676
Twins	62	33	53.2	18-19	0.486
Mets	62	33	53.2	15-16	0.484
Rays	64	32	50	16-19	0.457
Marlins	65	31	47.7	12-28	0.3
Pirates	65	31	47.7	20-22	0.476
Mariners	65	30	46.2	26-14	0.65
Astros	67	27	40.3	32-15	0.681

Team	Games	Homegrown	% Starts	Rotation	Pct.
Blue Jays	65	20	30.8	17-27	0.386
Padres	67	18	26.9	18-25	0.419
Phillies	63	14	25.6	23-22	0.511
White Sox	63	16	25.4	13-28	0.317
Nationals	63	16	25.4	27-17	0.614
Braves	65	16	24.6	25-16	0.61
Brewers	65	16	24.6	22-19	0.537
A`s	66	14	21.2	20-25	0.444
Indians	63	10	15.9	29-15	0.659
Rangers	68	6	8.9	14-30	0.318
Red Sox	66	4	6.5	32-16	0.667
Tigers	67	3	4.5	18-20	0.474
Cubs	62	1	1.6	23-19	0.548
Diamondbacks	64	0	0	24-17	0.585

Lowest ERA Coors Field

(Minimum 20 Starts)

Player	W	L	ERA
Kyle Freeland	9	10	3.52
Ubaldo Jimenez	30	19	3.67
Tyler Anderson	9	6	3.73
Jhoulys Chacin	23	23	4.21
Jorge De La Rosa	53	20	4.31
Byung-hyun Kim	10	12	4.56

Player	W	L	ERA
Aaron Cook	36	32	4.65
Joe Kennedy	9	2	4.72
Jon Gray	15	7	4.88
Jeff Francis	34	29	4.92
Jason Hammel	13	14	4.95
Denny Stark	9	4	5.07
Tyler Chatwood	17	20	5.17
German Marquez	8	7	5.18
Jason Jennings	31	22	5.19
Juan Nicasio	13	9	5.24
Armando Reynoso	8	7	5.36
Shawn Chacon	16	19	5.55
Chad Bettis	14	8	5.58
John Thomson	15	17	5.71

Kyle Freeland

Total	W	L	IP	ERA
Total	17	17	234.1	3.96
Home	9	10	117.2	3.52
Away	8	7	116.2	4.4

Tyler Anderson

Total	W	L	IP	ERA
Total	14	13	267.2	4.27
Home	9	6	147.1	3.73

Total	W	L	IP	ERA
Away	5	7	120.1	4.94

Jon Gray

Total	W	L	IP	ERA
Total	6	6	70	5.66
Home	3	3	37.2	6.45
Away	3	3	32.1	4.73

Chad Bettis

Total	W	L	IP	ERA
Total	29	24	492.1	4.92
Home	14	8	242	5.58
Away	15	16	250.1	4.28

German Marquez

Vasto, Howard Latest additions to Rockies Bullpen

Tracy Ringolsby / InsidetheSeams.com | June 11, 2018

Left-handed pitchers Jerry Vasto and Sam Howard, called up by the Rockies from Triple-A Albuquerque during the weekend, made their MLB debuts on Sunday, the first time the Rockies have had two rookie pitchers debut in the same game.

Howard worked the ninth inning of the Rockies 8-3 loss to Arizona, and allowed one hit. Vasto retired two batters in the seventh, giving up three runs on three hits and a walk. He also struck out one.

Their call-ups were a part of a weekend of roster juggling. Jairo Diaz was designated for assignment to make room for Vasto on the Rockies' 40-man roster.

Howard joined the Rockies on Saturday, filling in for Harrison Musgrave, who is on a bereavement leave and expected to rejoin the team on Wednesday.

Vasto was called up Sunday when Scott Oberg went on the disabled list with a back strain, suffered during a workout in the weight room. Vasto was 2-0 with a 1.71 ERA as a reliever at Albuquerque.

Oberg, 28, has gone 1-0 with a 4.08 ERA (17.2 IP, 8 ER), six walks and 13 strikeouts in 16 appearances in two stints with the Rockies this season. He was recalled from Albuquerque two weeks ago, and did not allow an earned run in six appearances before suffering the injury.

Adam Ottavino appeared a step closer to coming off the disabled list. After a bullpen session on Saturday, Ottavino had no residual soreness Sunday. He will throw off a mound again Tuesday in Philadelphia -- possibly to hitters -- after which his status will be re-evaluated. He could be sent on a short rehab assignment or possibly activated to the big-league roster if all goes well.

Carlos Gonzalez missed the Saturday and Sunday games, which initially was announced as a back spasm. On Sunday, the Rockies said Gonzalez felt a twinge in his rib cage Friday night, and was treated with a chiropractic adjustment.

Díaz, 27, has made four relief appearances with Triple-A Albuquerque this season, allowing four earned runs across 3.2 innings pitched (9.82 ERA). He has been on the disabled list since April 19. Díaz allowed five runs in five innings of four appearances with the Rockies in 2017. He missed the 2016 season after undergoing Tommy John surgery.

He also appeared in the big leagues with the Angels in 2014, and the Rockies in 2015.

Arenado No. 1 Third Baseman in Early All-Star Voting

Tracy Ringolsby / InsidetheSeams.com | June 11, 2018

Nolan Arenado has been a favorite of baseball management since he arrived in the big leagues in 2013. And the recognition continues to build.

