



MEDIA CLIPS – Sept. 10, 2018

How does Rox division title drought stack up?

MLB.com looks at how long each expansion team took to finish 1st

David Adler | MLB.com | Sept. 9, 2018

On Monday, the Rockies and D-backs meet for the first of four huge games in Colorado. It's the type of series that makes September baseball so exciting. The National League West is up for grabs. The Rockies, Dodgers and D-backs are all within **2 1/2 games** of each other -- Colorado in first at 78-64, Los Angeles half a game back at 78-65 and Arizona third at 76-67.

For the Rockies, that means a real chance to win their first division title. The Rockies and the Marlins are the only expansion teams, of the 14 to join Major League Baseball since 1961, that have yet to win their division.

None of the others had as long a drought, in their current cities, as the Rockies' 25 years and counting without a division title. The Rockies' opponent this week, the D-backs, had the shortest sprint to a first-place finish, as they won the West in just their second year. As the Rockies fight to protect their lead, MLB.com looks at all the expansion teams, and the number of seasons they needed to achieve a first-place finish.

The teams are listed from longest to shortest time to a division title. For franchises that relocated, the number used is how long it took them to finish first in their current location.

Rockies: 25 years without a division title (active streak)

First season: 1993

The Rockies have made the playoffs four times -- including last season -- since they brought baseball to the Mile High City

in 1993. They've won one National League pennant, in 2007, when the "Rocktober" Rockies caught fire down the stretch. But all of Colorado's postseason appearances have been as a Wild Card team. The playoffs are the playoffs, of course, but the Padres, D-backs, Giants and Dodgers have all cycled through reigns atop the division during that time. That could all be about to change.

Marlins: 25 years (active streak)

First season: 1993

The Marlins haven't just made the playoffs -- they've won the World Series, twice, in 1997 and 2003. But like the Rockies in their postseason appearances, the Marlins were a Wild Card team both times, as the Braves had a stranglehold on the NL East in those years. (Both the '97 and '03 seasons came during Atlanta's record run of 14 consecutive division titles.) Miami won't end its drought this year; the rebuilding club has officially been eliminated from the NL East race.

Rangers: 24 years before first title

First season in Texas: 1972 | First title: 1996

The Washington Senators moved to Texas, and became the Rangers, in 1972. From that point, it wasn't until '96 that they finally won the American League West and made their first postseason appearance, although they were also leading the division when the '94 strike ended the season early. (If you include the franchise's time as the Senators from 1961-71, it would add an additional 11 years of fruitlessness.) The '96 Rangers went 90-72 to end the drought behind league MVP Award winner Juan Gonzalez, who hit .314 with 47 home runs and 144 RBIs, and Ivan Rodriguez, who was an All-Star, Gold Glove Award winner and Silver Slugger at catcher.

Angels: 18 years

First season: 1961 | First title: 1979

The 1979 Angels brought Anaheim its first division title by going 88-74 to win the AL West. Don Baylor won MVP honors after crushing 36 homers and leading the Majors with 139 RBIs and 120 runs scored. Rod Carew, who had been acquired from the Twins in the offseason, hit .318 and stole 18 bases in his first season with the Halos. And Nolan Ryan led the American League with 223 strikeouts and the Majors with five shutouts. The Angels fell to the Orioles in the AL Championship Series.

Astros: 18 years

First season: 1962 | First title: 1980

The Astros just ended their World Series drought last year, when they won the franchise's first championship in 56 years. They had a long division title drought, too, before they finally won the NL West in 1980. They had to go to Game 163 to do it -- Houston and the Dodgers finished the regular season tied for first at 92-70, forcing a one-game playoff. The Astros won, 7-1, to take the division, with Joe Niekro pitching a complete-game gem for his 20th win. Houston would drop a hard-fought five-game NL Championship Series to the eventual World Series champion Phillies.

6th, 1980

Mariners: 18 years

First season: 1977 | First title: 1995

The 1995 Mariners were star-studded. Randy Johnson went 18-2 with a league-best 2.48 ERA and 294 strikeouts to win his first Cy Young Award. Edgar Martinez had arguably the best season of his career, winning the batting title with a .356 average and leading MLB with a 1.107 OPS. Ken Griffey Jr. provided an iconic moment in the deciding Game 5 of the AL Division Series against the Yankees, scoring the winning run from first on Martinez's double in the bottom of the 11th to send the Mariners to the ALCS.

Padres: 15 years

First season: 1969 | First title: 1984

The Padres cruised to their first division crown and playoff berth in 1984, finishing as the only team over .500 in the NL West at 92-70. It was the first full season for Tony Gwynn, who at age 24 set the standard for the rest of his Hall of Fame career, hitting .351 to win the batting title and leading the Majors with 213 hits. San Diego then beat the Cubs -- who were themselves in the playoffs for the first time since 1945 -- in the NLCS, but fell to the Tigers in the World Series.

Brewers: 11 years

First season in Milwaukee: 1970 | First title: 1981

After a year as the Seattle Pilots, the Brewers came to Milwaukee in 1970. From then on, it was just over a decade before they had a first-place finish. That came in the strike-shortened '81 season, when the Brewers won the second-half AL East to qualify for the postseason. (They also had the East's best record across both halves, 62-47.) Rollie Fingers won the Cy Young and MVP awards with a 1.04 ERA and an MLB-leading 28 saves in his first year with Milwaukee. The Brewers lost a tough ALDS to the Yankees, but they were back in '82 with a full-season division title thanks to the star play of Robin Yount and Paul Molitor.

Rays: 10 years

First season: 1998 | First title: 2008

After a decade of being lovable losers, the Rays vaulted into contention in 2008, making it to their first World Series. Under manager Joe Maddon, with veterans like Carlos Pena and James Shields and rookies Evan Longoria and David Price making an impact, the Rays won the East and won the AL pennant. They supplanted the Red Sox and Yankees at the top of the division -- the first time neither team had won the East since 1997. Their 97 wins remain the franchise record.

Blue Jays: 8 years

First season: 1977 | First title: 1985

The Blue Jays grew into a contender fairly quickly. Their first AL East title in 1985 came during a run of 11 straight seasons of 85-plus wins from 1983-93 that included five playoff appearances and back-to-back World Series wins in '92 and '93. The '85 Blue Jays went 99-62 in the regular season and had a 3-1 lead over the Royals in the ALCS, but Kansas City rallied to win the series in seven games.

Mets: 7 years

First season: 1962 | First title: 1969

The 1969 Miracle Mets completed the team's stunning turnaround from bottom-feeders to World Series champions. In the first season of the divisional era, the Mets, led by Cy Young Award winner Tom Seaver (25-7, 2.21 ERA, 208 strikeouts), went 100-62 to win the NL East by eight games over the Cubs. They swept the Braves in the NLCS, then upset the heavily favored Orioles in five games in the World Series. That made them the first expansion team to win the World Series.

Royals: 7 years

First season: 1969 | First title: 1976

The 1976 season was one of George Brett's finest, and he was just 23 years old. Brett won the AL batting title by hitting .333 while leading the Majors with 215 hits. Behind their star third baseman, the Royals went 90-72 to win the AL West for the first time. They pushed the Yankees to Game 5 in a back-and-forth ALCS, but Chris Chambliss' series-winning walk-off homer for New York ended the Royals' season.

Nationals: 7 years**First season in Washington: 2005 | First title: 2012**

It didn't come easy for the Nationals in their early years in D.C., as they finished last in the NL East in five of their first six seasons after leaving Montreal. (As the Expos, the franchise's first first-place finish was in the second half of 1981, 12 years after its inaugural '69 season.) But the Nats' transformation into a perennial contender began in 2012. Catalyzed by a rookie **Bryce Harper**, they went 98-64 and beat out the Braves for the NL East crown. They pushed the Cardinals to the brink in the NLDS, but they couldn't hold on in Game 5 despite a 6-0 lead after three innings and a 7-5 lead entering the ninth. They've been snakebitten in the postseason to this day.

