



MEDIA CLIPS – Sept. 4, 2018

Cuevas lines 2-run single in 8th, Rockies beat Giants 9-8
Associated Press | ESPN.com | Sep. 3, 2018

DENVER -- A September call-up, Noel Cuevas just wants to make an impact.

With one choked-up swing, he delivered in a most meaningful way -- in the heat of a pennant race.

The rookie pinch-hitter bounced a go-ahead, two-run single through the middle in the eighth inning and the Colorado Rockies rallied to beat the San Francisco Giants 9-8 on Monday after squandering a five-run lead.

"He's clutch, man," Trevor Story said. "He's not scared."

This was just another wild game at Coors Field as the Rockies remain in the thick of the NL West chase. They entered the day a half-game behind the Los Angeles Dodgers.

"You always have to grab on and hold on tight (at Coors Field)," said catcher Drew Butera, who was making his Rockies debut after being acquired from the Kansas City Royals last week. "Because anything can happen here."

On an afternoon when Story hit two homers off Giants ace Madison Bumgarner and the Rockies seemed in command at 7-2 after five innings, they needed the rookie Cuevas to come through with that clutch hit.

Ian Desmond started the eighth with a single and pinch-hitter Chris Iannetta later lined a double off the wall in right. Then, Cuevas stepped into the moment.

He took a big first swing off reliever Tony Watson (4-6) and whiffed. So Cuevas decided to choke up on the bat and focus on going up the middle. It worked -- a grounder through a drawn-in infield.

"No words for it," said Cuevas, who was with the team earlier this season. "How much better can it get? It's almost like a walk-off."

Colorado had a 7-5 lead in eighth when Giants pinch-hitters Alen Hanson and Chris Shaw hit back-to-back homers off reliever Seunghwan Oh (6-3). Hanson tied the game at 7 on a two-run homer and three pitches later Shaw lined an 0-2 cutter from Oh over the fence in right for his first career homer.

"What a great comeback. It was a shame we couldn't hold on," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "We really came on strong at the end."

Wade Davis struck out the side in the ninth for his 38th save.

It's a pivotal stretch for Colorado, which started off 10 straight at home and all against NL West foes.

"To go down late and come back in the eighth, that was huge," Story said. "Hopefully we can ride that momentum through the homestand."

Colorado scored four times in the first off Bumgarner, who threw 35 pitches in facing nine hitters. DJ LeMahieu and Story each hit two-run homers in the inning.

Story added a three-run homer off Bumgarner in the fifth. The shortstop has a career-high 28 homers this season.

Gorkys Hernandez homered for the Giants, who've dropped 15 of 17 in Denver since 2017.

"These are the toughest ones to lose," Hernandez said. "We came back after being so far down and we couldn't get the win."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Giants: OF Steven Duggar will undergo surgery on his left shoulder Tuesday. ... INF Brandon Belt wasn't in the starting lineup due to right knee soreness.

Rockies: LHP Mike Dunn is planning to have season-ending shoulder surgery. The reliever has been on the disabled list since July 7 with discomfort in the AC joint.

ROUGH OUTING

Bumgarner gave up a season-high seven runs, six earned, over five innings. He surrendered three homers in a game for the seventh time in his career.

"My command wasn't very good at all," Bumgarner said. "My stuff wasn't very good. My curveball felt pretty good, but everything else was left up. You have to be better. Especially here."

PROGRESS

Rockies starter Tyler Anderson was in line for his first win since July 4 before the bullpen melted down. Still, this was progress. The left-hander hit an August slump in which he was 0-4 with an 11.39 ERA.

Anderson had seven days off between starts and his command appeared back in rhythm as he allowed three runs and struck out seven over 5 1/3 innings.

"He mixed speeds well," Butera said. "He made some big pitches inside."

UP NEXT

Giants rookie RHP Dereck Rodriguez (6-2) has a 2.47 ERA heading into his start Tuesday against Colorado. He's also holding hitters to a .207 average. Rockies RHP German Marquez (11-9, 4.11) is coming off a start in which he had 13 strikeouts.

MLB Roundtable: What to watch during the season's homestretch
Teammates J.D. Martinez and Mookie Betts might also be rivals for the AL MVP award down the stretch.
ESPN.com | Sep. 3, 2018

With less than a full month of action left, we asked David Schoenfield and Bradford Doolittle of ESPN.com and Sarah Langs of ESPN Stats & Information to share their thoughts on what September will have on tap for fans as the regular season winds down. We asked them about who's riding high in the standings and which teams have been -- and might continue to be -- surprising, which races demand your attention and which players are in the running for either some major hardware or historic notoriety before we turn the page on the 2018 campaign and gear up for the postseason.

What's the first thing that jumps out to you in the standings right now?

Sarah Langs: The differences between the American League and the National League. There's only one divisional race left in the AL, and it seems like we do finally know who the five teams will be given how the Seattle Mariners have fallen off. In the NL, it still feels like anybody's guess. It wouldn't surprise me if all three current leaders are atop their divisions at the end of the season, though it also wouldn't surprise me if one or two fall short.

David Schoenfield: Well, the Baltimore Orioles are 54½ games out of first place! Aside from the that, it has to be the three-team NL West race, which has been a dogfight for two-plus months now. Nobody has held a lead of more than two games since July 1, when the Arizona Diamondbacks led by 2½ games. The teams play each other a bunch in September, so it's going to be an exciting final month. May the baseball gods give us a three-way tie.