Arenado, who has won five Gold Gloves in five big-league seasons and Silver Slugger Awards each of the last three seasons, is in line for a fourth consecutive selection to the NL All-Star team.

In the early fan voting, he is a strong leader at third base to be elected to the starting lineup for a second year in a row.

Arenado has 527,683 votes in the results announced on Monday, more than 200,000 voters ahead of second-place Kris Bryant of the Cubs.

Arenado's vote total is second to only Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman, who has 633,342 votes, more than double Cubs second baseman Anthony Rizzo, who is in second with 248,275 votes.

Arenado is the only Rockies player leading voting at his position. Only two other Rockies are among top vote getters. Shortstop Trevor Story is fifth in the voting at his position, and Charlie Blackmon is fourth among outfielders. The top three outfielder vote-getters earn starting positions in the All-Star Game, which is scheduled at Nationals Park July 17.

All-Star Balloting Program is being conducted exclusively online and via mobile devices at MLB.com, all 30 Club web sites and the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps. Fans can submit 35 ballots, including a maximum of five ballots within a 24-hour period.

Leading Vote-Getters

Pos	Player	Club	Votes			
1B						
1	Freddie Freeman	Braves	633,342			

Pos	Player	Club	Votes		
2	Anthony Rizzo	Cubs	248,275		
3	Brandon Belt	Giants	162,750		
4	Cody Bellinger	Dodgers	113,392		
5	Joey Votto	Reds	83,272		
2B					
1	Ozzie Albies	Braves	398,816		
2	Javier Báez	Cubs	360,307		
3	Scooter Gennett	Reds	309,512		
4	Asdrúbal Cabrera	Mets	97,243		
5	Joe Panik	Giants	62,325		
3B					
1	Nolan Arenado	Rockies	527,683		
2	Kris Bryant	Cubs	305,062		
3	Johan Camargo	Braves	152,260		
4	Eugenio Suárez	Reds	87,659		
5	Justin Turner	Dodgers	87,387		
SS					
1	Brandon Crawford	Giants	466,021		
2	Dansby Swanson	Braves	225,182		
3	Addison Russell	Cubs	210,764		
4	Trea Turner	Nationals	158,252		
5	Trevor Story	Rockies	143,603		

Pos	Player	Club	Votes			
C						
1	Buster Posey	Giants	281,331			
2	Willson Contreras	Cubs	259,427			
3	Kurt Suzuki	Braves	223,108			
4	Francisco Cervelli	Pirates	168,832			
5	Yadier Molina	Cardinals	152,336			
OF						
1	Bryce Harper	Nationals	498,189			
2	Nick Markakis	Braves	494,206			
3	Matt Kemp	Dodgers	351,780			
4	Charlie Blackmon	Rockies	309,099			
5	Ronald Acuña Jr.	Braves	277,077			
6	Ender Inciarte	Braves	225,225			
7	Kyle Schwarber	Cubs	203,299			
8	Ben Zobrist	Cubs	196,837			
9	Odúbel Herrera	Phillies	189,234			
10	Jason Heyward	Cubs	175,583			
11	Christian Yelich	Brewers	163,575			
12	Corey Dickerson	Pirates	150,239			
13	A.J. Pollock	D-backs	110,055			
14	Matt Adams	Nationals	106,317			
15	Lorenzo Cain	Brewers	104,948			

Colorado Rockies: DJ LeMahieu seeing power surge in contract year

Luke Mullins / RoxPile.com | June 12, 2018

There has been a lot of negative news swirling around the Colorado Rockies the past couple weeks. For a moment, let's take a break from that and look at one of the positives to this point in the season.

Second baseman DJ LeMahieu is in the final year of his contract and, while there is plenty of uncertainty surrounding whether or not he will return to the Rockies in 2019, he is certainly making a strong case for general manager Jeff Bridich to bring him back.

A former batting champ, LeMahieu is used to hitting for a good average and he is currently clipping a solid .285. But what stands out about DJ's 2018 campaign is his sudden power surge. On their face, six home runs and 20 RBI might not look like much, but LeMahieu has never hit more than 11 home runs in a season. Last year, he hit 8. Unless something unforeseen happens, LeMahieu is well on his way to eclipse those marks.

What makes the Gold Glover's 2018 power numbers so stunning is the decent chunk of time he has missed on the DL. LeMahieu has played in only 41 games, roughly a quarter of a full season. If you take that into account and transfer his current numbers into a 162-game season, they become very intriguing.

Had he not missed so much time, LeMahieu would be on pace to hit about 24 home runs and drive in around 80 RBI. Both of those would be career-highs.

Those numbers should carry even more weight considering DJ has spent most of the year hitting leadoff. Anywhere near 80 RBI from the top spot in the order is ridiculous.

Recently, I addressed whether or not Trevor Story could wind up at his first All-Star Game this summer. Since then, Story has had a couple of big games to boost his bid to be the NL's starting shortstop. His average has climbed to just a tick below .260, his 14 home runs are tied for third in the NL and his 47 RBI are tied for second, just one RBI back from first. Both the 14 home runs and 47 RBI lead NL shortstops by a mile.