D-backs: 1 year**First season: 1998 | First title: 1999**

The honor of quickest ascent to the top of a division goes to the D-backs. In just their second year of existence, the D-backs won the NL West with a 100-62 record. In fact, they went from worst to first from 1998 to '99. The biggest difference? Randy Johnson, who was signed in the offseason. The Big Unit went 17-9 with a league-leading 2.48 ERA and 364 strikeouts to win the first of his four straight Cy Young Awards in Arizona.

Rockies squander heroics by Nolan, Blackmon

All-Stars combine for 3 HRs, 3 spectacular plays in loss to Dodgers

Owen Perkins | MLB.com | Sept. 9, 2018

DENVER -- In his first game back after sitting a day to help him get out of his funk at the plate, **Nolan Arenado** left no doubt that he wasn't bringing the funk to the field. His defense saved at least one run in a critical game against the Dodgers on Sunday, and he added two more with a home run in a late-inning rally to accompany two home runs on the day from **Charlie Blackmon**, but it was not enough to overcome the Dodgers as they beat the Rockies 9-6 to take the rubber match in the three-game series.

The Rockies remained in first place in the National League West, but the loss closed the gap between them and the second-place Dodgers to a half-game. The defeat also kept their lead over the D-backs at 2 1/2 games, with Arizona losing to Atlanta before beginning a four-game series in Denver starting Monday.

"It's good to see Chuck doing his thing, as we expect him to do," Arenado said of Blackmon's two-homer day. "We can't let this game affect us. We know we have a big series here with the Diamondbacks. Losing is never fun, but when you have big games coming up, which we put ourselves in that position, it's easy to move on."

The Dodgers jumped out to a two-run lead in the first, with a one-out single from **Justin Turner**, a run-scoring double from **Manny Machado** and a **David Freese** single to right to plate Machado.

Colorado answered with Blackmon's leadoff homer deep into the right-field seats, the first of three extra-base hits on the day for the center fielder.

, 2018

"I've been working on some stuff and I feel pretty good," Blackmon said. "I felt better lately. I've still made some mistakes in the box here and there. They've made some good pitches here and there also. But I'm getting there."

In the bottom of the second, after a homer from **Enrique Hernandez** to open the inning, Arenado made the first of his two standout plays. With one out and the bases empty, Dodgers starting pitcher **Rich Hill** hit a grounder down the line that crossed over the bag, pulling Arenado into foul territory as he fielded it. Arenado's momentum carried him practically into Dodgers third-base coach Chris Woodward as he threw a one-hopper to **Ian Desmond** at first. Desmond bobbled the ball and dropped it, but still had time to pick it up and record the out.

In the next inning, Arenado had a run-saving, rally-killing, jaw-dropping defensive play. With two outs, runners on first and second, and reliever **Chad Bettis** facing his first batter after taking the ball from struggling starter **Tyler Anderson** (2 2/3 innings, 4 runs, 3 earned), **Austin Barnes** ripped a screaming grounder down the third-base line. Arenado dove toward the line, then rifled a throw from his knees to beat Barnes by a step.

"If you're not contributing on one side of the ball, I know I can help the team on the other," Arenado said of the confidence his defense gives him. "It does motivate me, it helps me, it fires me up when I can help the team on the defensive side or make some plays to save some runs. It definitely affects my offense."

The Dodgers scored two more in the sixth on a two-run homer from Turner before the Rockies answered with a three-run rally, trimming the deficit to 8-5.

Arenado used his bat to narrow the gap in the sixth. Blackmon led off the inning with a double and scored on **DJ LeMahieu's** double into the left-field gap, driving starter Hill from the mound. **Pedro Baez** came in to face Arenado, getting ahead 0-2 before Arenado unloaded on a 97.2 four-seam fastball and drove it an estimated 440 feet, according to **Statcast™**, into the left-center stands.

"Nolan is a lineup-changer," Blackmon said. "When you have a guy like that on your team, it totally changes the dynamic of your lineup and how you have to approach that lineup. He's very important to us. He's working really hard lately. It was nice to see him hit that ball over the fence."

Arenado is hitting .329 (26-79) with 10 homers and 17 RBIs in the 21 games he's played after a day off -- whether an individual day or a scheduled team off-day.

Blackmon homered again in the eighth, driving a no-doubter to right an estimated 428 feet to bring the Rockies within two before L.A. padded its lead with a ninth-inning insurance run and retired the Rockies on three hard-hit balls to left, right and center, stranding Desmond, who singled and stole second to open the inning.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Rockies rookie right-hander **DJ Johnson** earned a reputation as a strike-thrower in his nine Minor League seasons, and he lived up to the buzz when he made his big league debut Sunday, entering the game in the fifth with a man on second, one out, and two runs already in.

"My heart was definitely racing a little bit," Johnson said. "It was good I got to sit in the bullpen the last couple days to get used to my surroundings. I definitely feel like I've calmed down the last couple days after the initial shock of being here. But coming in there with a runner on third base, that's what I've done all year for Albuquerque. I'm just glad I could save a run for Betty [**Chad Bettis**]."

Johnson's first pitch was a ball, but he threw the next seven for strikes to win the battle and fan Barnes, then got Hill swinging on a 1-2 pitch, leaving him with 10 of his 12 pitches for strikes in his Major League debut.

"He came in with man on third and one out against a pesky little hitter," Black said. "That was a good battle, punched him out, that was great. He showed well. Velocity was there, good curveball, which was good to see, as reported from our Triple-A staff."

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Gerardo Parra made sure Arenado and Blackmon weren't the only Rockies making the highlight reel, diving to rob Machado of extra bases in the fourth. With two out and a man on second, Machado drove a low liner to the right-center gap and Parra laid out for it on a dead run, fully airborne when he caught it a foot off the ground for the final out.

E SAID IT

"Honestly, I thought it was going to be three teams clawing and scratching, and that kind of seems to be what the case is. Sometimes even four teams. I think it's going to be an exciting September. There's still a lot that can change, good and bad. So I think we still need to stay focused and play hard. Every game counts." -- *Blackmon, on the tight race in the NL West*

UP NEXT

German Marquez (11-9, 4.05 ERA) takes the hill for the Rockies on Monday in a 6:40 p.m. MT start to a big series with the D-backs. He'll face Arizona right-hander **Zack Godley** (14-8, 4.51). Marquez threw 6 2/3 innings of two-run ball on seven hits and two walks while striking out 11 on Tuesday. His fastball had life down in the zone, and he mixed in his breaking balls effectively, accounting for 24 strikeouts over his past two games. The Rockies are 9-3 over his last 12 starts.

Oberg has been vital to bullpen success

Owen Perkins | MLB.com | Sept. 9, 2018

DENVER -- When the Rockies looked to improve a struggling bullpen earlier in the summer, the answer came calling from within the house. While picking up **Seunghwan Oh** in July changed the dynamics of the 'pen, **Scott Oberg's** recall on May 28 might have been the missing piece in securing a bulletproof back of the bullpen.

The unsung right-hander leads all Rockies relievers with 200 appearances since 2015, and since rejoining the club in May after a rough April, he has gone 6-0 with a 1.24 ERA, the lowest ERA among National League relievers with a minimum of 25 innings during that span.

"His mechanics, his delivery have become really consistent," manager Bud Black said before Sunday's rubber match with the Dodgers. "You look at the release point, his arm action -- he's repeating it. When you repeat natural arm action, you're going to consistently make pitches."

Oberg is only getting better as the pennant race heats up. Over the team's last 26 games since Aug. 10, he's allowed one run on six hits and a walk while striking out 15 in 13 appearances and 13 1/3 innings. He's allowed no hits and a walk in five September appearances, pacing the bullpen to the top of the league for the month.