Bradford Doolittle: The Boston Red Sox and Chicago Cubs both have some separation between themselves and every other team in their respective leagues. Obviously there are many roadblocks from here to a Fenway Park-Wrigley Field World Series, but it's currently the most likely Fall Classic matchup. It's the series we thought we'd get back in 2008.

Which pennant race are you most excited to watch over the final month?

Langs: Can I pick two? They're related -- the NL West and NL wild card. We have three teams within fewer than two games in the NL West, and five teams within fewer than four games in the NL wild card. Whether that's because there are a bunch of mediocre teams that are middling or a bunch of good teams all on each other's level remains to be seen, but it'll make for a fun final few weeks. We could end up with three West teams in the playoffs again like last year. Or we could

get one. And the Dodgers have their division-winning streak on the line -- if they win it this year, that would be their sixth straight NL West title, the third-longest such streak since divisions came into existence in 1969.

Schoenfield: Oops, I just wrote about the NL West. The AL West race is just as fascinating given Oakland's surprising surge since mid-June. The A's were 34-36 on June 15, 11½ games behind the Astros, but have gone 49-20 since then. They may have not a roster full of All-Stars like the Astros, but Matt Chapman should be part of the MVP discussion, Khris Davis is hitting bombs and the bullpen has been lights out. The teams don't play each other again, however, so this race will involve a lot of scoreboard watching.

Doolittle: The NL West race -- right now -- looks tantalizing. That L.A.-Arizona series over the weekend was a joy to watch -- terse, tense, low-scoring, with dramatic finishes. What happens the next time an Archie Bradley situation occurs against the Dodgers and Matt Kemp is scheduled to hit? That's not to ignore the Colorado Rockies, who on paper shouldn't be in this mix but find themselves very much smack in the middle of it.

Which team are you most surprised is still in contention heading into the final weeks of the season?

Langs: The Rockies. Teams with negative run differentials do not usually make the playoffs, yet there they are, in contention in September. Only six teams in the expansion era (since 1961) have made the postseason with a negative run differential. Only one such team went on to win the World Series (the 1987 Twins). The last team with a negative run differential to make the playoffs was the 2007 Diamondbacks.

Schoenfield: Based on preseason predictions, probably the A's, but remember that the Nationals were heavy favorites in the NL East. The Braves and Phillies don't feel like surprises because they've been up there all season, but both teams have arrived a year early. The Braves, with their plus-97 run differential, feel like the bigger surprise to me because of how well they've played all season. They're a good team with a very bright future.

Doolittle: The Tampa Bay Rays! I mean, their playoff odds are currently at 3.4 percent, so I'm stretching the definition of contention, but this team is 11 games over .500 and has been the AL's hottest club for about 10 days now. The Rays are seven games behind Oakland in the loss column and the A's have an easier finishing schedule. But Tampa Bay has quietly been one of this season's great stories, and Blake Snell has come into his own as one of the AL's top pitchers.

Which team's place in the standings is most disappointing?

It would be fair to say that 2018 didn't work out quite the way Bryce Harper or the Nationals expected. Gavin Baker/Icon Sportswire

Langs: It's hard to go with anyone other than the Nationals, given that they were a popular NL pennant pick entering the year, if not World Series winner. (Check the tape, I picked them to lose in the World Series this year.) This was not exactly the sendoff that they would have wanted to give Bryce Harper in his contract year. Lest we forget: In that same division, there's a team that started 11-1 in the Mets. The lowest winning percentage by any team to start 11-1 or better through 12 games is .457 by the 2002 Indians. That Indians team is the only one to finish a season below .500 after starting 11-1 or better through 12 games. The Mets closed Monday at .453.

Schoenfield: Nationals. The story of the 2012-2018 Bryce Harper/Stephen Strasburg/Max Scherzer (he joined in 2012) Nationals will thus read this way: not a single playoff series victory.

Doolittle: I'm kind of sick of being disappointed in the Nationals, so I'll go with the Phillies. It's noble that they decided to go all-in this season with so many veteran acquisitions, but when you're talking about a mostly young team having its first breakthrough, adding so many declining players can sap the dynamism out of a pennant chase. That's especially true when you have a team with a solid pitching staff that gets continually kneecapped by crappy defense. Why would you make that team less athletic?

Which individual award or stat race are you most excited to watch over the final month?

Langs: Whether J.D. Martinez can win the Triple Crown. He's close, though he could be held off by his own teammate in Mookie Betts or by A's slugger Khris Davis. There have been four instances of a player winning the Triple Crown not just by leading his league in the three categories, but by leading all of baseball. Those are Rogers Hornsby in 1925, Lou Gehrig in 1934, Ted Williams in 1942 and Mickey Mantle in 1956. If Martinez wins it, he likely joins that list.

Schoenfield: The AL MVP race is one of the best in a long time because of the quality of the seasons involved, plus it's a fun debate because of the different types of seasons involved from the top candidates. There is the all-around brilliance of Mookie Betts, Jose Ramirez, Francisco Lindor and Mike Trout; the Triple Crown chase from J.D. Martinez; the defensive

brilliance and second-half batting line from Matt Chapman; the clutch hitting of Alex Bregman. Right now, a first-place vote for any of those seven players wouldn't look ridiculous.

Doolittle: The only stat race that grabs me is J.D. Martinez's run at a Triple Crown. I don't care if two of the three categories are outmoded and I certainly wouldn't give him the MVP award for winning it, but there's still something special about the achievement. Beyond that, all of the award races are great this year. None of them are settled, which means every highlight-reel moment the candidates produce from here on out will have outsized repercussions.