Story has put up an all-star first half, and third baseman Nolan Arenado is a perennial All-Star ... but does LeMahieu's power surge merit his third career all-star game selection? Could the Rockies potentially end up sending three of their four infielders to D.C. for the summer classic?

LeMahieu's numbers are good, but he certainly has some tough competition. Cincinnati's Scooter Gennett, Atlanta's Ozzie Albies, and Chicago's Javier Baez have put up stellar numbers thus far and all three deserve to be All-Stars.

As unbelievable as it might sound, Gennett could potentially wind up in a fight for a triple crown by the time the season is over. Right now, he is hitting .340 with 12 home runs and 47 RBI.

In case you had begun to think there was a new influx of second basemen named "Scooter Gennett," this is in fact the same Scooter Gennett the Milwaukee Brewers designated for assignment a year ago.

In Atlanta, Albies' 15 homers and 36 RBI have been a big part of his team's unexpectedly good first half. Baez has also had a surprising start to 2018 with 14 home runs and 46 RBI. The biggest problem for both Albies and Baez is that they are hitting in the .250s.

If he had played enough games to qualify, DJ's batting average would be third among NL second basemen.

In the end, LeMahieu's injury-plagued first half is going to hurt his All-Star chances this summer, but he is still one of the best second basemen in the NL. While he is a great hitter, the thing that is always going to make LeMahieu stand out from the crowd is his defense.

Last season, he led NL second basemen in fielding percentage. Currently, his .994 fielding percentage in 2018 is well ahead of Gennett, Albies, and Baez.

Chances are, while fans may be clamoring about the All-Star Game, it is probably the farthest thing from DJ's mind. He is undoubtedly focussed on turning his team's recent struggles around. But if there was one thing that could potentially threaten to distract from the game, it would be his impending free agency this offseason.

Colorado Rockies: The panic button needs to be pressed!

Aaron Hurt / RoxPile.com | June 11, 2018

If Colorado Rockies fans haven't done so already, that big bright red button labeled "Panic" needs to be pressed.

It's been 51 games and a day less than 2 months but for the first time since April 11, the Colorado Rockies' record has dipped below .500. The next day the Rockies would go on to defeat the Washington Nationals 5-1 to even their record to 7-7.

Now on June 10th, the Rockies have lost 7 straight at Coors Field and 13 of their last 20 games overall with very little positives to cling on to for hope. They are now in 4th place in the NL West and 3.5 games back of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The prime culprit of the Rockies' struggles has been the bullpen. The bullpen has become a wasteland of pitchers who are highly overpaid and can't get anyone out. So much for the \$106 million the organization shelled out to 3 arms to create this so-called "super bullpen." The even tougher reality is that the return of a healthy Adam Ottavino isn't automatically going to fix this mess.

So who in the bullpen does Bud Black actually has faith in? Of the guys on the active roster, only one player who has more than 3 appearances has an ERA below 3.50. And that player, Wade Davis, hasn't been all sunshine and rainbows as of late. His last four appearances, he has a 10.80 ERA with a loss and a blown saves.

The stat that shows how much the pitching has let the Rockies down is that they have lost 19 games in which they have had the lead this season (2nd most in the NL). Not that this all the bullpens fault but its a good indicator of what has wrong with this team.

To make things worse, a Wild Card spot is probably not coming out the NL West. With the three team race in the Central and two team battle in the East, the Rockies will have to win the division in order to make the playoffs. If approximately 90 wins is going to win the West, the Rockies will need to win 58 of the final 97 games (.598 winning percentage). That's a tall task for a team that has gone 11-19 at home.

If there is any silver lining in this it's that the team that just swept the Rockies, the Diamondbacks, went through a stretch in May where they lost 15 out of 17 games. Now they have won 9 of 12 and have taken 2.5 game lead in the West.

The "Panic Button" has been pushed. Its time for the Rockies to rise to the occasion or continue to crumble into the abyss.

What's wrong with Bryan Shaw?

"Middle-middle for a pitcher is usually bad-bad."

Adam Peterson / PurpleRow.com | June 12, 2018

At the beginning of 2016, Bryan Shaw was pitching for the eventual American League Champion Cleveland Indians. Through his first four outings he gave up nine runs over 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings, which amounted to a 24.30 ERA. In his remaining 63 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings, Shaw gave up 17 runs total for a 2.13 ERA. His season total was a 3.24 ERA in 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. The point: reliever seasons are weird and fickle and can be ruined by just a small stretch of bad games.

Fast forward to 2018 and Bryan Shaw has gone from being one of the prized free-agent members of the new Rockies Super Bullpen to the pitcher Rockies fans least want to see jogging in from the bullpen in a close game. Before Sunday's game, Rockies manager Bud Black said "At no other point in his career has he had to go through this for this extent of time."

Bryan Shaw, 2018

Spilt	G	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR	ERA	BABIP	K/9	LOB%
Season	35	32	44	30	25	16	31	7	7.03	0.385	8.7	51.0%
Through May 18	25	22.1	21	11	11	11	26	3	4.43	0.333	10.5	75.5%
Since May 19	10	9.2	23	19	14	5	5	4	13.03	0.463	4.7	40.2%

Through June 10, 2018 *FanGraphs*

Through the season's first quarter, Shaw was more or less what the Rockies signed him to be. He was allowing a few more base runners than he had in previous years, but the results were there. Unfortunately, the last 10 games have been particularly painful.