"Our bullpen's on a nice little run here in September," Black said. "I think we're second in the National League in ERA, we're first in opponents average against. So nice job by our guys. We're going to need our bullpen here these next three weeks, and I think our guys are going to respond. Arm-wise, they feel good about where they are physically. Mentally, they're gaining confidence as a group. It's going to take all of them, and so far here in September, it's been good."

Oberg's September numbers are even better than they were in June, when he made five scoreless appearances after his recall. Unfortunately, he spent 20 days out of commission with a back strain, and the Rockies went 6-12 during that stretch.

It's a dramatic change since Oberg stumbled out of the gate with a 6.97 ERA for April, earning an option to Triple-A Albuquerque, where he got back in synch.

"The biggest thing is he trusts the execution of his pitches and trusts his command, and Buddy trusts him to use him in the seventh," catcher **Chris Iannetta** said after Oberg entered a tight game Saturday with a three-run lead and first place on

the line, faced four straight left-handed pinch-hitting power bats, and struck out the side. "He's done great. He's been able to get to glove side, which was something he wasn't able to do early in the year in Spring Training. He has the ability to get the glove side, work up and down on the outside part of the plate, run it in if he has to."

Of the 12 pitchers in the expanded Rockies reliever corps, Oberg is one of only four homegrown Rockies. He's having the best season of his career and proving as vital a cog as any of the big-dollar signings the Rockies have made to bolster their bullpen, finding his place at the right time.

"When he misses, the misses are where they're supposed to be," Black notes. "They're close to the strike zone. He's not missing in big ways. He's not trying to throw the ball down and away and he throws it up and in. So the misses are smaller.

"When you see a pitcher just missing, that's a really good sign. He's around the plate, he's throwing strikes with the fastball, the slider consistency has improved. You combine the velocity he has and the sharpness to his breaking pitch, you're going to have success."

Tyler Anderson's struggles continue as Dodgers hang on to take 2 of 3 from the Rockies

Los Angeles moved to within a half-game of Colorado in the National League West.

Patrick Saunders | Denver Post | Sept. 9, 2018

Three-fifths of the Rockies' starting rotation — left-hander Kyle Freeland and right-handers German Marquez and Jon Gray — has been reliable, and often outstanding.

One fifth of the rotation — 23-year-old right-hander Antonio Senzatela — has displayed promise, mixed with bouts of inconsistency.

The final cog — left-hander Tyler Anderson — is broken and has been since the end of July.

That was illustrated again Sunday afternoon at Coors Field when the Dodgers battered Anderson early, built an 8-2 lead and hung on for a 9-6 victory. By taking two of three games in the weekend series, Los Angeles moved to within a half-game of Colorado in the National League West.

The Rockies, 78-64, have 20 games remaining, meaning Anderson, theoretically, has four starts remaining. The Rockies, in the hunt for their first division title, can't afford to give away those games.

So is Anderson fixable at this late stage of the season?

"For sure, he's just got to command the ball," Rockies' manager Bud Black said. "He's very capable of that. He feels good physically, his stuff is the same, it's just that today the (pitch) location was poor."

Black gave Anderson the hook after only 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. Anderson needed 35 pitches to get through the Dodgers' two-run first inning and ended up throwing 72 pitches, allowing four runs (three earned). Black believes Anderson's issues are all about lack of fastball command.

Anderson agreed.

"I'm just not getting the ball where I want to," he said, adding that he's healthy and not fatigued. "In fact, I have been throwing the ball harder. Something must be a little off in my delivery if you are not getting the ball where you want it to go."

Black, who gave no indication Sunday that Anderson's spot in the rotation is in jeopardy, saw some fatal flaws Sunday.

"It looked to me today that when he tried to go inside, he left some balls out over the middle," Black said. "When he tried to throw his cutter inside to the righties, he left a lot of them up over the middle. When you do that, that's dangerous."

How dangerous? Over his last 11 starts, Anderson is 0-5 with a 6.75 ERA. The Rockies are 2-9 in those 11 games. Over his last five starts, he's 0-4 with an 11.64 ERA.

Sunday, Anderson gave up a leadoff homer to Kike Hernandez in the Dodgers' two-run second inning and has now served up 29 long balls, tied for the most in the National League with Milwaukee's Chase Anderson.

Still, Tyler Anderson insisted he has not lost his confidence.

"I think if I was to pitch to (the Dodgers) tomorrow, I could get them out," he said.

Anderson was hurt by an unsightly error by left fielder Matt Holliday in the second inning, but Anderson's was out of sync almost from the beginning.

The Rockies, as has become their trademark this season, were resilient and fought their way back. An explosive, three-run sixth inning, highlighted by Nolan Arenado's slump-busting, two-run home run, cut the Dodgers' lead to 8-5 and woke up a sleepy crowd. Charlie Blackmon, who led off the first inning with his 25th home run of the season, led off the sixth with a double to right-center. He scored on DJ LeMahieu's RBI double.

Blackmon smashed a solo home run in the eighth to cut L.A.'s lead to 8-6, his 10th career multi-home run game at Coors Field, his first since May 31, 2016 vs. Cincinnati. That was as close as the Rockies got in their comeback bid.

Five things to know about the Diamondbacks heading into Rockies' four-game series vs. Arizona

Arizona is sliding coming into Coors Field on Monday, including blowing a would-be victory at home to Atlanta on Sunday

Kyle Newman | Denver Post | Sept. 9, 2018

As the Rockies host the Diamondbacks for a four-game series at [Coors Field](#) from Monday through Thursday, here's five things to know about Arizona.

Colorado currently holds a ½ game lead over the Dodgers, and a 2 ½ game lead over the Diamondbacks, in the red-hot race for the National League West title.

Arizona's currently sliding

The Diamondbacks have lost seven of their last nine games and haven't won a series since a two-game set against the Angels on Aug. 21-22, not to mention they have the toughest remaining schedule when compared to Colorado and Los Angeles.

Sunday's crushing defeat

Arizona's latest loss came in devastating fashion on Sunday, blowing a 5-3 advantage in the ninth to Atlanta at home. The Braves — no-hit through five — rallied with homers from Ender Inciarte, Lucas Duda and Johan Camargo in the inning.

Archie Bradley struggling

The Diamondbacks' set-up man leads the team with 32 holds, but he's scuffled as of late, posting a 6.59 ERA with a .305 opponent average in August and September as opposed to 2.96 and .193 marks the rest of the year.

Status of Snakes' bullpen

The Diamondbacks added right-handers Matt Andriese and Brad Ziegler as well as left-hander Jake Diekmann at the deadline, a move designed to ease the workload on a bullpen that leads baseball in average leverage as well as appearances on zero days rest (129).

Goldschmidt, Peralta hot

Paul Goldschmidt has been Arizona's best second-half hitter, averaging .344 with 16 home runs since July 1, and David Peralta (.316, 11 homers in that time frame) is expected to be back in the lineup Monday after being held out of a starting role Sunday due to a tweaked ankle.

Nolan Arenado's slump-busting home run a silver lining in Rockies' loss to Dodgers

Homer was No. 32 for Arenado, but first since Aug 24, a span of 48 at-bats

Patrick Saunders | Denver Post | Sept. 9, 2018

Nolan Arenado was certainly bummed out by the Rockies' 9-6 loss to the Dodgers Sunday afternoon. He was heartened, however, by his two-run home run in the sixth inning that busted one of the worst slumps of his career.

"It felt really good," the all-star third baseman said. "I haven't hit a lot of balls hard lately. Obviously it stinks that we couldn't win, but that felt good."

