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**MEDIA CLIPS – Oct. 10, 2018**

**Rockies' end-of-season bullpen analysis: The good news, the arms with promise and the downright ugly**  
*Grading out the performances of all of the Colorado relievers, plus forecasts into their roles heading into the 2019 season*

By **KYLE NEWMAN** | [knewman@denverpost.com](mailto:knewman@denverpost.com) | The Denver Post  
October 10, 2018 at 6:00 am

In the up-and-down year that was the Rockies' 91-win season, no facet of the team took as much heat — or rode the season's roller-coaster as hard — as the bullpen, which the Rockies invested more than \$100 million in during last offseason.

Following is a breakdown of the Rockies' relievers and their outlook for 2019, plus grades for their performances this season.

*All contract information is via Baseball Reference and Cot's Baseball Contracts.*

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## **THE GOOD NEWS**

### **RHP Adam Ottavino**

After a rough 2017, Ottavino dove head-first into pitch development during the offseason. He turned in the best season of his career, setting a club record for strikeouts (112) by a relief pitcher. Ottavino displayed one of the best sliders in the game. Unfortunately, due to contracts handed out to Wade Davis, Bryan Shaw and Jake McGee, it's unlikely the free agent will be re-signed. **Grade: A**

### **RHP Scott Oberg**

Oberg's emergence as a bullpen stalwart was one of the most pleasant surprises of the Rockies' season. He was the best arm in the 'pen during September, when he posted a 1.72 ERA in 14 games. He spent May in Triple-A and then overcame a midseason back strain. Oberg is under club control until he hits free agency in 2022. **Grade: A**

#### **RHP Wade Davis**

Colorado's highly paid closer led the National League with 43 saves, but he also blew a career-high six saves, the second highest total in the league. Still, despite occasional dramatics, Davis was about as lockdown as you could ask of a reliever pitching in high-leverage situations at elevation. He'll be around at least two more seasons, with a mutual option in 2021. **Grade: A-**

#### **RHP Seunghwan Oh**

In a steal at the trade deadline, the Rockies acquired Oh from Toronto in exchange for three prospects. The "Final Boss" immediately firmed up the struggling 'pen, posting a 2.53 ERA and eight holds in 25 appearances. Colorado paid Oh around \$500,000 for his services, and he could be brought back for a relative bargain in 2019 via a \$2.5 million club option. **Grade: A-**

#### **LHP Chris Rusin**

Despite consistent struggles throughout the meat of the season, Rusin's best splits came in the first and last months, when he posted a 3.48 ERA in six games in April and a 2.08 ERA in nine games in September. That final month gives hope that Rusin, Colorado's most efficient reliever in 2017, can again be a lynch-pin in 2019. The southpaw is under club control for two more seasons. **Grade: B-**

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### **ARMS WITH PROMISE**

#### **RHP DJ Johnson**

The journeyman's first big-league opportunity was a long time coming, and the 29-year-old who began his professional career as an undrafted free agent with the Rays in 2010 made the most of his September call-up. Johnson gave up three runs in 6 1/3 innings with nine strikeouts, and posted five consecutive scoreless appearances to begin his career. **Grade: A**

#### **LHP Harrison Musgrave**

In a bullpen short on reliable left-handers, the rookie earned higher-leverage innings throughout the season after making his debut April 23. His 3.26 ERA in 30-plus innings at home were more than decent for a young reliever being thrown into

the Coors Field fire. It would surprise no one if Musgrave emerged with a breakout 2019 season, much like Scott Oberg did this year. **Grade: B+**

#### **RHP Chad Bettis**

After finger-blister issues and the emergence of Antonia Senzatela bumped Bettis to the bullpen in mid-August, the veteran posted a respectable 2.38 ERA in 11-plus innings as a reliever. Bettis, the club's highest-paid starter of 2018 at \$2 million, will no doubt vie for a spot in the rotation again in 2019 — especially with the question marks surrounding Jon Gray. The right-hander is set to become a free agent in 2021. **Grade: B**

#### **RHP Yency Almonte**

“Showtime” impressed enough in a small second-half sample size following his big-league debut June 21 to earn a September call-up. He allowed two runs in five-plus innings over the final month. While there is certainly plenty of room for improvement — Almonte allowed 80.0 percent of inherited runners to score in 14-plus total innings — a heater that can climb into the upper 90s and a bulldog mentality provide great promise. **Grade: B**

#### **LHP Sam Howard**

Howard wasn't on the postseason rosters and threw only four innings across four games this season. With not much of a sample size in LoDo, it's hard to effectively grade him, as he shuttled back-and-forth between the Rockies and Triple-A Albuquerque three times while posting a 5.06 ERA in 96 innings for the Isotopes. **Grade: C**