How many Triple Crown categories will J.D. Martinez win?

Langs: I'll be an optimist (for once), and say all three.

Schoenfield: I say RBIs, as he ends up second to Mookie in the batting race and one home run behind Khris Davis (in part, because he'll probably sit a few games down the stretch to rest up for the postseason).

Doolittle: One. He won't get Khris Davis in homers, or Betts in average.

What's one under-the-radar thing you'll be following the rest of the season?

Langs: The Indians. Somehow, a team that could realistically win the World Series is managing to fly under the radar. They've faced mediocre to bad competition within their division, but they are a solid team and have been hitting well all year. After a 5.28 bullpen ERA in the first half -- after poor performances and injuries -- they've been much better at the end of games in the second half. And who doesn't want to keep an eye on Jose Ramirez and Francisco Lindor playing every day? Plus, getting the chance to see if Josh Donaldson can make an impact during the postseason.

Schoenfield: Hmm ... well, Mark Reynolds is the only player in MLB history to hit at least 30 home runs while batting under .200 (32 with the Diamondbacks in 2010 while batting .198). Joey Gallo already has 34 home runs and is hitting .207. With a late slump, he could reach 40 home runs and finish under .200 while striking out more than 200 times. I'm not saying this is a good thing.

Doolittle: The Rangers experimented with an "opener" on Monday. The A's did it on Saturday. The Twins have talked about it. I'm wondering if by the end of the season, we'll be at the point where a few teams set their offseason plans

around employing this strategy on a semi-regular basis in 2019. I'm not sure what that will look like, but clearly the Rays' scheme has caught the attention of teams around baseball.

**Rockies rally late, sit alone atop NL West
Story homers twice off Bumgarner, but Cuevas' pinch-hit wins it in 8th
Owen Perkins | MLB.com | Sep. 3, 2018**

DENVER -- The Rockies were in heart-attack mode Monday, knocking Giants ace Madison Bumgarner out of the game with seven runs in five innings -- with five runs coming on a pair of Trevor Story homers -- only to lose the lead in the eighth on a pair of two-out, pinch-hit homers from the Giants. But the Rockies countered in the bottom of the inning, with pinch-hitter Noel Cuevas hitting a two-run single past a drawn-in infield for his first hit since starting his September callup.

The 9-8 win, coupled with the Dodgers' loss to the Mets, moved the Rockies into first place all by themselves in the National League West.

"It was a good win," manager Bud Black said. "Somebody's going to win this game, and we prevailed. We got it done when we needed to."

The Rockies led 7-5 going into the eighth, and gave the ball to reliever Seunghwan Oh, who was 1-0 with a 1.72 ERA in 17 games coming into Monday since the Rockies picked him up in a July 26 trade. After retiring the first two batters, Oh hit Gorkys Hernandez with a pitch, then yielded back-to-back homers to pinch-hitters Alen Hanson and Chris Shaw, who hit his first career homer to take the lead, a no-doubter to the second deck in right, traveling 468 feet and marking the second-longest Giants homer since Statcast™ started tracking homers.

The Rockies wasted no time bouncing back in the bottom of the inning, with Ian Desmond lining a single to left and pinch-hitter Chris Iannetta knocking a double off the right field fence to put runners on second and third.

"Sometimes you can eliminate pitches," Iannetta said of his pinch-hit approach. "You can read the situation and understand what they're going to do. It doesn't always happen that way, but it does at times. With a reliever, they're going to go with their best stuff, and his best pitch is his changeup. When you're facing the back end of a bullpen, it's all about them making mistakes as opposed to you capitalizing on a pitch."

That brought the rookie Cuevas to the plate in his first big league at-bat since being optioned to Triple-A on June 29. Cuevas took a big cut and missed the first pitch he saw from reliever Tony Watson, then poked a two-run single to center

through a drawn-in infield to give the Rockies the lead and, ultimately, the win. The hit made Cuevas 8-for-25 (.320) as a pinch-hitter this season.

"You don't start in the game, so you always look for that moment that you get an opportunity," Cuevas said. "The opportunity came pretty big for me. It means a lot for me that Bud gave me the opportunity in that situation, and even better that I was able to come through.

"I took my normal aggressive swing [at the first pitch]. When I swung and missed, I thought I better choke up a little bit. I did that, I stayed in the middle, and I was able to get a pitch and get it back to the middle."

It would have been a rough loss after the way the Rockies treated Bumgarner, a nemesis for the Rockies who had posted a 1.38 ERA against them this season entering Monday's start and boasted the third best all-time career mark against the Rockies with a 2.93 ERA, trailing only Randy Johnson (2.47) and Johnny Cueto (2.67 ERA). His 3.93 ERA in 14 starts at Coors Field is also third best for a pitcher with 10 starts or more who never played for the Rockies, trailing Ian Kennedy (3.16) and Tom Glavine (3.68).

Rockies starter Tyler Anderson rebounded from his last start (six earned runs in two-thirds of an inning) to pitch 5 1/3 innings of three-run ball, allowing six hits and no walks while striking out seven. He gave up a solo shot to Gorkys Hernandez to lead off the third and an additional run in both the fourth and sixth innings.