When Arenado stepped to the plate in the sixth with DJ LeMahieu on second, he was hitless in his last 15 at-bats and mired in a 5-for-41 funk. But Arenado homed in on reliever Pedro Baez's 0-2, 97 mph fastball, crushing the ball 440 feet to left-center. The home run was No. 32 for Arenado, but his first since Aug 24, a span of 48 at-bats.

"I've been putting in the work, so that's not the thing that's frustrating me," said Arenado, who spent Saturday night's game on the bench as manager Bud Black decided to sit him for a game. "I can live with the results, but the part that hurts the most is letting people down and not contributing to the team when they need your help."

Arenado's swing mechanics have been out of whack, but he rediscovered something Sunday.

"I was getting my A swing," he said. "When I'm feeling good, I feel like I can get my A swing off. For my last two at-bats I was able to do that."

Charlie Blackmon also had a big day, blasting two home runs and a double. Blackmon recorded the 10th multi-home run game of his career and his second this season.

"I've been working on some stuff and I've felt better lately," said Blackmon, who has three home runs in the past two games.

The center fielder was excited to see Arenado's bat come back to life.

"Nolan is a lineup changer," Blackmon said. "When you have a guy like that on your team, it totally changes the dynamic of the lineup and how you have to approach that lineup."

Looking ahead

Diamondbacks RHP Zack Godley (14-8, 4.51 ERA) at **Rockies RHP German Marquez** (11-9, 4.05), 6:40 p.m. Monday; ATTRM, 850 AM

After Tyler Anderson's meltdown on Sunday, the Rockies are counting on Marquez to give them a solid start, something he's done consistently in the second half of the season. The 23-year-old right-hander has made eight consecutive quality starts, going 3-1 with a 2.24 ERA. That's the longest streak of quality starts by a Rockies pitcher since Ubaldo Jimenez strung together a franchise record 15 consecutive in 2010. In his last outing, Marquez was allowed two runs on seven hits with 11 strikeouts in the Rockies' 6-2 win over the Giants. Marquez is 1-4 with a 4.72 ERA in career 11 appearance (10 starts) vs. Arizona. Godley has set career highs in wins (14), games (29), starts (28) and strikeouts (170). He's coming off a game in which he served up a costly three-run homer to San Diego's Franmil Reyes in Arizona's 6-2 loss. In five career starts vs. Colorado, Goldley is 4-0 with a 2.56 ERA. He's thrived at Coors Field, going 3-0 with a 2.89 ERA in three starts. — *Patrick Saunders, The Denver Post*

Tuesday: Diamondbacks RHP Zack Greinke (13-9, 3.08) at Rockies RHP Antonio Senzatela (4-5, 4.92), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Wednesday: Diamondbacks LHP Patrick Corbin (11-5, 3.01) at Rockies RHP Jon Gray (11-7, 4.69), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Thursday: Diamondbacks RHP Clay Buchholz (7-2, 2.01) at Rockies LHP Kyle Freeland (14-7, 2.91), 1:10 p.m., ATTRM

Chris Iannetta's key role in the Rockies pursuit of the playoffs

Iannetta is one of the most important players on the team

Renee Dechert | Purple Row | Sept. 9, 2018

We've heard a lot this year about **how good the Rockies' starting rotation is** and how marginal the catchers are, including **bafflement** that for a while the **Rockies** carried three catchers rather than bring a more able bat from **Albuquerque**. As **Mark Knudson** put it: "This lack of star power behind the plate continues to hamper the franchise."

Looking at *FanGraphs*, it's difficult to disagree. Here's the Rockies catcher leaderboard, courtesy of FanGraphs (through September 10):

Rockies catchers, 2018

Player	G	PA	HR	BB%	K%	AVG	OBP	SLG	wOBA	wRC+	Def	WAR
Chris Iannetta	96	314	10	12.7%	23.9%	0.226	0.335	0.392	0.316	82	2.5	0.3
Tony Wolters	64	191	3	10.5%	15.7%	0.172	0.283	0.301	0.262	46	4.7	-0.1
Tom Murphy	33	93	2	3.2%	45.2%	0.222	0.247	0.389	0.267	49	1.3	-0.2
Drew Butera	2	5	0	0.0%	20.0%	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.352	105	0.1	0

In terms of all catchers in MLB, here's how the Rockies rank, according to fWAR:

47 — Iannetta

78 — **Wolters**

87 — **Murphy**

101 — **Butera**

A catching corps with a -0.1 WAR does not inspire confidence. Although these are current numbers, they are consistent with the Rockies' 2018 showing. All season, fans and sportswriters urged the Rockies to make changes, but the team

stayed with **Chris Iannetta**, **Tony Wolters**, and **Tom Murphy** — and then they acquired a player on nobody's wish list, **Drew Butera**.

The batting stats speak for themselves. That said, when reading through *FanGraphs's* discussion of catcher analytics, one passage stands out:

“Finally, game management (or game calling) remains the black box of catcher defense. No one has cracked this code. Catchers play a huge role in determining which pitches to throw and how a pitcher navigates a given lineup. Honestly, there is no public research that provides much insight into game calling. By all accounts, it should matter, we just don't have any idea how to measure it.”

While I have no insight into cracking “the black box” of catcher game management, I'd like to offer some theories as to why this particular group of catchers has worked so well even though they are, statistically, sub-optimal.

At the trade deadline when **Jeff Bridich** said the Rockies were staying with the catchers they had, he **told Thomas Harding**, “We're getting more questions from teams asking if we would trade them catching than us reaching out to anybody.” After the Rockies acquired **Butera**, **Bud Black** explained the decision by saying, “He's a great game-caller, receiver, great baseball mind He brings a lot of intangibles. . . . He brings a lot of positives.”

What are these “positives” that don't show up in the stats? More specifically, what does **Chris Iannetta** bring?

Chris Iannetta is training young catchers

Iannetta's value is twofold. Obviously, he's catching a very young starting pitching staff, and their record suggests he's been effective.

In addition, he's teaching **Wolters** and **Murphy** the intricacies of the position. During spring training, **Nick Groke wrote**, “The Rockies were not about to flirt with the risk of developing two young catchers on the fly in their drive to return to the postseason. But their tutelage is no less pressing. That's why Black, a 15-year pitcher, spends so much of his time instructing his catchers with a firm hand.”

The Rockies have focused on training their young pitchers, but their success is directly related to their collaboration with the catchers. Bridich and Black are keenly aware of this, and Iannetta has been their go-to guy for helping Wolters and Murphy adapt.

Those qualities are not measurable. As Iannetta **explained**, “For a catcher, maybe you had a conversation with a pitcher that changed his mentality, and then he pitched a great game Or another guy gets a hit in a certain situation, and maybe you helped the pitcher relax in a certain situation. You can’t put that on a stat sheet.”

For Bridich and Black, what they lose in Iannetta’s defense (more on that in a minute) and bat, he makes up for with his experience.

Chris Iannetta is calm — very calm

A young team making a playoff run can lose focus amidst a long season. In the same way that he’s teaching pitchers and catchers, Iannetta is keeping his teammates centered.

As **Groke put** it, “Chris Iannetta rarely takes a deep breath because he never needs one. He is a metronome, a constant force of calm in the face of freak-outs.”

Similarly, early in the season, Iannetta **told *Purple Row’s* Jordan Freemyer**,

“I think the goal is just play .500 ball for as long as possible I think if you see the teams that have made it to the playoffs perennially they play .500 baseball and then they go on a couple little winning streaks and then all of a sudden they’re 20 games (over .500).”

In other words, stay calm, and trust the process.

Late in the season, he’s held to his **mantra**: “You want to keep pace right now. You don’t want to take off and get hot at this point You want to wait another few more weeks. But you can’t draw it up like that. That’s not what we’re trying to do. But if you could draw it up, that’s what you’d want.”

The Rockies are well positioned for a postseason appearance. Bridich and Black have worked to shore up the team's emotional skills, and for that, they are looking to Iannetta. He's keeping everyone in the moment, just as a good catcher helps a pitcher work out of a jam.