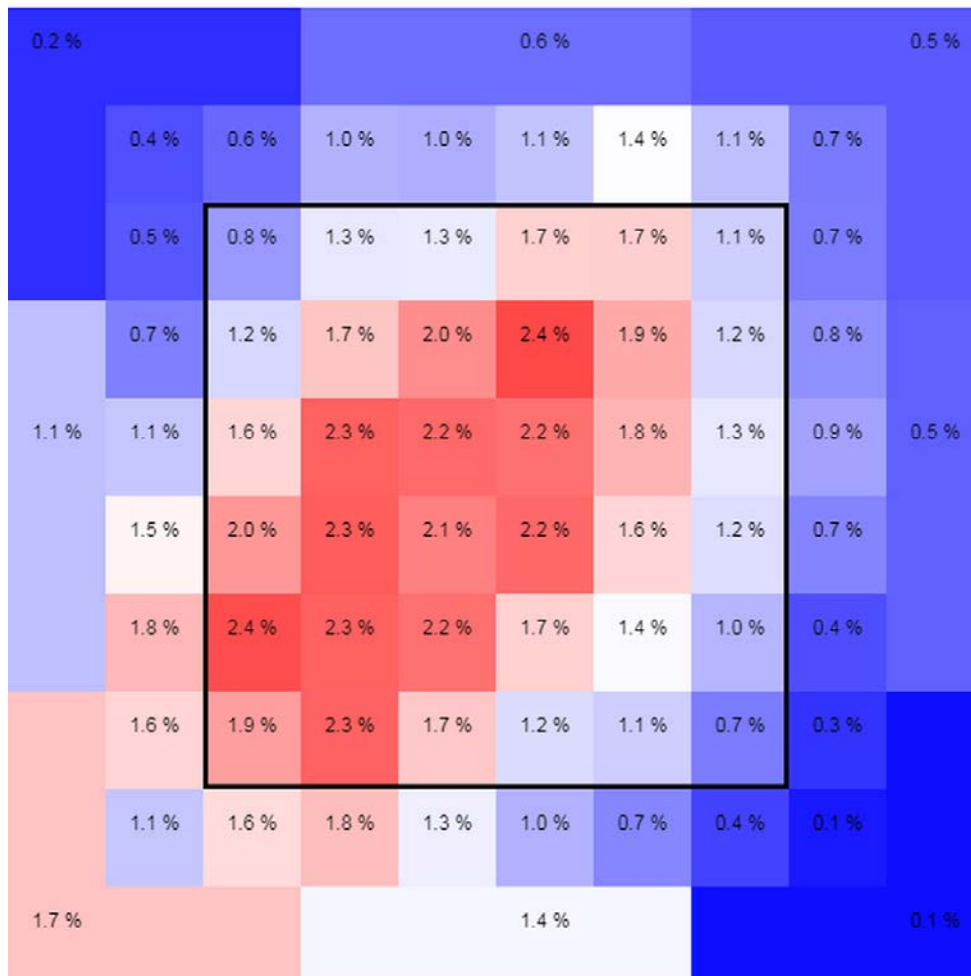
The underlying factors paint a pretty grim picture as well. Indicators like batting average on balls in play (BABIP), strikeout rate (K/9), and strand rate (LOB%) are important for any pitcher, but especially for relief pitchers who deal in such small sample sizes. The average LOB% across baseball floats around 70-72%; Bryan Shaw's season LOB% is 51.0%, and it's 40.2% since May 19. That, coupled with his .463 BABIP over his last 10 appearances (average is about .300) and a 26.2% HR/FB (his career average is 11.2%) and one might reasonably conclude that Shaw has been unlucky.

There's more than just bad luck happening here, though. Statcast data show he's allowed 13 barrels already in 2018, nearly triple his total (5) from last year. His average exit velocity allowed is up and his expected weighted on-base-average (xwOBA) is an astronomical .397—not far off from his .406 actual wOBA.

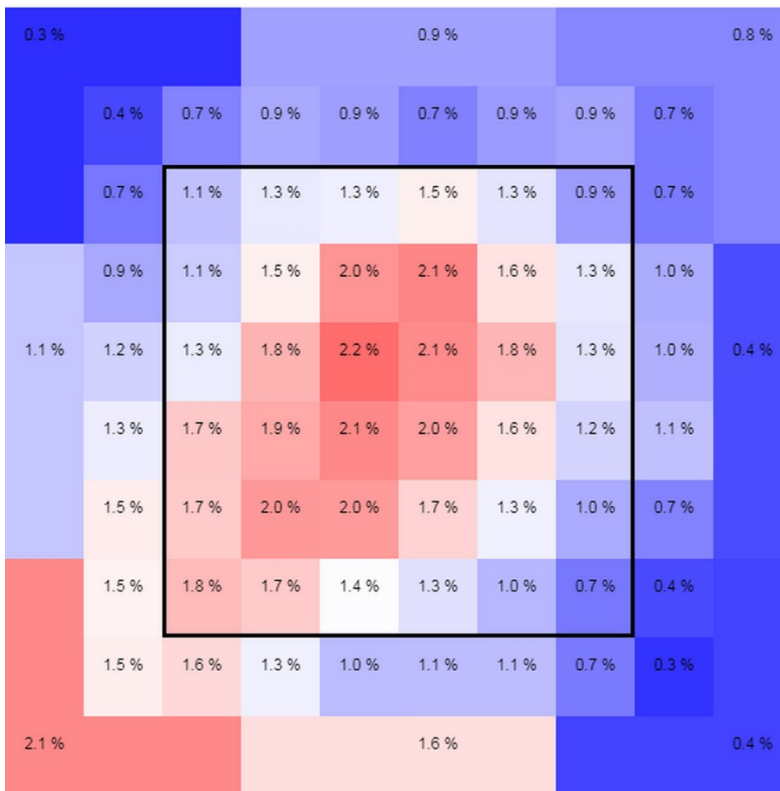
Why is he getting hit so hard? Plate discipline numbers show more of Shaw's pitches are out of the zone than ever before and players are chasing them less than ever before. For a pitcher that relies on movement from a cutter/slider combo to get ahead of hitters, this is bad news. If a batter doesn't chase pitches outside the strikezone, the pitcher ends up behind in the count and needs to try to catch more of the plate to try to earn a strike. As Black put it, "Middle-middle for a pitcher is usually bad-bad."