With relievers Scott Oberg and Adam Ottavino unavailable, the Rockies patched together a bullpen hold from newly recalled Yency Almonte (two-thirds of an inning, zero runs), Chris Rusin (two-thirds of an inning, two runs), Chad Bettis (one-third of an inning, zero runs), Oh (one inning, three runs), and Wade Davis, who struck out the side in the ninth and earned his National League-best 38th save.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Double dingers: Getting the early lead was a rare feat for the Rockies, and they made it count. Story hit a two-run shot to center from the cleanup spot in the first inning, following DJ LeMahieu's two-run homer two batters earlier to mark the first time in franchise history that the first four Rockies hitters scored on a pair of two-run homers. Story's homer went a projected 422 feet, according to Statcast™.

The Rockies scored more runs in the first inning than they've scored against Bumgarner in all 13 innings of his two previous starts against Colorado this season combined. The frame was even more remarkable given Bumgarner's 0.94 ERA in the first-through-third innings this season (five earned runs in 48 innings).

After flying to left in the third, Story came up with two men on and blasted his second long ball of the day 393 feet to left, per Statcast™. He plated Charlie Blackmon, who was hit by a pitch, and Nolan Arenado, who reached base on an error by second baseman Kelby Tomlinson.

"I really liked Trevor's second homer, a three-run homer in the middle part of the game," Black said. "He fell behind 0-2, and then Bumgarner, as he can do, tantalized Trev with some pitches down below the zone, hoping for the chase, and he didn't get it. Full count, Trevor threw a great swing on a breaking ball that looked to be a little bit up in the strike zone."

The homers gave Story a career-high 28 for the season and marked his fourth multihomer game this year and the ninth of his career.

SOUND SMART

Blackmon's steal of second in the seventh inning gave him 126 career steals, tying him for second in Rockies history with Larry Walker. Eric Young is the all-time leader with 180 steals.

HE SAID IT

"How much better can it get? It's almost like a walk-off, had it happened in the ninth inning. To be able to contribute to the team win in such a way, I got no words for it. Nothing feels better than that." -- Cuevas, on his two-run single in the eighth, giving the Rockies their 16th last at-bat win of the season

UP NEXT

German Marquez toes the rubber in the middle game of the three-game set with the Giants, facing Dereck Rodriguez in a battle of right-handers at 6:40 p.m. MT Tuesday. Marquez had outstanding feel for his slider in his last start, striking out a career-high 13 Padres in eight innings to compile his seventh straight quality start.

Clemente Award nominees announced
Roberto Clemente Award nominees
MLB.com | Sep. 3, 2018

The 30 club nominees for the 2018 Roberto Clemente Award, the most prominent individual award for Major League players, were announced today by Major League Baseball. The Roberto Clemente Award is the annual recognition of a player who best represents the game of baseball through extraordinary character, community involvement, philanthropy and positive contributions both on and off the field.

The list of club nominees features players with a collective 62 MLB All-Star Game appearances whose various community activities have focused on important issues ranging from awareness and fundraising for the fight against childhood cancer and other illnesses, education for young people, Hurricane Maria relief, outreach to underserved children and communities in the United States and abroad and more. The 30 club nominees of the 2018 Roberto Clemente Award are listed below:

Arizona Diamondbacks -- Paul Goldschmidt

Atlanta Braves -- Kurt Suzuki

Baltimore Orioles -- Chris Davis

Boston Red Sox -- Brock Holt

Chicago Cubs -- Jon Lester

Chicago White Sox -- Jose Abreu

Cincinnati Reds -- Tucker Barnhart

Cleveland Indians -- Carlos Carrasco

Colorado Rockies -- Ian Desmond

Detroit Tigers -- Michael Fulmer

Houston Astros -- Charlie Morton

Kansas City Royals -- Danny Duffy

Los Angeles Angels -- Andrew Heaney

Los Angeles Dodgers -- Justin Turner

Miami Marlins -- Martin Prado

Milwaukee Brewers -- Corey Knebel

Minnesota Twins -- Joe Mauer
New York Mets -- Steven Matz
New York Yankees -- CC Sabathia
Oakland Athletics -- Chad Pinder
Philadelphia Phillies -- Rhys Hoskins
Pittsburgh Pirates -- Jameson Taillon
St. Louis Cardinals -- Yadier Molina
San Diego Padres -- Clayton Richard
San Francisco Giants -- Buster Posey
Seattle Mariners -- Nelson Cruz
Tampa Bay Rays -- Mallex Smith
Texas Rangers -- Cole Hamels
Toronto Blue Jays -- Kevin Pillar
Washington Nationals -- Ryan Zimmerman

Hamels remains the Rangers' nominee despite being acquired by the Cubs via trade. More information can be found at MLB.com/clemente21.

Each club nominates one current player to be considered for the Roberto Clemente Award in tribute to Clemente's achievements and character. Wednesday, Sept. 5, marks the 17th annual Roberto Clemente Day, which was established by Major League Baseball to honor Clemente's legacy and to officially acknowledge local club nominees of the Roberto Clemente Award. Major League Baseball has commemorated Roberto Clemente Day in early September since 2002.

Clubs playing at home on Wednesday will recognize their local nominees as part of Roberto Clemente Day ceremonies. Visiting clubs will honor their nominees on a subsequent homestand. As part of the league-wide celebration, the Roberto Clemente Day logo will appear on the bases and official dugout lineup cards and a special tribute video will be played in ballparks.