This is a quality Black models. Here's how Groke **describes** it: "Bud Black is deftly guiding the Rockies from panic and into contention." **Patrick Saunders** agrees, **writing** that Black "simply doesn't get rattled." If Black is projecting calm from the dugout, Iannetta is his on-field presence.

The Rockies have figured out how to maximize Iannetta's effectiveness

Throughout the season, Black has tinkered with various arrangements of catchers and pitchers, trying to find what works. Recent weeks would suggest he's settled on a mix he likes. Iannetta always catches **Kyle Freeland**. That said, he seems to work less well with **Jon Gray**, who is more often caught by **Tony Wolters**. But lately the Rockies have tended to use Wolters to catch the starting pitcher and then gone to Iannetta in late innings, first as a pinch hitter and then as, essentially, the closing catcher.

This makes sense for two reasons. One, Wolters is clearly the **better defensive catcher**, so it makes sense to use him early. Two, Iannetta, 35, is not a young player; this arrangement minimizes the physical wear and tear.

Using Iannetta in this way also allows Black to maximize his late-game presence. Iannetta is a better hitter (.225/.337/.380) than Wolters (.172/.283/.301), and Black has come to rely on Iannetta's late-game performance at the plate. For example, consider his **walk-off single** against the **Giants** and his **walk-off walk** against the **Dodgers**.

Here's Groke **describing** Black's decision to go with Iannetta over **Carlos González** in a pinch hit situation:

In the same game, with the score tied in the ninth inning and the bases loaded, Black decided against using **Carlos Gonzalez** as a pinch-hitter against Dodgers' right-hander **Dylan Floro**. **Gonzalez** crushes right-handers. And Chris Iannetta was 0-for-3 that day. But Black knew that Iannetta is a more picky hitter and **Gonzalez** is better as a starter than off the bench. Iannetta walked to score the winning run.

In other words, Iannetta brings with him those intangibles that Black values. Consider this tweet from **Jake Shapiro** describing Iannetta's hitting strategy:

Jake Shapiro@Shapalicious

Replying to @RFreemyer

basically told me that he shrinks not expands with two strikes because the odds that he makes good contact on a pitch he chases to a corner/outside are marginal meanwhile if it's on the corner it's 50/50 strike/ball and they have to try and give him a better pitch or he gets on.

10:09 PM - Sep 5, 2018

These are not the kinds of decisions young players are known for making. Black values this skill more than he values lannetta's metrics.

lannetta has the makings of an MLB manager — and, in effect, Black is training him for that role, just as lannetta is teaching his younger teammates. That's an asset. More than being a statistical liability, Chris lannetta is a key member of this team, and if the Rockies make it to the postseason, he will play a significant part in getting them to Rocktober.

Dodgers 9, Rockies 6: Miscues haunt Rockies in loss

The team rallied, but couldn't overcome an early deficit

Eric Garcia McKinley & Sam Bradfield | Purple Row | Sept. 9, 2018

In a series of strange games, the Rockies came up short, dropping the series finale to the **Dodgers** 9-6. In this particular game, a poor start by Tyler Anderson and miscues by Chris Iannetta, Matt Holliday, and **Gerardo Parra** ultimately doomed the team. Luckily, even with the loss they still remain in first place in the NL West, but now the lead is squeezed to 0.5 with the Arizona Diamondbacks coming in for a four game series starting tomorrow.

Tyler Anderson's struggles

It wasn't as bad as his last start, but **Tyler Anderson** offered up another stinker. He allowed four runs and five hits in 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. The hits were loud, too. He didn't get any favors from the defense behind him either. **Matt Holliday** whiffed on a line drive, which led to a run, and **Chris Iannetta** dropped a sure out after a minor collision with **Manny Machado** at home plate. With the large stable of relievers, it was easy for Black to remove **Anderson** without him getting of the third inning. He probably could have removed him a batter or two sooner.

Is Nolan back?

There was a silver lining in this game and it was Nolan Arenado. Arenado sat out of yesterday's win. It was a day off designed to get him right at the plate. While he only had one hit, it was a well struck two-run home run to left center field. Let's hope that swing sticks around over the next three weeks.

Arenado also made a couple of ice plays at third base. You can tell there is still some concern with the shoulder, but he's still making plays a lot of other third baseman don't.

Up next

The **Rockies** have four more important games up ahead, this time against the third place **Diamondbacks**. German Márquez starts against Zack Godley. First pitch is scheduled for 6:40 MT.

Colorado Rockies: Who takes the mound in a must win game?

Aaron Hurt | Rox Pile | Sept. 10, 2018

The Colorado Rockies lost the important 3-games series to the Dodgers over the weekend, shrinking their division lead to the slimmest of margins.

As disappointing as it may be, if anything, this weekend series answered one of the biggest questions should they make playoffs. If the Rockies are faced with a winner-take-all situation, who takes the mound as the starting pitcher?

With any luck, the Rockies will win the NL West and won't have to worry about it, but if they do fall into the Wild Card game, they will have to make a huge decision between **Jon Gray**, **Kyle Freeland**, and **German Marquez** getting the starting nod.

Patrick Saunders and Mark Kiszla of the Denver Post debated this very question last month but a lot more has been learned since then.

For as good as Marquez has been in the second half of the season, he is the least likely of the three to be handed the ball. His 9.00 ERA in the first inning is not what the Rockies want to start off in a win or go home situation. So let's move on to Gray and Freeland.

In the past year, Jon Gray has pitched in 3 games that were relatively high stress games: The Wild Card game last season, Opening Day this season, and Friday night opposite **Clayton Kershaw**.

In those games, Gray is 0-3, giving up 9 earned runs, 17 hits, striking out 8, and walking 8 in only 9.1 innings of work.

On the other hand, Kyle Freeland has been untested with only Saturday night's game opposite **Walker Buehler** being a playoff quality type game. Freeland, of course, pitched a solid game going 6 innings, giving up 1 run, and striking out 8 to earn the win.

Looking at season stats, there is no comparison between the two. Freeland is by far the best starting pitcher on the team. Gray has pitched extremely well since being recalled from the minors in July but Freeland has been even better in the second half.

Since the break, Freeland has a 2.52 ERA in 10 starts, while Gray has a 3.41 ERA in 9 starts.

Colorado Rockies Player Splits: 2nd Half

Name	W	L	ERA	G	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO	HBP	WHIP	SO9
Kyle Freeland	6	1	2.52	10	60.2	53	17	17	3	25	61	3	1.286	9.0
Jon Gray	3	0	3.41	9	58.0	45	24	22	10	15	43	3	1.034	6.7

Provided by **Baseball-Reference.com**

This all may not matter with the NL Wild Card game being played on a Tuesday which **Bud Black** would have to factor in days rest.

Forbid the Rockies don't have to get to that decision and win the NL West outright but if they get into a win or go home game, Kyle Freeland should be handed the baseball.

Colorado Rockies: The offense will be the deciding factor

Aaron Hurt | Rox Pile | Sept. 9, 2018

To put it simply, the Colorado Rockies will go as far as its offense will take them. For 141 games, we have been told that this team is going break out and hit. With the most important stretch of the season upon us, it's time to get it going.

Believe it or not the pitching staff has kept the **Colorado Rockies** in games. Yes, they have been ridiculously bad in the first inning and the bullpen is shaky at best but, for the most part, they have kept them in ballgames.

It's the offense that must hold up its end of the bargain for the Rockies to make the playoffs.

Friday and Saturday night's games against the Los Angeles Dodgers are prime examples of just that. On Friday, the offense didn't show up when needed and they lost the game. Yes, they were facing future Hall of Famer **Clayton Kershaw**, but he wasn't the same three-time **Cy Young** Award winner that everyone has learned to fear over the years. The Rockies had multiple opportunities to take control of that game but failed to do so scoring only two runs in six innings off Kershaw. Add hitting 1-for-9 with runners in scoring position and leaving 10 on base for the game and that's a recipe for a loss.