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### **THE DOWNRIGHT UGLY**

#### **LHP Mike Dunn**

Nothing went according to plan for Dunn this season. After posting a 4.47 ERA in 50-plus innings of relief in 2017, Dunn's injury-riddled 2018 left him with a 9.00 ERA over 17 innings. He first went to the disabled list in April for back spasms, and then again in early June for a left rhomboid strain, before making his final appearance of the season July 3. Dunn battled a left A/C joint issue that had been bothering him since he tweaked it last offseason, and that injury finally necessitated season-ending surgery in September. He expects to be fully healthy for 2019. **Grade: D+**

#### **LHP Jake McGee**

Another offseason deal that blew up in the Rockies' face, McGee was right behind Shaw as he posted a 6.49 ERA in 51-plus innings. McGee's early-season struggles after signing a three-year contract similar to Bryan Shaw's were followed by an even worse second-half, including a 7.59 ERA in a dozen August appearances. The left-hander is due at least \$20

million over the next three seasons (including a \$2 million buyout in 2021) as he, too, will become expensive dead weight in 2019 if he doesn't turn things around. **Grade: D-**

#### **RHP Bryan Shaw**

After signing a three-year, \$27 million deal last offseason, Shaw became was the Rockies' biggest bullpen liability. He made the contract general manager Jeff Bridich gave him look like a mistake. Shaw had a 5.93 ERA, five blown saves and innumerable blown leads and never could get right following a midseason phantom disabled list stint for a "strained calf." He was relegated to mop-up duty in the final couple months and was left off the postseason rosters. He is due at least \$19.5 million over the next three seasons (including a \$2 million buyout in 2021). **Grade: F**

## **Kiz vs. Saunders: Should Rockies trade third baseman Nolan Arenado in the offseason?**

*How about a five-year, \$150 million deal?*

By **PATRICK SAUNDERS** | [psaunders@denverpost.com](mailto:psaunders@denverpost.com) and **MARK KISZLA** | [mkiszla@denverpost.com](mailto:mkiszla@denverpost.com) | The Denver Post

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### **Question: Should the Rockies trade third baseman Nolan Arenado in the offseason?**

**Kiz:** Where did the Rocktober magic go? After 162 games and six months of good vibrations, Colorado's playoff run ended abruptly with a single game at Coors Field as the crowd booed their local heroes. Fans even booed Nolan Arenado, who hit .188 in four postseason games. This is a team with a bright future. But should Arenado be part of it? He's on schedule to be a free agent after next season. So would it be wise to trade Arenado this winter?

**Saunders:** Kiz, this is a tough question for me, so imagine how difficult it is for general manager Jeff Bridich and for Arenado. I think the Rockies need to do everything they can — within reason — to sign Arenado to a long-term deal. He's a once-in-a-generation player and the Rockies need his platinum glove and his power. This team is already losing a lot of its core, most notably second baseman DJ LeMahieu, so I don't think it can afford to lose Arenado, too. If the future is bright, Arenado needs to be a part of it. Don't trade him.

Should the Rockies trade Nolan Arenado in the offseason?

**Kiz:** The Rockies need more than one missing piece before they can be considered a legitimate contender to win the World Series. But it's hard to envision Colorado closer to the first division title in franchise history without Arenado's glove at third base and his bat in the lineup. I'm not against exploring a blockbuster trade. But tell me: With Arenado entering the final year of his contract, how likely would it be for the Rockies to get an elite player back in trade?

**Saunders:** I can't help but think back to 2008 when the Rockies couldn't reach a deal with Matt Holliday, so they traded him to Oakland in exchange for closer Huston Street, outfielder Carlos Gonzalez and pitcher Greg Smith. It turned out to be a very good deal for Colorado. But I think a trade for Arenado would have to bring back an even bigger haul. In my mind, trading Arenado would have to include a front-of-the-rotation starting pitcher, as well as a good bat and some hot prospects. I don't think that's very likely to happen.

**Kiz:** If the Rockies are unable to work out a contract extension with Arenado, the questions regarding his future will linger over the Colorado clubhouse throughout 2019, whether he wants to talk about it or not. But I also think Arenado is all-in whenever he takes the field. So I'm adamantly against the Rockies trading Arenado now for anything less than 100 cents on the dollar, even if they risk losing him for nothing 12 months down the road. Am I nuts?