The league-wide winner of the Roberto Clemente Award, who will be announced during the 2018 World Series, will be selected among the group of nominees via a blue-ribbon panel that includes individuals connected to the game. The blue-

ribbon panel includes Commissioner Robert D. Manfred, Jr., representatives from MLB-affiliated networks (MLB Network, FOX Sports, ESPN and TBS) and MLB.com, as well as Vera Clemente (the late Roberto's wife & MLB goodwill ambassador). Beginning on Roberto Clemente Day, fans can vote for the winner of the Roberto Clemente Award via a dedicated website. The site will feature bios of each of the nominees and will allow fans to vote from Roberto Clemente Day on Wednesday until Tuesday, Sept. 18. The winner of the fan vote will count as one vote among those cast by the blue-ribbon panel. Fans are encouraged to vote by visiting the following link: mlb.com/clemente21.

"I am very proud of the great philanthropic efforts of our players," said Manfred. "Through wide-ranging work and actions, these 30 nominees honor Roberto Clemente's legacy of being exemplary community ambassadors. Roberto's unwavering humanitarian spirit continues to inspire our players and fans and serves as a positive example for future generations."

The concept of honoring Major League players for their philanthropic work was created in 1971 as the Commissioner's Award. The recognition was renamed the Roberto Clemente Award in '73 in honor of the Hall of Famer and 15-time All-Star who died in a plane crash on Dec. 31, 1972, while attempting to deliver supplies to earthquake victims in Nicaragua.

Why August was the best month of the season for Kyle Freeland and German Márquez
Ben Harris | TheAthletic.com | Sep. 4, 2018

After a scorching month of July during which the Rockies cut the National League West division lead from six games to just a half game, they played uninspiring baseball in August posting an even 14-14 record. It would have been worse if their two best starters, Kyle Freeland and German Márquez, had not posted the best months of their seasons.

The Rockies went 5-1 in Freeland's starts and 3-3 with Márquez on the mound for a combined 8-4 record behind the pair. When anyone else started, Colorado went 6-10.

Freeland and Márquez each posted their lowest OPS allowed in any month in August, and it kept the Rockies in the race.

Despite the lackluster effort, the Rockies dropped just a half game during August. So what do the 2018 rotation linchpins owe their recent boost in success? In short, their breaking pitches.

Kyle Freeland

Freeland's fastball-slider combination has fueled a season that, in any other year, would have earned him some NL Cy Young attention — especially given the atmosphere in which he pitches.

Freeland uses two types of sliders that vary slightly. One is softer, about 80 mph, that drops more than the average slider and has a bit of cut. On pitch-tracking websites, this is classified as just that, a "slider." The other is harder, around 86 mph, doesn't drop as much but has more left-to-right cut on it. This pitch is classified as a "cutter."

Although Freeland says, in his mind, that both are sliders, for our purposes we'll refer to the harder one as a cutter and the softer one with more depth as a slider, aligning them with their traditional names and pitch characteristics.

That hard cutter has become a bigger part of Freeland's arsenal this season, used a career-high 26 percent of the time. He threw it more than 31 percent of the time in August, its highest usage in any month this season. Against lefties, it regained its place as his most-used pitch, even more than his four-seam fastball.

Freeland faced 32 lefties in August. He allowed one hit and a .035/.125/.036 slash line. Lefties were as close to automatic outs as can be. To find how that compares to the field, let's use weighted on-base average, or wOBA, a catch-all offensive metric that combines and properly weights different ways of reaching base.

Freeland held lefties to a .092 wOBA in August, the lowest mark in baseball out of 131 pitchers who faced at least 30 lefties last month. That's really impressive. But it gets better. That's the lowest wOBA allowed to lefties by any pitcher in any month over the last two seasons.

Since 2002, as far back as we have this data available on Fangraphs, there have been 14,803 pitchers who have faced at least 30 lefties in any month. Freeland's .092 wOBA allowed ranks 11th out of those 14,803 pitchers, or the 99.9th percentile. Talk about domination.

That lone hit by a lefty in August came on his cutter, a leadoff single from the Pirates' Corey Dickerson on Aug. 6. Guess where that pitch was located?

You can't make a more perfect pitch than that. But that's baseball. Sometimes you get beat.

In addition to the nearly unhittable cutter, Freeland hasn't allowed a lefty to log a base hit off either of his fastballs since June 27, a span of 58 consecutive plate appearances.

But lefties comprised only 20 percent of the batters facing Freeland in August. Still, his dominance against them gave him more leeway against righties. He didn't need to be perfect.

The cutter is his second-most used pitch against those righties, whose results against the pitch have declined this year.

Cutters to right-handers

2017: .294 AVG, .609 SLG

2018: .220 AVG, .376 SLG

Righties have increasingly whiffed against that cutter, up to a career-high 15 percent last month and swung more than ever but made poor contact. Just as it became an important part of how Freeland attacks lefties, his cutter in August was an integral part of his strategy facing righties.

"It's been working really well. The cutter-slider over the past month or so has felt good. I feel like I can place it in spots where I want and execute it extremely well," Freeland said.

German Márquez

In his 2017 rookie season, Márquez suffered from severe second and third time through the order splits. His OPS allowed the first time he faced hitters was a respectable .701 before jumping to .821 the second time around and ending at a disturbing .951 the third time through. Márquez relied heavily on his fastball and curveball, accounting for more than four out of every five pitches he threw. But the duo wasn't enough to successfully traverse big-league lineups two and three times.

Entering this season, the 23-year-old right-hander worked on his changeup and slider to give batters different looks from the one-two punch he leaned on last year.

Those additions have made all the difference, and August showed just how dominant he can be when both pitches are clicking. The graph below depicts the combined usage of his slider and curveball by month over the course of his career.