In Saturday's win, the offense may not have been as productive against rookie phenom **Walker Buehler**, but it got the big hits that the previous night was lacking. The Rockies ended up batting 2-for-3 with runners in scoring position and only left three runners on base.

We all know the struggles of the offense, but it is unimaginable to think that a Rockies team, who is leading the NL West, would be having their worst statistical year in franchise history. This club may be in the top third of the majors in most offensive categories this year but, historically, they rank dead last in batting average at .254 and second to last in on base percentage at .319. When they have gotten on base, they are hitting .255 with runners in scoring position. It's not a horrible number ... but it is not what we have come to expect around Colorado.

If this team is going to make the playoffs, it obviously starts with getting **Nolan Arenado** back to being Nolan Arenado. His slump hasn't hurt this team badly yet as the they are 6-1 this month, but they will need him to get hot and win them a few games down the stretch.

If anything, Arenado has hurt **Matt Holliday**'s production. Since joining the team on August 23, Holliday is 11-for-27 (.407) with two home runs but only three RBI. The lack of traffic on the bases in front of Holliday is keeping important runs off the scoreboard.

There has been a playoff atmosphere already with three weeks to play in the season. The Rockies bats have to deliver in order to win their first-ever NL West title.

Colorado Rockies morning after: Pressure is what you make of it

By Kevin Henry | Rox Pile | Sept. 9, 2018

Pressure? What pressure? Sure, the Colorado Rockies are in the driver's seat to grab the franchise's first-ever National League West title, but don't even suggest to manager Bud Black or anyone else in the clubhouse that these are pressure-packed games.

Sure, to me and you, they are. When **Colorado Rockies** closer **Wade Davis** was facing the tying run in the top of the ninth of **Saturday's 4-2 win** over the Los Angeles Dodgers at Coors Field, yes, there was pressure. I felt it. How about you? Many of you on Twitter certainly did.

Davis did his job, however, recording his league-leading 39th save of the season and nailing down the win for **Kyle Freeland**, who moved to 14-7 on the campaign with his 20th quality start of the season. Scattering four hits over six innings and giving up just a solo home run to **Chris Taylor** in the fifth inning, Freeland once again showed why he should absolutely be in the conversation for **Cy Young** voting.

A 2.91 ERA has earned him that right. A 2.47 ERA has earned **Scott Oberg** the confidence of Black to come in and get three huge strikeouts in the seventh inning. A 1.93 ERA is just another part of what has been a fantastic season for **Adam Ottavino**.

And, by the way, if Freeland deserves some Cy Young chatter, doesn't Ottavino deserve some Comeback Player of the Year buzz after not even making the Wild Card roster last season with a 5.06 ERA? Just saying.

Entering the game with just a half-game lead over the Dodgers in the division and less than 24 hours after an **emotionally charged loss to Los Angeles**, Colorado's clubhouse was loose before the game.

After the game? Freeland took a few minutes before addressing the media because he needed to finish a huge ping pong matchup, teaming with **Gerardo Parra** for the win.

If the pressure is rising at 20th and Blake, it doesn't seem that way. With 21 games left in the season, Black is preaching the same message he was when I first interviewed him in March in Arizona. Be ready for anything ... and that includes being right in the middle of a three-team jockey match for a guaranteed spot in the postseason.

“Whether it’s a spring training game, whether it’s a game in May, whether it’s a game in the dog days of August or September, we have to play the same game,” Black emphatically told Rox Pile and other members of the media after Saturday’s victory. “Pressure is what you make of it. I get it. Our group will play at a high level of intensity and continue to embrace, in your word (addressing Patrick Saunders of *The Denver Post*, who asked the question), pressure.

“It’s great. Our guys want it. They want to be in this situation. But we can’t do anything different. We have to play even keel with intensity and fire and poise. And Kyle did that, man. He did great.”

Kyle did do that, striking out the side in the third as part of a stretch of retiring seven of eight batters prior to Taylor’s solo shot. He also did it in the first inning when **Justin Turner** laced a one-out single to get on base. However, the next batter, **Manny Machado**, dribbled one back to Freeland, who started the double play to end the frame.

In arguably what could have been his most pressure-packed start of his career, Freeland shrugged his shoulders and made his pitches when he needed to ... just like he has in so many games this season.

“It’s another game, in my eyes. It’s another game in the team’s eyes,” Freeland told Rox Pile and other reporters after the game.

Sunday will be the same, when the Dodgers try to win the series. Monday through Thursday will be the same as well, when Arizona comes to town to try to knock the Rockies out of first place. The final nine games of the NL West slate will be as well ... all on the road and against the Giants, Dodgers and Diamondbacks.

The pressure is there, but the Rockies don’t seem to be fazed by it. They expect to win ... and that’s just what they’re doing.

State pride runs deep in Rockies Rookie-ball team

By Rich Allen | BSN Denver | Sept. 10, 2018

GRAND JUNCTION – The state of Colorado doesn't have the deepest roots in baseball lore. While New York and California have churned out talent for decades, the Centennial State is still much more prominently known for its 300 days of sunshine and affinity for football, the outdoors, and craft beer.

But there have been some standouts from the union's 38th addition, with minor league franchises dotting its history, to MLB talents like Hall of Famer Goose Gosage and soon-to-be Roy Halladay. Yet, Chase Headley's 130 home runs is the most for a Colorado-born big leaguer, a decidedly mediocre mark for a place whose altitude makes it synonymous with the longball.

That tide is turning, though, and has been ever since the Rockies gave Colorado an MLB identity. Of the state's 93 natives to play in the league, 23 debuted after 2000. Today, ace-apparent homegrown talent Kyle Freeland is leading the charge of bringing Coloradans to the forefront of the big-league stage, and David Bote's overnight sensationalism gives locals a nice anecdote to be proud of.

But an institution needs a strong foundation. Very few Colorado natives reach professional baseball, fewer still MLB. It starts from the ground up: not with the Rockies based in Denver, but the ones up I-70 in Grand Junction, a community that loves their baseball perhaps more than any other in the state.

This year, the Rookie-ball Rockies are manifesting the growth of the sport in Colorado, starting at the top with first-year manager Jake Opitz, a native of Englewood and graduate of Heritage High School in Littleton. Opitz told the GJ Sentinel I that his new position is a "dream job." But beyond him, four players had ties to Colorado before turning professional, presumably the most the level has had since the team's inception in 2012.

Among them is Reagan Todd, a standout at Grand Junction's Colorado Mesa University this past season before being selected in the 32nd round of the First-Year Player Draft on June 6. After growing up in Centennial, Todd spent his first two collegiate seasons at Arizona State University before returning to Colorado to anchor the rotation of the most prolific program in the state.

When he made his pro debut on June 19, it was on the same mound he helped the hometown Mavericks clinch the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference Tournament title and a trip to the NCAA Division II playoffs.

"When you grow up in Colorado, you want to be a Rockie," Opitz said of Todd. "So, he said for him, it's basically a dream job also. To be a Rockie, and to get him here to pitch in his home stadium, basically, it was a pretty special night for him. I think he was a little nervous, but he showed some good things and some stuff to work on also."

Todd pitched in 12 games in Junction before earning a promotion to Low-A Boise on Aug. 16. In Rookie, he posted a high ERA of 7.20, but the local would be the first to tell you it isn't because of the altitude.

For regular BSN Denver readers, his quotes about pitching in his home state should sound familiar.