Consider the following heat maps. The first shows Shaw's 2017 season, one which more or less corresponds to his career averages. The second one shows his 2018 season. Both are from the pitcher's point of view.

Bryan Shaw Pitch% vs All Batters
 Season: 2017-04-04 to 2017-10-01
 Count: All Counts | Total Pitches: 1204 | View: Pitcher



Bryan Shaw Pitch% vs All Batters
 Season: 2018-03-30 to 2018-06-09
 Count: All Counts | Total Pitches: 595 | View: Pitcher



FanGraphsFanGraphs

Pay attention to that bottom left corner. That's where most of Shaw's sliders end up. In the past, he's been able to nail that sweet spot that's still a strike without being something hitters can do much with. This year, more of those pitches are ending up outside the strikezone, which is forcing Shaw to work more towards the center of the zone.

Clearly the Rockies are aware of this issue and haven't considered it enough of a problem to remove Shaw from high leverage situations. With the Rockies still waiting for Adam Ottavino to return from the DL, the bullpen remains precariously thin. And yet, Shaw continues to struggle.

As the team's playoff odds continue to tumble, the Rockies cannot afford to give away so many games late. Shaw came into this season as a major cog in the bullpen, but until he can figure out how to turn more of those borderline sliders and cutters into strikes, and reveal this stretch of bad games as the 2018 anomaly, Bud Black needs to move him down in the pecking order.

Cartersville's Howard gets called up, pitches scoreless inning in MLB debut

Nicholas Sullivan / DailyTribuneNews.com | June 11, 2018

The journey through minor league baseball is not for the faint of heart. It's a war of attrition that's discarded many stellar players over the years.

To break through and get the well-earned call to join the major leagues, if only for the proverbial cup of coffee, is a moment on which players spend countless nights dreaming.

That dream became reality for Sam Howard on Friday.

Friday, the 2011 Cartersville High graduate sat at a Cracker Barrel hours before he was set to start against the Omaha Storm Chasers. The left-handed pitcher sat with one of his roommates — yes, minor-league players often need multiple roommates to afford housing — when he got a call from the Albuquerque Isotopes' pitching coach telling him he'd been scratched from his start.

There was a chance Howard would be called up for the first time in his career. If the parent club Colorado Rockies didn't end up needing him, the former Cane would slot back into the Isotopes' rotation.

"We got in the locker room after the game," Howard said recalling his wild Friday, "the manager and pitching coach called me into the office and just pretty much told me straight up, 'You're going into the big leagues. Congrats. You deserve it and go enjoy it.'"

Straight away, calls went out to Howard's family. They awoke after midnight Eastern time to find out Howard would be joining the Rockies on Saturday. Flights were booked, and his mom, maternal grandparents and girlfriend were on hand for Saturday's game against the Arizona Diamondbacks.

In the eighth inning, Howard found out he would be called on for the ninth inning if the pitcher's spot in the batting order came up in the eighth. It didn't, so Howard sat back down and watched Brooks Pounders close out a 12-7 loss.

A similar opportunity presented itself Sunday. This time, the ninth inning did belong to Howard.

"I wasn't expecting it, I was hoping, but when they called down it was definitely a surprise," Howard said. "Immediately, nerves set in when they told me the ninth inning was mine."

Since he's a starter in Albuquerque, Howard had been getting stretched a few different times to make sure he was loose — should he be called upon. Despite starting 97 of his 98 minor-league appearances, he had some experience as a relief pitcher during spring training.

After a stress-filled 48 hours, Howard finally felt at ease as he strolled to the mound prior to the top of the ninth.

"You're so happy to be there, but you feel so stressed out," Howard said of the weekend. "Just nervous. All day; all night. Barely sleeping. When I was up there Saturday, Scott Oberg, one of the big-league pitchers, kind of showed me around the locker room, showed me around the video room — looked over some of the hitters in case I went in the game — and he told me to do something. Two hours before the Saturday game, he was like, 'Hey, let's just walk out to the game mound, right now, before everything gets started. Just stand behind the mound and just take a look, just soak it all in. It will give you a better feel than when you get out there and it's actually your time to pitch.' ...