Márquez threw his breaking balls a combined 47 percent of the time in August, a career high. Entering this season, he had never combined to throw them even one-third of the time. Now he's up to almost half.

The more he uses them, the better they seem to get. August was, by far, the best month for his breaking balls, allowing a combined .072 batting average (6-for-83) and .133 slugging percentage.

As a result, he has reversed his times through the order struggles from last year. He was best the first time facing hitters in 2017, allowing a .701 OPS. The second and third time facing hitters this season, he has allowed just a .664 OPS.

Márquez used to have a fastball-curveball-changeup arsenal. That's a straight pitch (fastball), one that primarily moves down (his curveball doesn't have a lot of horizontal movement) and another that moves left to right (changeup). Now, with the slider, he has something that moves right to left, away from righties.

Now that he has a pitch to torture righties with, their slugging percentage dropped from .528 last year to a paltry .348 this year. The slider filled out his movement profile, giving him offspeed pitches that now move in every direction: down, left to right, and right to left.

The slider is making it harder for batters to pick up on his curveball, because now they have to discern between two breaking balls. In addition, it pairs beautifully with his fastball. Pitch tunneling is the practice of making two pitches look similar for as long as possible as they approach the plate before they diverge, ideally ending up as far away from each other as possible when they enter the hitting zone. According to Baseball Prospectus' pitch tunneling data, Márquez's best tunneling combination is his slider and fastball against right-handed hitters.

For both pitchers, their breaking stuff took them to new heights in August. For Freeland, it was his cutter, the harder version of his slider with less depth and more zip. For Márquez, it was the addition of the slider this offseason and a growing comfort with the pitch. After Monday's 9-8 win over the Giants and a Dodgers loss, the Rockies moved into first place in the NL West by a half game. There's no telling where they would be without Freeland and Márquez anchoring the rotation.

Rockies rally in the eighth inning to defeat the Giants
Aniello Piro | MileHighSports.com | September 3, 2018

The Colorado Rockies defeated the San Francisco Giants 9-8 in thrilling fashion Monday afternoon in the first game of the club's 10-game homestand. The Rockies entered the game two games above .500 in a tight race for first place in the National League West and came away with a crucial comeback victory Monday to keep pace.

The Rockies initially jumped out to an early lead in the first inning, starting with a Charlie Blackmon leadoff single to center field. DJ LeMahieu followed by belting a two-run home run to center field to give Colorado an early 2-0 lead. The Rockies' offense stayed hot, as Nolan Arenado hit a double to left field, which was then followed by a two-run home run from Trevor Story to put the Rockies up 4-0.

The Giants got a run back in the 3rd inning when Gorkys Hernandez hit a solo home run to left field. San Francisco manufactured an additional run in the fourth inning which started with a double from Chase d'Arnaud. Evan Longoria later hit a sacrifice fly that scored d'Arnaud, making the score 4-2.

Colorado added to its lead in the fifth inning. Blackmon was beamed in the Rockies' first at bat of the inning. Nolan Arenado then grounded into a fielder's choice; however, due to an error by Giants' second basemen Kelby Tomlinson both Blackmon and Arenado reached base safely. Trevor Story then hit his second home run of the ballgame, a three-run blast to left field to give the Rockies a 7-2 lead.

The Giants answered again in the sixth inning where All-Star Brandon Crawford hit an RBI single to score former Rockies catcher Nick Hundley, who reached base via a ground rule double. San Francisco kept things going into the seventh inning where they were able to get two runners on the base paths. With two outs, Longoria hit a triple to deep right field, scoring two runs to bring the Giants within two runs of the Rockies.

San Francisco's momentum rolled over into the eighth inning where they managed to take the lead. Seung-hwang Oh was tasked to pitch the eighth inning for the Rockies where he quickly retired the first two batters he faced.

Oh then proceeded to hit Hernandez with a pitch before the Giants opted to pinch hit Allen Hanson in place of Tomlinson. Hanson hit a two-run home run to right field to tie the game at seven runs apiece. The Giants then pinch hit Chirs Shaw in place of the pitcher and he mimicked Hanson by hitting a solo home run to right field, giving the Giants an 8-7 lead.

With their backs against the wall, the Rockies refused to quit and rallied in the bottom of the eighth inning. Ian Desmond started the inning with a single to left field. Rockies' skipper Bud Black opted to pinch hit Chris Iannetta in place of fellow catcher Drew Butera.

Iannetta delivered with a double to right field, giving the Rockies two base runners. Black used another pinch hitter, this time youngster Noel Cuevas. Doubling down on the bench, Cuevas delivered for Black and the Rockies by hitting a single to center field, scoring two runs to give the Rockies a 9-8 lead.

Wade Davis then set the Giants down in order in the ninth inning to solidify the victory for Colorado.

Colorado's late-game tenacity has been a common theme throughout the second half of the summer with Monday's holiday victory serving as another electrifying victory. The Rockies current 10-game homestand includes series against the Giants, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Arizona Diamondbacks and is critical to their continued pursuit for the postseason.

The Rockies and Giants will continue their series Tuesday night at Coors Field with first pitch set for 6:40 MST.

Rockies beat Giants on clutch hit from unexpected hero

Drew Creasman | BSNDenver.com | Sep 3, 2018

DENVER – For as complicated and unusual as the 2018 Colorado Rockies season has been, a simple formula has emerged for them to find their way to the first division title in franchise history.

The pitching needs to stay right where it is and somebody—anybody—on the offense needs to play like a star down the stretch. On Monday, in a Labor Day afternoon contest against the San Francisco Giants and ace Madison Bumgarner, that man was Trevor Story.