"Yeah, there is a little difference pitching in Colorado, your numbers might be a little inflated," Todd said. "But at the same time, you're pitching against the same opponents in the exact same conditions. The only thing is we're actually used to it more than our opponents, so when people use that excuse I just kind of tell them to suck it up, because you're opponent is doing the exact same thing you are."

Todd was joined by another Reagan in the Rockies rotation, second-year Rookie-baller Reagan Biechler, who was born in Colorado Springs and lived there through high school. He pitched four years at Division I Wichita State and was selected by the Rockies in the 31st round of the 2017 draft. Biechler, pitching to a 2.55 ERA, earned a promotion to Boise on the same day as Todd.

But Todd has a much more direct connection to another new teammate: Zach Hall.

"I'm pretty sure he hit a home run off me," Todd said.

Hall isn't a Colorado native, but he is quickly becoming the pride of Colorado Springs baseball, being the first player drafted out of the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, which established its baseball program before the 2017 season.

Coming to UCCS from a community college in California, he credits his development into a professional-caliber player to the staff of head coach Dave Hajek, who coached in the Rockies organization for more than a decade and played for then-Rockies affiliate Colorado Springs Sky Sox in 1999.

Hajek turned Hall into a conference first-teamer and a powerful, left-handed bat in the outfield that produced 20 home runs in his final collegiate season. On March 10, one of those blasts came off Todd in the duo's future home park, Soplizio Field. Hall also tagged Todd for a double in that game, which would chase him from the contest after the next hitter. But Hall remembers the dinger more clearly.

"It was a fastball just out over the plate," Hall recalled through chuckles. "Reagan's a cool guy. He's a good guy and a good teammate. We joke around, but we're all in the same place now."

The power that introduced Hall to Todd in college has translated in pro ball, even if the rest of his game that made him an All-American hasn't followed yet. Hall clipped .321/.412/.679 through his first nine pro games, but has fallen to .201/.266/.468 since. His eight home runs and natural power have made him a passable player, even if he's hovering near the Mendoza line.

But it's the fourth Coloradan that has shined the brightest so far. Niko Decolati only lived in Boulder for the first six months of his life, but the sixth-round pick is still endeared to the state.

"There's a lot of sentimental value," Decolati said. "My mom's side of the family lives in Boulder and my dad's side lives in Denver, so we pretty much made annual trips out here. I went to my first Rockies game when I was like five years old, and that was an awesome experience."

Decolati recounted that first game to Anne Rogers for MLB.com, which is definitely worth the read. That was one of the first steps in molding him into a professional baseball player, the next of which included chasing Bryce Harper foul balls at College of Southern Nevada and playing on a travel ball team coached by Kris Bryant's father. Now, he's just a highway from the place where it started. And he's contributing well.

Earning Pioneer League All-Star honors, Decolati is forcing his way onto the radar of many. Slugging over .500 and swiping 15 stolen bases so far, he's putting tools on display that should impress. The recently-turned-21-year-old also has the versatility that the Rockies franchise has begun to preach, slotting in at all three outfield positions after playing primarily third base and shortstop in his college career.

While Decolati might be the most promising of the group in terms of prospective future, just the fact that there's a group at all is significant. Look at the four: Decolati, the native who came back, Biechler and Todd, the arms that found success at altitude and made careers out of it, and Hall, the inherited son who *left* California to get his baseball break. An institution is healthy when it produces in such variety whether it be at the collegiate or high school level, or even drums up interest in youth.

"Baseball's the same game I've played since I was five years old. But, it's just kind of a different environment in professional ball, especially playing for the Rockies, because I've been a fan my entire life," Todd said.

As ingrained as the Denver Broncos are in Colorado culture, they've had so much longer to grab a foothold. Now, after 25 years of admittedly lackluster results, baseball has struggled to catch up. But, as the kids of the 2007 World Series berth come of age and start to find their way into professional baseball, maybe the sport has a place in Colorado after all. Todd was among a record-high four players drafted out of Mesa this year, a huge step for the premier program in the state.

As the Rockies continue to find ways to compete and the game grows overall in the region, like UCCS's shiny-new program, maybe the sport can start to make a dent.

Rockies rally falls short, Dodgers take series

By Drew Creasman | BSN Denver | Sept. 9, 2018

DENVER – It was an afternoon in which almost nothing went right for the Colorado Rockies. They managed an inspiring late rally but it came up just short on a day in which their pitching just could not keep the Los Angeles Dodgers away from home plate, dropping the series finale 9-6.

It was a short and difficult day for Tyler Anderson in a stretch that has been defined by difficult days. He didn't have good command and he couldn't catch a break, limiting him to two-and-two-thirds innings in the game. He gave up four runs, three of them earned.

The Dodgers jumped all over Anderson early beginning with a line drive single to left for Justin Turner. He came all the way around to score when Manny Machado lined one into the left-center field gap for a double. David Freese followed that by shooting a single to right but Gerardo Parra came up with a perfect throw home, beating Machado to the plate. Catcher Chris Iannetta couldn't quite secure the ball before Machado ran through him rather than slide, knocking the baseball out of the glove and scoring the second run of the game.

The Rockies got one of those runs back on a home run for Charlie Blackmon in the bottom of the first. It was the 30th leadoff home run of his career.

But Los Angeles kept hitting Anderson hard, Enrique Hernandez greeting him with a no-doubt home run to left on the first pitch of the second inning. After a couple of hard-hit outs, Brian Dozier drew a walk and Turner ripped one to left but right at Matt Holliday. Unfortunately for the Rockies, Holliday whiffed on the baseball, allowing another run to score.

Anderson gave up a single and a walk in the third and with two outs and at 72 pitches, Bud Black decided that would be it. He went to Chad Bettis who gave up a hard grounder down the third base line but Nolan Arenado made a spectacular diving stop and throw to get the final out and strand a pair of runners.

Despite all the traffic and momentum for the Dodgers offense, it was still a three-run game and that was with two tough-luck runs.

Colorado finally got a huge break in the bottom of the fourth when Matt Kemp lost a flyball in right off the bat of DJ LeMahieu who ended up at third with a triple. Arenado's struggles at the plate continued when he struck out on a check-swing at a 3-2 pitch out of the zone, but Trevor Story got the job done with a ground ball to the left side, making it a 4-2 game.

Bettis was still out there in the fifth and gave up a leadoff bloop single to right for Kemp. Freese followed with a walk and Chris Taylor launched one over the head of Blackmon in center for a two-run double, putting the Dodgers ahead 6-2. Hernandez lofted another one that direction but Blackmon was able to track it down and haul it in with a leaping catch.

Taylor was able to tag up and advance to third. With that, Bud Black went back to his bullpen, calling on 29-year-old DJ Johnson to make his MLB debut. It couldn't have gone any better for him, getting back-to-back strikeouts to strand the runner at third.

Yency Almonte came on in the sixth and did not have his command either, walking Cody Bellinger on five pitches before surrendering a home run to deep center off the bat of Turner, putting the Dodgers way up at 8-2.

The Rockies climbed back into the game in the bottom of the sixth, though. Blackmon led things off with a double to right and came around to score when DJ LeMahieu scorched one into the gap for a double. That led to a huge potential moment moving forward when Arenado finally connected with a baseball, blasting it over the wall in left-center field for his 32nd home run of the season, pulling Colorado to within three at 8-5.

He was 0-for-15 before that.

Jake McGee worked around a misplay from Holliday in left that led to a triple, keeping the score where it was in the seventh with a big strikeout.

Suenghwan Oh came on for the eighth and surrendered a double to Turner, his fourth hit in the game, unleashed a wild pitch and walked a man after recording an out to put runners at the corners with one away. Black went to lefty Harrison Musgrave who got a lineout to second then threw a wild one himself but raced home and beat Turner to the plate, applying a great tag after a beautiful slide and throw from Iannetta.

Blackmon followed that moment up by scorching his second home run of the game in the bottom of the eighth, laying into a low fastball and depositing it into the Rockies bullpen to make it a two-run game.