"I did that Saturday, so when they called down [Sunday] and I went out on the warning track to walk to the mound, it was kind of weird. It was like all the nerves and stress I had been feeling warming up and for two days just kind of turned to excitement. It just felt like this is everything you've been working for, just go have fun."

Howard entered in the kind of low-leverage situation he anticipated. With Colorado down 8-3, he had nothing to lose. It helped him execute the plan he had formulated from the moment he knew he was being called up.

"I'd been telling myself since I got called up Friday night, if I got the opportunity to get out there, just go right at them," Howard said. "No matter who's in the box from their biggest players to their rookies. Just kind of an underdog mentality. I knew if I went right at them and challenged them, the odds would be in my favor. That was my goal is to not try to nibble, challenge them with every pitch and make them put it in play."

Howard's plan worked like a charm. He threw nine of his 11 pitches for strikes, leading to a flyout, a groundout, a double and another groundout to close out a scoreless inning.

The initial plan was for it to be a "short trip" to the majors for Howard. Considering Oberg got hurt and sent to the disabled list over the weekend and the overall bullpen struggles for Colorado this season, it's possible Howard's stay could be a little longer.

Either way, he plans on making the most of his stay.

"My whole mindset going in to Saturday's and Sunday's games was if I get to pitch, go right at them, try to help the team win and show that I belong here," Howard said. "I can't control the rest, so if they send me back down, that'll be all right."

For a long time, 2018 seemed to be the year when Howard would get his shot. However, an injury suffered while running the bases earlier this season had appeared to push back his timetable.

He even admitted to having discussed the possible ramifications with his teammates. The higher-ups, though, felt Howard had shown enough over his past two starts to allay any fears.

"I knew as soon as I came out hurt with that injury, if an opportunity came up, it was going to push that back," Howard said. "I actually talked about that with a couple of my friends on the Triple-A team. I missed two starts and was basically out right at two weeks with that injury. When I got called up Friday, I was very surprised, because it was my start day and I was focused on making my start."

The Chicago Cubs originally drafted Howard out of Cartersville High in 2011. He was a 48th-round selection but wisely chose to attend Georgia Southern instead. Three years later, Colorado chose him in the third round.

Even being a high-round draft pick guarantees a player nothing, and Howard had to grind his way through the Rockies farm system. It helped immensely to have a teammate like Jerry Vasto there almost every step of the way.

They've been in lockstep through four levels of the minors. They've been roommates each of the past two years. When Howard got a promotion to Double-A Hartford midway through the 2016 season, Vasto followed just weeks later.

And when Howard got called up Friday, Vasto made sure to join him as soon as possible, earning his promotion Sunday to replace Oberg. Howard and Vasto both wound up pitching that day with the latter getting two outs in the seventh. According to Elias Sports Bureau, it's the first time in Rockies history that two pitchers made their MLB debut in the same game.

Roughly 24 hours later, Howard still couldn't believe it.

"He's like my best friend in pro ball," Howard said of Vasto, another left-handed pitcher. "We've played together since 2015 when we were both on the Asheville Tourists team. That's when we got to know each other, the second half of that season was when we got to be good friends. In 2016, we both went to High-A in California. We got us a house together. We both did good there. I went up to Double-A, and two weeks later, here he came. We were at Double-A together, played together last year, lived together last year, went to Triple-A together this year, [and] both lived together this year.

"Since 2016, we've been talking about making it to the big leagues, pushing each other and motivating each other. The day after I got called up, he got called up and we pitched together in the same game. It's unreal. We talked about it all night on the plane coming to Philly, how we would have never guessed this would have happened in a million years."

There were plenty of people back home in Cartersville who were thrilled to see Howard become the second Cane to reach the majors — after Russ Mitchell earlier this decade.

It's the kind of support that helped Howard make it through several grueling campaigns. The long bus trips, the fast food meals and the cheap hotel rooms were all worth it when he stepped on the mound Sunday at Coors Field.

He'll hope to have plenty more days like that, but, for now, Howard can appreciate where he's been and where's he's at. The future can wait.

"It was a lot of fun, man," Howard said. "It's something I'll never forget. It's hard to find the words to even describe the feeling of everybody reaching out to me from back home and having some family there to make my debut. It's been an unbelievable two to three days, so far."

Opinion: Rockies should make these dramatic moves to save their season

Mark Knudson / Coloradoan.com | June 11, 2018

The Major League Baseball season is well into its third month and as a wise coach once said, “You are who your record says you are.”

That makes the Colorado Rockies pretty much a .500 baseball team.

As constructed, these Rockies are not going to be a playoff team.

The bullpen woes are well-documented, as are the struggles of the lower half of the batting order with Ian Desmond being critics' prime target. Colorado could use a boost in the clubhouse as well, where signs of life are scattered at best these days. It's going to take sizable moves to turn this ship around; maybe even moves that seem desperate and overly dramatic.

Rather than wait for things to change for the better, it could already be time for the Rockies to start looking at ways to tweak the roster. It likely will take something dramatic, even outlandish from the front office to accomplish what has to happen before this team can make a run at the National League West title. Note: This is not the season to count on being a wild card participant.

So what do the ROckies need to do to turn things around? Here are three outside-the-box moves to make:

Ship Shaw

Call the Cleveland Indians and see what they'd be willing to give to re-acquire formerly stellar relief pitcher Bryan Shaw.