The third-year shortstop drove in five runs and set a new career high for round-trippers, powering his club to a game that on paper they should not have won. Starter Tyler Anderson did his part to keep his club in the game. The bullpen faltered, blowing a big lead, but the much-maligned offense bailed them out late, resulting in a 9-8 win.

The Rockies wasted no time getting after the World Series MVP, jumping all over him in the first.

It began innocuously enough when Charlie Blackmon reached out and put a protection swing on an 0-2 slider rolling it up the middle just out of the reach of the defense for a leadoff single. DJ LeMahieu fell into a full count in the next at-bat but went down and golfed a low fastball, getting every stitch to launch a line drive into the bleachers beyond the wall in left-center field, his 14th home run of the season.

Nolan Arenado quickly followed by looping one down the left-field line for a double, his 29th two-bagger of the year, and trotted home when a Trevor Story fly ball to center field just kept going and going and going, falling into the fountains for his career-high tying 27th home run of the season.

And just like that, the Rockies had taken a 4-0 lead before recording an out.

They kept the pressure on with a walk from Matt Holliday and a single from Carlos Gonzalez that moved up to third but strikeouts from Ian Desmond and Drew Butera meant that a pop up from Anderson ended the inning with the Rockies having batted through their lineup.

The Giants got on the board in the third when Gorkys Hernandez ambushed the first pitch of the inning, ripping it to left for a solo homer.

They tacked on another and nearly took the lead in the fourth. Chase d'Arnaud started the rally with a double to left. He noticed that Anderson was paying little attention to him and swiped third, only his second stolen base of the season, which allowed Evan Longoria's fly ball to center to score him with ease.

Nick Hundley followed by ripping a single to left then Anderson got Crawford on strikes but Hunter Pence singled up the middle to keep the inning alive and bring Hernandez back to the plate. He put a scare in the home crowd with a deep line drive to left in a similar spot to where he hit his home run, but it fell just shy as Holliday was able to track down after a few twists and turns for the final out.

The Rockies answered back with another outburst in the bottom of the fifth. Bumgarner plunked Blackmon, giving the Colorado leadoff man three straight at-bats reaching base. After LeMahieu struck out it appeared that Arenado had hit into an inning-ending double play. But Tomlison couldn't handle the hard grounder, committing a fielding error that allowed Arenado to reach and Blackmon to get to third.

Story made them pay for it with his second home run of the game on a three-run shot to left. That meant that he had tied and then surpassed his career-high for home runs in a season which now sits at 28. The blast put the Rockies on top 7-2.

Anderson was chased from the game in the sixth on a Hundley double and Brandon Crawford single that made it a 7-3 ballgame. Bud Black went to youngster Yency Almonte who recorded a pair of quick outs to make sure no further damage occurred.

Chris Rusin came on for the seventh and gave up a solid single with one out to Aramis Garcia then ran into some bad luck when Austin Slater hit a Baltimore chop to the left side that neither Arenado or Story could field.

Still, Rusin got his more typical grounder in the next at-bat but Arenado fumbled the baseball on the transfer. He managed to catch the ball with his bare hand and get the runner at first but the failure to turn the inning-ending double play came back to haunt the Rockies the way it did for the Giants earlier in the game.

Black went back to his bullpen and called upon Chad Bettis who got Longoria to swing late and hit a high fly ball to right field but it tailed just out of the reach of a diving Gonzalez for a two-RBI triple, making the game close again at 7-5, Rockies.

The Rockies had a chance to add some insurance in the bottom of the seventh, getting walks from Blackmon and LeMahieu to lead off the inning. After Arenado struck out, they even managed a double steal to take the traditional double play out of order. But the Giants pulled the infield in and Story's ground ball was right at the third baseman, getting Blackmon hung up on the contact play, eventually making the out between third and home.

Holliday struck out to strand a pair in scoring position after Story stole his 23rd base of the season.

Seunghwan Oh was handed the eighth-inning duties and got two very quick outs before an odd sequence against Hernandez. First, the hitter was granted a timeout on an 0-2 delivery when Oh was half-way through his delivery then a fastball ran inside and got mostly bat but a review determined that it got enough of Hernandez' hand to go down as a hit by pitch.

That bad omen led right to pinch-hitter Alen Hanson turning on an inside fastball to hit a line drive over the high scoreboard in right for a two-run game-tying home run. Things compounded in a second-straight pinch-hit appearance from Chris Shaw to demolished another 0-2 pitch over the fence in right-center field for a solo shot that suddenly gave the Giants the lead. It was Shaw's first homer of the season.

With that, a 7-2 lead was turned into an 8-7 deficit.

The sinking feeling that emanated Coors Field was soon replaced by elation. Desmond began the momentum swing with a line drive to left for a single. Gonzalez flew out to center and the September match-up game heated up as Bud Black went to Chris Iannetta to pinch-hit for Butera.

Iannetta came up with an almost exact replica of his clutch double in San Diego, crushing one off the fence in right. Desmond, unsure if the right-fielder would have a play, was only able to reach third on the play. That mean rookie Noel Cuevas needed to come up with at least a productive out with the infield in once more.

And he did just that, hitting a hard grounder right back up the middle for a two-RBI single that swung the game back in favor of his club at 9-8.

Back in front, the Rockies brought on closer Wade Davis. He saw pinch-hitter and Rockie-killer Brandon Belt in his first encounter and struck him out looking. Next was Longoria who had driven in three in the game. Davis got him swinging.