The Dodgers picked up an insurance run in the ninth when Hernandez tripled into the pull gap and scored on a liner from Alex Verdugo that barely escaped a diving Ian Desmond at first.

Desi led off the ninth with a single and the Rockies got three straight line drives but they were all right at fielders, and the rally came up just short.

Colorado falls to 78-64 but remains in first place by a half-game in the NL West.

FINAL STATS:

Tyler Anderson: 2.2 IP, 5 H, 4 R, 3 ER, 2 BB, 2 K

Chad Bettis: 1.2 IP, 3 H, 2 ER, 1 BB

DJ Johnson: 0.2 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 2 K

Yency Almonte: 1 IP, 2 H, 2 ER, 1 BB, 1 K

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

Seunghwan Oh: 0.1 IP, 1 H, 0 ER, 1 BB

Harrison Musgrave: 1.1 IP, 2 H, 1 ER, 2 BB, 2 K

Charlie Blackmon: 3-for-4, 3 R, 2 RBI (2 HR: 26)

DJ LeMahieu: 2-for-4, 2 R, 1 RBI

Nolan Arenado: 1-for-3, 1 R, 2 RBI (HR: 32)

Tyler Anderson's atrocious pitching helps doom Rockies to 9-6 loss

By Aniello Piro | Mile High Sports | Sept. 9, 2018

The Colorado Rockies lost the Los Angeles Dodgers Sunday afternoon, 9-6. The loss dropped Colorado's record to 78-64 and their lead on the Dodgers in the National League West to just a half game.

Tyler Anderson was the starting pitcher for Colorado and struggled from the get-go.

Conversely, LA was hot out of the gate, with Justin Turner hitting a single and then scoring on a RBI double hit by All-Star Manny Machado early in the first inning. The Dodgers pushed another run across the plate in the first when David Freese hit into a fielder's choice, allowing Machado to score and establishing a 2-0 lead for Los Angeles.

The Rockies got a run back immediately in the bottom of the first inning as Charlie Blackmon led off with a solo home run to left field, making the score 2-1.

Anderson's struggles continued into the second inning where he surrendered a solo home run to Enrique Hernandez.

Anderson then recorded two outs before issuing a walk to Brian Dozier. From there, Turner hit a routine fly ball to left field that Matt Holiday dropped, allowing Dozier to score and extend the Dodgers' lead to 4-1.

Anderson struggled all afternoon and was pulled after just 2.2 innings, allowing three earned runs on five hits while striking out two batters and issuing two walks.

The Rockies were able to cut the deficit in the fourth inning, which started with a triple from DJ LeMahieu. Trevor Story later grounded out to third base with LeMahieu crossing the plate to make the score 4-2.

The Dodgers added to their lead in the sixth inning. Chad Bettis, who was pitching in place of Anderson, allowed a leadoff single to Matt Kemp and then walked David Freese. Chris Taylor then drove home two runs via a double to deep center field.

Los Angeles added an additional two runs in the sixth inning when Turner hit a two-run home run to center field, extending their lead to 8-2.

The Rockies managed to creep back into the game in the sixth inning. The top of Colorado's lineup raked, as Blackmon hit a double to left field then scored as LeMahieu followed with a RBI double to left center field. Nolan Arenado then broke out of his 5-for-41 slump by blasting a two-run home run to center field to make the score 8-5.

Blackmon proceeded to hit his second solo home run of the game in the bottom of the eighth inning, bringing the Rockies to within two runs of the Dodgers. However, as the Rockies made one stride, the Dodgers further distanced themselves as they scored an RBI single from Alex Verdugo, putting Los Angeles on top 9-6.

The Rockies were unable to come back in the ninth inning and lost to the division rivals.

Colorado will welcome the Arizona Diamondbacks to town for a four-game series starting Monday night at Coors Field with first pitch set for 6:40 MST.

Turner's 4 hits lift Dodgers past NL West-leading Rox 9-6

By Associated Press | ESPN.com | Sept. 9, 2018

DENVER -- Rich Hill broke his own personal rule: He peeked at the standings before mid-September.

Curiosity simply got the better of him. It was appropriate, too, since this game had a playoff feel.

Justin Turner hit a two-run homer as part of a four-hit day and the Los Angeles Dodgers climbed closer to the first-place Colorado Rockies in the NL West with a 9-6 win Sunday.

The Dodgers captured two of three from the Rockies in a pivotal series and moved within a half-game for the division lead. Colorado has never won the NL West crown.

"This was the biggest game of the year so far for us," said Enrique Hernandez, who hit his 20th homer of the season. "If we do make the playoffs, we're getting good preparation. Every game is a must-win. Every game is huge."

That's why Hill typically doesn't look until at least Sept. 15. It couldn't be helped, though, with everyone around him talking about it.

"We just have to be concerned with what we need to do," he said.

Hill (8-5) allowed four runs over five innings to pick up his first career win against the Rockies. He gave up a homer to Charlie Blackmon on his fifth pitch of the game, but then found his rhythm.

Kenta Maeda gave up a single to start the ninth before turning it over to Scott Alexander. The lefty got the Rockies 1-2-3 for his third save.

Alexander was filling in for All-Star closer Kenley Jansen, who didn't make the trip to the Mile High City after a team cardiologist recommended he not pitch at altitude after suffering an irregular heartbeat episode in Denver last month.

The bullpen was 2 for 2 in saves chances without Jansen.

"They answered the bell," Turner said.

As did Turner, who went 4 for 5 with an intentional walk as he kept wearing out Rockies pitching. He had a single in the first, double in the fourth, a two-run homer in the sixth that gave the Dodgers an 8-2 lead, and another double in the eighth. He's hitting .385 at Coors Field this season.

"I felt good. I felt really good," Turner said. "I felt like I swung at good pitches and got good results."

His only mishap was a misstep rounding first base in the opening inning. He bruised his left heel.

"I'll be all right," he said.

Blackmon finished with two solo homers, including one in the eighth that made it 8-6, and Nolan Arenado broke out of a slump with a two-run shot in the sixth. It was Arenado's first homer since Aug. 24.

"Obviously it stinks that we couldn't win, but it felt good that I was able to hit a ball hard there," Arenado said.

Lefty Tyler Anderson (6-8) lasted only 2 2/3 innings in allowing four runs, three earned. He's 0-5 with a 6.75 ERA since his last win on July 4.

"It centers around the fastball and you have to locate it," Rockies manager Bud Black explained. "Today, Tyler didn't."

A few Rockies miscues led to some early Dodgers runs: Catcher Chris Iannetta dropped the ball while trying to tag Manny Machado at home in the first and left fielder Matt Holliday fumbled a Turner liner for an error in the second.

Colorado also turned in several big plays, including a diving stop by Arenado and throw to first from his knee in the third.

"We can't let this game affect us," Arenado said. "Losing's never fun but when you have big games coming up, which we put ourselves in that position, it's easier to move on."

JANSEN UPDATE

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said he checked in with Jansen and he's "doing well." He will join the team in Cincinnati.

Told that Jansen posted a workout video on Instagram , Roberts smiled.

"I guess I don't need to talk to a player, just go on social media these days," Roberts cracked.

DEBUT

Rockies RHP DJ Johnson made his major league debut in the fifth. He struck out two, including Austin Barnes and had the ball tossed into the dugout.

UP NEXT

Dodgers: LHP Alex Wood (8-6, 3.37 ERA) gets the start to open a three-game series Monday in Cincinnati. The Reds will throw LHP Cody Reed (0-2, 4.81).

Rockies: A four-game series against Arizona -- another team right on the Rockies' heels. RHP German Marquez (11-9, 4.05) starts Monday for Colorado, while the Diamondbacks throw RHP Zack Godley (14-8, 4.51).