**Saunders:** Nope, you are right on the money. The Rockies' window to win is still very much open, and Arenado needs to be a part of it. However, if the team is clearly out the race by mid-summer and Arenado has not been re-signed, then you have to trade him. Here is my proposal: make Arenado a good-faith offer on a five-year deal worth about \$150 million. No

10-year deals, but perhaps include an “opt-out” clause of some sort. If Arenado truly wants to stay in Colorado, he’s going to take a hard look at the offer. If he balks, I think that would be an indication that he wants to play somewhere else. But at least the Rockies would have tried to hold onto a player who’s on track for the Hall of Fame.

## The end of summer

By Ted Chalfen Oct 10, 2018, 8:00am MDT | Purple Row

*“It follows the seasons, beginning each year with the fond expectancy of springtime and ending with the hard facts of autumn.”*

That line from the opening narration of the first episode of Ken Burns’ *Baseball* always hits home this time of year, but as the **Rockies** crashed out of the playoffs on a frigid afternoon at Coors Field it felt especially appropriate.

Sunday’s weather was a reminder that winter is around the corner and that baseball’s hours on the stage this season are numbered. Against this bleak backdrop, these Rockies made their exit after but a cameo in the postseason. And it wasn’t just *the* Rockies, it was *these* Rockies.

**Charlie Blackmon. DJ LeMahieu. Nolan Arenado. Trevor Story.** Carlos González. **Matt Holliday.**

The vast majority of the best position players to debut for the franchise in the last 20 years were in the starting lineup on Sunday — each of them a fan favorite whose name could have been found on the backs of hundreds of those in attendance if you had checked under their winter jackets. They are batting champions, Gold Glove winners, MVP candidates, and many-time **All-Stars**.

And they were utterly helpless.

They strained with all their might at the plate, trying in vain to produce something that would give life to a shivering crowd so desperate for a chance to stand up and roar. There were brief flashes — some hard contact here, a long at-bat there — but in the end it all added up to nothing.

There were no outward displays of rage on Sunday like **Chris Iannetta**, arguably the best catcher in franchise history, had on Thursday when he broke his bat across his knee. Instead, there was disbelief and resignation. It wasn’t supposed to end this way.

During the stretch run, it was easy to forget that CarGo went unsigned until late in spring training, and that Holliday was only signed in August. For a few weeks at the end of the season, it seemed like things were as they should be. The

Rockies were winning, and they were doing it with *their guys*. The ones who had given so much to the franchise and who deserved this success the most.

The potential post-season departures of González, Holliday, **LeMahieu**, and possibly even **Arenado** were forgotten as the team surged into first place in the final week of the season. The Rockies were finally going to win the National League West, and all of these franchise greats were going to be a part of it. It wasn't difficult to picture this dream lineup, backed by a young rotation led by hometown **Kyle Freeland**, going all the way to the **World Series**.

Sports, unfortunately, are not scripted. The West slipped through their fingers at the eleventh hour, and this would-be murderer's row of an offense produced almost nothing in the postseason.

These men — in particular Arenado, González, and Holliday — carry a label stronger than “star”, or even “legend” in Colorado. They are Heroes. They have done seemingly superhuman things that have defined entire seasons and brought joy to millions of people. That all of them could be in the starting lineup for the first home playoff game in nearly a decade seemed too good to be true. To see them so lost and despondent as the game wore on was intensely painful.

Seeing them repeatedly fail to produce at the plate, one could practically hear “are these your kings?” above the stunned silence, with **Erik Kratz** playing the role of Erik Killmonger. Unlike in the movies, there would be no improbable comeback from the Rockies.

It's difficult to process that this anti-climax could really have been the last game in a Rockies uniform for so many of the franchise's best players. If this is the end of the line in purple for DJ, Carlos, Matt, or even Nolan, try to forget the way they went quietly into the night on a bitter autumn afternoon. That's not the way heroes go out.

Instead, remember them as you saw them a week earlier; when an equally gloomy morning gave way to an afternoon of brilliant sunshine as summertime staged one last rally and the Rockies scored 12 runs to force a one-game tiebreaker with the **Dodgers**. Remember the standing ovations, the chants and the feeling that everything was still possible, because, in that moment, it was.

★ ★ ★



One of baseball's most magical powers is its ability to remind us at any given moment of the summers of our youth. It is a time machine that we can take back to an age where summer meant freedom, water balloon fights, trampolines, water slides, little league games, imitating your favorite player's batting stance, and going to the ballpark with your parents. When summer was really *summer*, and when your favorite baseball players seemed like supermen instead of fallible people who fail more often than they succeed.

Even as you grow up and become jaded by contracts, lineup construction and your "real life" responsibilities, a great catch or home run by someone you idolized as a kid has the power to take you right back to when you were 4 feet tall and had to literally look up at them when they signed a baseball for you. These men may be the only people on earth who have the power to give you that feeling of summer back.