The Rockies reliever is broken and may be beyond repair, at least here. Cleveland wanted to keep Shaw when he became a free agent last winter, but after having paid him \$4.6 million in 2017 they weren't willing to match Colorado's three-year, \$27 million offer. Maybe they would be now.

The Indians are a good team in a poor division and in need of bullpen help to make their own pennant push. Shaw, assuming he can clear his head of Coors Field nightmares, could be their missing link. Shaw had five excellent seasons for the Tribe. If he's going to get straightened out, Cleveland might be the only place he can do so.

Colorado could ask for prospects like right-handed pitcher Shane Bieber, who recently made his Major League debut after rolling through Triple A this spring with a 1.05 ERA, pitcher Brady Aiken or maybe outfielder Will Benson, a right-handed bat with great power.

Land Lucroy

Call the Oakland A's and check into the possibility of re-acquiring catcher Jonathan Lucroy, who should never have left Colorado.

After turning down a reported three-year deal with the Rockies in hopes of getting a fat multi-year deal elsewhere, Lucroy was forced to settle for a one-year deal with Oakland. The former All-Star backstop isn't having a spectacular season with the A's, and also probably knows that venturing back out on the market next winter isn't going to be fun unless his numbers get better. What better place to fix those than at Coors Field?

Meanwhile, the Rockies' catching tandem of Chris Iannetta and Tony Wolters has been mundane offensively (Iannetta is hitting .230, Wolters .161) and defensively. If you like the Wins Above Replacement stat, you'll find it interesting that Iannetta is a minus-0.2 and Wolters a 0.2. Frankly, both players are better suited for backup roles. Top prospect Tom Murphy evidently hasn't impressed the Rockies enough to get a call up yet. Time to give Billy Beane a call?

Make Moustakas a Rockie

Call the Kansas City Royals and find out the availability of third baseman Mike Moustakas, who could easily move to first base. Like Lucroy, he ventured out on the free agent market last winter looking to score big, only to crawl back to the Royals and accept a one-year deal for \$5.5 million.

He's a bargain and like Lucroy, you could probably get him without giving up a big-time prospect. The downside is he's a left-handed hitter and a right-handed thrower, which is not an ideal combo for first base. But he's hit 13 homers this season and would provide an immediate boost to the inconsistent Rockies offense.

Would these kind of move be overly dramatic? Absolutely. Guaranteed to send Colorado back to the postseason?
Absolutely not. There are no guarantees, other than the Dodgers winning the NL West again.

But if Colorado is going to be a factor in the NL West race, something dramatic has to happen, and soon.

Fly Fishing Provides A Getaway For Colorado Rockies Manager Bud Black

CBS4Denver.com | June 11, 2018

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, Colo. (CBS4) – Baseball can be a grueling game. The season is 187 days long, and that’s not including spring training or the playoffs. So sometimes you need to get away.

For Rockies manager Bud Black and his wife Nan, that sometimes means a day out on the river.

CBS4’s Jamie Leary joined the couple at Rocky Mountain National Park recently to do some fishing.

Nan Black has been fishing for about 20 years, and “Buddy is finally catching on,” according to Nan.

“Are you the type who has to catch a big fish in order to be satisfied for the day?” Leary asked Nan.

“I could not catch a fish all day long and be completely happy just being out here,” she said.

As she waited for a bite, Nan said she and her husband think they’d be happy settling down in Colorado eventually. (Black is in his second season coaching the Rockies.)

“I love it here,” she said.

Nan caught a fish while CBS4 was shooting video, and Bud showed off the fly he tied on.

Bud told CBS4 “I’m starting to get into it more, because I’m getting better at it. I mean, this is so relaxing for me.”

While there were no phone calls to team headquarters out on the river, Nan said Bud was “on the phone with Jeff (Bridich)” — the Rockies GM — when he woke up that day, the night before, and during pretty much the entire drive up to the park.

“It’s ongoing even when they’re not on the field,” she said. “I think people don’t really realize how much goes on.”

"I do think about our players and our team when I'm out here," Bud said. "But it's still peaceful. It's great."

Lunch Special: How can the Colorado Rockies fix their woeful bullpen?

And who does Mark Kiszla believe will win the World Cup?

Mark Kiszla / DenverPost.com | June 11, 2018

Columnist Mark Kiszla answered questions in our Lunch Special on Monday. Here are the highlights:

Kiszla: Well, all right, all right, all right. I feel good (or at least a lot better than the Rockies bullpen). So let's talk sports. Broncos mini-camp, World Cup, whatever's on your mind.

Mark, What is your opinion of 14 one-inning pitchers? Throw 12 or less, you get another inning. No batter would see the same guy twice. Let me know.

Kiszla: Desperate times call for desperate measures. And the Rockies are in dire straits, doubt. But there's innovation ... and there's cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs. OK, we're spitballing here. So no bad ideas. But changing pitchers based on if the dude on mound gets out of inning with less than a dozen pitches? Did I understand correctly? The problem with the Rockies, and in the majors generally, is not enough good pitchers and too many poor ones used in every game. If we're talking out-of-the-box ideas, I'd be more in favor of limiting a manager to three pitching changes in a nine-inning game.

Who's your pick to win the World Cup?