If you are a Rockies fan between the ages of 10 and 25, the odds are that one of the players likely making their final appearance with the team on Sunday was a childhood hero of yours — the star of your fondest memories. Be thankful that, this magical summer, they added a few more moments to the reserve you keep safe in your heart for days like Sunday, when everything is cold, grey and hopeless.

Be thankful too that there will be another summer of baseball next year. Plenty of your old favorites will be back, along with new favorites you haven't even met yet. There will be incredible excitement, unbearable tension, absolute misery and incomprehensible joy. That's baseball, and it isn't going anywhere.

But this summer of 91 victories, first place after 162 games, endless walk-off heroics and **Kyle Freeland** shutting down the **Cubs** on three days rest . . . this summer of 3 million fans, 44 road wins and 500-foot home runs . . .

this *summer* of **Charlie Blackmon, DJ LeMahieu, Nolan Arenado, Trevor Story**, Carlos González and Matt Holliday sharing the same dugout, is over.

May it keep you warm this winter.

## Rockies Have a Blueprint for Long-term Deal With Arenado

TRACY RINGOLSBY - OCTOBER 10, 2018 | InsideTheSeams.com

In the spring of 2001, Todd Helton, already signed through the 2002 season, which would take him through his arbitration years, was involved in negotiations with the Rockies for a an extension that would buyout nine years of free agency and pay him \$141.5 million.

He figured a bigger deal could be on the table from other teams if he waited two years to become a free agent, but he also knew that other than the Rockies the only two teams he had a real interest in playing for with the Cardinals or Braves, both close to his Tennessee home.

What he didn't know is if either would have interest in a first baseman.

"Truth is, if my grandchildren aren't taken care of with this, we've got problems," Helton said. "And I do know I enjoy Colorado. It's my base home."

So on the final day of spring training that year, Helton agreed to what at the time was the fourth largest contract in MLB history.

Arbitration eligible	Service time	Projected
Nolan Arenado	5 years, 155 days	\$26.1 million
Trevor Story	3 years	\$6.4 million
Chad Bettis	4 years, 96 days	\$3.2 million
Jon Gray	3 years, 62 days	\$3.2 million
Tyler Anderson	3 years, 65 days	\$2.9 million
Chris Rusin	4 years, 92 days	\$1.7 million
Scott Oberg	3 years, 81 days	\$1.2 million
Tony Wolters	2 years, 161 days	\$1.1 million
Total		\$45.8 million

That scenario looms against for the Rockies this off-season, only this time it's Nolan Arenado who will be the focus of the Rockies approach to negotiations. Twenty-seven days shy of the six years of major league service time needed to become a free agent, Arenado is among eight Rockies' players arbitration eligible this off-season.

And he is the one who figures to make an impact on MLB whenever his deal is completed – whether it be through an arbitration ruling or a negotiated deal with the club. MLB Trade Rumors, in its annual projection of arbitration salaries, projects Arenado to receive a record \$26.1 million.

Five of the other seven Rockies are first-year eligible – Trevor story, Jon Gray, Tyler Anderson, Scott Oberg and Tony Wolters. The other two – Chad Bettis and Chris Rusin – are both second-time eligible. Story, at \$6.4million, has the highest projected arbitration salary among to seven, according to Trade Rumors, doubled the amount for Chad Bettis and Jon Gray, who rank behind Story.

<b>Contract Details</b>
2018 Base Salary \$14 million
2019 Base Salary \$21 million
2020 Base Salary \$21 million
2021 Base Salary \$21 million
*2022 Base Salary \$21 million
*2023 Base Salary x-\$10 million
Incentives
\$500,000 each 400, 425, 450, 475, 500, 525 plate appearances (2018-22)
\$1 million each 550, 575 plate appearances (2018-22)
\$2 million 1-3 finish MVP vote 2018-22
\$1 million 4-5 finish MVP vote 2018-22
*-players option
x-Could increase to \$18 million
Can block trade to 15 teams a year
Hotel suite on road
Source: Cot's Baseball Contracts

Only two previous arbitration eligible players received more than \$20 million, both last year and both in settlements before the hearing – Josh Donaldson, who received \$23 million from the Blue Jays, and Bryce Harper, who agreed to \$21.65 million from the Nationals.

The current record salary for an arbitration-eligible Rockies player is \$14 million that Charlie Blackmon agreed to last winter before working out a six-year deal that guaranteed Blackmon at least \$105 million, but gives him ample opportunities to increase the payout.

After the 2021 season, by which time he will have earned \$75 million, he has the right to opt out of the final two years, in which he is guaranteed \$21 million in 2022 and \$10 million in 2023 with the ability for that to increase to \$18 million if he chooses to remain with the Rockies.

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2019 Base Salary \$21 million
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Source: Cot's Baseball Contracts

But more than that, he has incentives for plate appearances, which added \$5 million alone to his base of \$14 million in 2018 because he surpassed 525 plate appearances. He also has the right to block a trade to 15 teams a year, and a hotel suite on the road.

The contract provides protection to both sides, in that Blackmon can make an additional \$5 million annually if he has 575 plate appearances, but if he doesn't reach 400 plate appearance the Rockies are obligated for the base salary, only, and he can protect himself from being traded to a undesirable team.

It would seem logical that Arenado could receive a similar structure – at higher figures – that would allow him to continue his career in Colorado, but also would give him an eventual escape clause if he felt the Rockies would not remain competitive.

If so, the end result will come down to whether Arenado wants to be a Rockies player from start to finish.

If not, he could be a free agent next fall – or the Rockies could decide to see what the trade market could bear this off-season.

The key thing to remember is that as well as an emotional, the decision does come down to business. It's an opportunity Arenado has earned.

## **The Rockies are all-in as contenders; is Nolan Arenado?**

**By Ronnie Kohrt - October 9, 2018 | Mile High Sports**

The Colorado Rockies have a monumental offseason ahead of them with long-term ramifications as Nolan Arenado's contract situation continues to be a cloud looming over the franchise that needs resolution sooner than later.

"I haven't really thought about that. I expect to be in spring training with the Rockies next year," Arenado told the media on Sunday night after being eliminated by the Milwaukee Brewers.

Well Nolan, it's time to think about it. Arenado's comments on wanting to win and be a part of a consistent winner are well-documented, and the Rockies have undoubtedly been building one, evidenced by back-to-back postseason appearances. It's time for Arenado to push his chips to the middle of the table – the Rockies have given him every reason to think they're not bluffing about winning.

From spending a record amount of money on the bullpen — \$105 million, to be exact — to bringing back familiar faces and personal friends in Carlos Gonzalez, Colorado is fulfilling their end of the bargain, including handing big-money contracts to Wade Davis and Ian Desmond. Deadline moves in Jonathan Lucroy, Pat Neshek and Seung-hwan Oh over the last two years only solidify the notion that these aren't your Daddy's Rockies anymore.

"This is a business; I know things can get a little weird when that side of stuff (comes up). Honestly, I expect to be here next year," Arenado continued.

While he expects to be in Colorado next year, the Rockies need some assurance from Arenado that this isn't a short-term relationship. They need to know that they can parlay Arenado's desire to stay long-term and utilize that information in future moves to better the team, making them more competitive in time, which only feeds into Arenado's wishes.

The Rockies have done everything possible to build a competitor, not only for the now, but for the future, and their foundation is strong. From the growth of young aces Kyle Freeland and German Marquez to the abundance of talent that Colorado holds with Ryan McMahon, Garrett Hampson, Raimel Tapia, the Rockies are young and talented. And don't forget about Brendan Rodgers, the MLB's ninth-ranked prospect in the all of the minor leagues, still waiting in the wings.

Colorado is loaded with ammo for long-term success, but Arenado's contract situation is a serious road block that could hold up momentum if not dealt with sooner than later.

How much more does Colorado have to show Arenado that they're for real — as a serious contending team — before they'll eventually come to realize that he just wasn't going to sign here regardless?

It's time for Colorado to discuss a long-term contract with Arenado and inform him that he needs to sign on the line and embrace the rise of the Rockies, or force Colorado into doing something they surely don't want to do: trade him.

Arenado's trade value would be absurd; a potential haul that Colorado would be foolish not to investigate if Arenado won't sign long-term. Eliminating the idea of a trade wouldn't be smart business — it must be explored, even with their their beloved superstar, if he won't commit.

Arenado has the opportunity to do something very rare in all of sports — not only could he become a Hall-of-Fame talent and spend his entire career in one city, but he could become a sports icon in the Rocky Mountain region. Like John Elway is to Denver, Arenado has the opportunity join him on the Denver sports Mount Rushmore. It's easy to envision Arenado as the greatest Rockie ever, maybe with a ring at the end of the day, too.

Colorado's fulfilled their end of the bargain so far. It's time for Nolan to follow suit. A smooth and easy contract resolution leads to an easier-to-execute offseason, injecting incredible excitement into a Rockies fanbase that surely will sell out Coors Field by the bunches next year.

So *whaddaya say*, Nolan? Rocktober for the next ten years at Coors Field?

Are you all-in?