Kiszla: OK, lets get my rare moment of insight out of the way. I nailed the World Cup winner in 2014. Said there was no way Brazil, the favorite, was going to win on home turf. And I liked Germany to take home the Cup. Now? In 2018? My crystal ball is a bit murkier. I want to say Belgium. I really want to pick Belgium. Eden Hazard as a playmaker controlling the middle of field. Kevin De Bruyne scoring goals. Thibaut Courtois stopping shots. I like their talent. But doesn't the Cup usually go to country with deeper soccer pedigree. So there's Spain. Out with the old guard, in with the new. Isn't that what a soccer country does? What the heck ... I'm going with Belgium. In an upset. But if Spain wins it, I'll claim I was half (25 percent?) right.

How would you fix the Rockies bullpen?

Kiszla: Ah, there's the rub. Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich spent \$100 million plus on the bullpen. It seemed like a good idea at the time ... (I liked it). But Bryan Shaw can't get anyone out. I can't even watch him pitch. He needs to go on the disabled list to get his head straight (call it a blister, call it soreness, call it anything). There's not an easy answer for the bullpen. Pray for Adam Ottavino to get healthy? A little prayer never hurts. But not certain it counts as a strategy that Bud Black wants to employ.

I like your Belgium pick. I'd like to see Argentina win it for Lionel Messi's legacy. And locally, how about those Rapids? Never thought I'd pine for the Pablo Mastroeni coaching days, but here we are.

Kiszla: France, Germany, Spain, Brazil. There are lots of reasonably good picks to win World Cup. And the Rapids? It appears to me as if whatever new coach Anthony Hudson is selling, the players aren't buying. And if you don't have buy-in, you have a ... last-place club.

Can Vance Joseph succeed as a head coach? His decision making during games is baffling.

Kiszla: Case Keenum will be solid as a QB. Bradley Chubb will figure it out as an outside linebacker. But Vance Joseph is the biggest concern the Broncos have. Yes, bigger than the offensive line. The players like Joseph. But before midseason, offensive coordinator Mike McCoy had stopped listening to Joseph. There is a certain level of competency a head coach must demonstrate to earn respect. Can Joseph make it? Yes. But that's probably not the way to bet.

Over/under on how many game Shane Ray plays this season. Thanks.

Kiszla: I hope Shane Ray plays 16 games. And I hate to bet against a man's health. Doesn't seem ... sporting. But, contrary to many fans and analysts in Broncos Country, I believed that John Elway did the right thing by not picking up Ray's option. Believed it at the time decision was made. Believe it more now.

Would you rather have a dominant offensive line or defensive line?

Kiszla: I'm a little nutty (as many of you know). I've long believed that the physical nature of a football team doesn't begin with the linebackers or edge-rushers, but the road-graders on the offensive line. So I would rather have two Pro Bowlers

on my offensive line and one on my defensive line, with a nice rotation of pass-rushers behind Von Miller. But that's just me.

What do you make of the Broncos offensive line? Think it'll be any better this year?

Kiszla: The Broncos offensive line better be vastly improved. If it's not, I don't see anyway this team finishes .500, much less makes the playoffs. But how good can the offensive line be? I don't think you will see even barely a hint until the preseason, and then no definitive answer until about Oct 1, even if the Broncos get off to a good start.

Popular opinion seems to be that the Broncos O-line is going to be improved. Do you think that'll be the case? I don't know much about Veldheer.

Kiszla: Jared Veldheer is supposed to be the answer at right tackle. Before he can be the answer, he has to get healthy. And when healthy, I think it's unfair to expect him to play at anywhere near a Pro Bowl level. If I'm wrong, and he's great, that's a big reason to think the Broncos can have a winning season. So let's hope I'm wrong.

The Rockies have SO MANY OUTFIELDERS. Which 3 would you roll out there as your preferred starters? Would you continue to mix/match? I think they need to trade one or two and bring up Tapia to play every day.

Kiszla: I'm not certain the Rockies have so many outfielders, especially with David Dahl on the shelf. There's no doubt when it comes to writing Charlie Blackmon's name in the lineup, as long as he's fresh. Carlos Gonzalez came out of his funk and began looking like the CarGo we know and love, before his back acted up. Gerardo Parra generally brings a good glove to the park, but he's the one I would rotate out of the batting order most often. Trade one? Well, Blackmon would bring a nice return ... but didn't the Rockies just sign him to a long-term deal? I'm not certain any other outfielder on the roster has enough trade value to get Colorado any significant help in the bullpen.

Did McCoy stop listening because McCoy thought McCoy knew best or because the message being delivered wasn't helpful? If it was the latter, are we looking at Musgrave as interim head coach by mid-season?

I can't tell if it's the players not buying in, or the players just not having enough talent to play at this level. Maybe a little of both. It's like a car wreck now though. Can't help but look.

Kiszla: To blame the Rapids' woes on a new coach would probably be both unfair and a stretch. Does Colorado have championship-level talent on the pitch? In a word: No.

Who is managing the clock in the last few minutes of the half, Musgrave or Joseph?

Kiszla: I'm guessing many Broncos fans hope it's Bill Musgrave managing the clock. But if the head coach doesn't manage the clock, why is he on the sideline?

Joseph made changing QBs sound like amending the Constitution. And then did it six times. What is it that the players like?

Kiszla: Players like winning. Win, and they don't care who the head coach is. It's the position coach that players live with day-in and day-out.