That left it up to a former Rockie who has been a thorn in their side ever since leaving, Nick Hundley. Davis fell behind 3-1 before Hundley fouled one off to make it full. With the capacity crowd on their feet in hysteria, he delivered the payoff pitch and went with the breaking ball that fell in for a called strike three. Game over.

FINAL STATS:

Tyler Anderson: 5.1 IP, 6 H, 3 ER, 0 BB, 7 K

Yency Almonte: 0.2 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 1 K

Chris Rusin: 0.2 IP, 2 H, 2 ER, 0 BB, 0 K

Chad Bettis: 0.1 IP, 1 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 0 K

Seunghwan Oh: 1 IP, 2 H, 3 ER, 0 BB, 2 K

Wade Davis: 1 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 3 K

Trevor Story: 2-for-3, 2 R, 5 RBI (2 HR: 28)

Charlie Blackmon: 2-for-2, 2 R

DJ LeMahieu: 1-for-3, 1 R, 2 RBI (HR: 14)

Nolan Arenado: 1-for-3, 2 R

WHAT'S NEXT:

The second game of the series will see Dereck Rodriguez take on German Marquez. First pitch at 6:40 Mountain Time.

Dunn Headed to Shoulder Surgery After Season-Long Struggle
Tracy Ringolsby | InsidetheSeams.com | Sep. 3, 2018

Mike Dunn's return to the active roster on Monday took a u-turn.

Instead of the Rockies announcing that Dunn was coming off the 60-day disabled list following his rehab assignment at Triple-A Albuquerque, the team announced that Dunn would not pitch again this season, and would undergo left shoulder surgery to alleviate the persistent pain in his left shoulder.

The hope is Dunn can be healthy by the start of spring training next year.

"Things didn't go well," Dunn told media members at Coors field Monday. "I had a couple setbacks. After my second outing, I had to get another cortisone injection. And then that didn't hold up either, so we're shutting it down for the year, and the next option's pretty much surgery."

Dunn, 33, made four appearances for Triple-A Albuquerque since Aug. 21. He's pitched 3 2/3 innings over that span, allowing three runs (all earned) on five hits and three walks while striking out four. His last outing was Friday, when he pitched an inning and allowed a run on a hit and a walk and struck out two.

"After my last outing and the pain that I went through, I woke up the next morning, and I was kind of at ease with it," Dunn said. "I tried to push through it, I tried to come back. I went through every option that we possibly could, and then some, by getting that extra cortisone shot at the end. It just didn't hold up, and so now I got to meet with the doctors today and just see what the next steps are and when it's going to be taking place."

The next step is surgery on his AC joint, but the cortisone shot he got a little over a week ago means he must put off the surgery until sometime next week. Nevertheless, the recovery time-line should allow Dunn to go into Spring Training fully healthy.

"It's a six-to-eight-week rehab, so it's nothing crazy," Dunn said. "It would be normal throwing program for me in the offseason. If it was six to eight weeks, I'd start throwing in December, which is my normal time anyways."

Dunn has pitched through pain all year long, starting with Spring Training. His 9.00 ERA in 25 games this season is a career high, roughly double any season ERA but his four-game stint in 2009 when he first came up with the Yankees.

"I tweaked it in the offseason working out, so we've been kind of fighting it off and on trying to keep it at ease," Dunn said.

"It just kind of slowly got worse and worse and worse until you can't do any more."

Dunn is a career 33-26 with a 3.87 ERA and four saves in 527 big league games, and before this season he only had two brief stints on the disabled list in his career, including a 2016 forearm strain and back spasms in '17. Dunn was 5-1 with a 4.47 ERA in 68 appearances for the Rockies in '17, his first season in purple pinstripes.

"I've never had to go through anything like this," Dunn said. "I've been blessed in my career to be healthy for 98 percent of it. It's tough. I've never had any surgery of any kind before, so in a sense you can say that's kind of scary. But the statistics behind everything are really high and positive. The recovery is going to be great."

Noel Cuevas' game-winning single, Trevor Story's homers help first-place Rockies set homestand tone in wild Labor Day win over Giants
Story's first home run followed DJ LeMahieu's two-run long ball in the opening inning to give Tyler Anderson an early 4-0 cushion
Kyle Newman | DenverPost.com | Sep. 3, 2018

It's September at Coors Field, and the Rockies are in the chase for their first divisional title. It's best to bring the blood pressure medication.

The Colorado faithful needed loads of just that in the homestand opener against the San Francisco Giants on Monday, as Noel Cuevas' pinch-hit, two-RBI single in the eighth inning provided the tying and winning runs in Colorado's 9-8 roller-coaster victory in LoDo.

"It was a whirlwind of a game," Rockies shortstop Trevor Story said. "It was up and down, and to go down late and then come back in the eighth, that was huge. Hopefully we can ride the momentum throughout the (10-game) homestand."

Colorado (75-62) took sole possession of first place in the NL West, half a game ahead of the Los Angeles Dodgers and 1½ games ahead of the Arizona Diamondbacks, both of whom lost home games Monday night.

Before Cuevas' clutch at-bat off San Francisco reliever Tony Watson — and prior to the Colorado bullpen squandering a four-run lead — three home runs put the Rockies in command in what had the early makings of a blowout.

But it took a key knock from a rookie September call-up to earn the win, as Cuevas choked up on the second swing of his at-bat after whiffing on his first to complete Colorado's rally.

"You always look for that moment when you can get an opportunity," Cuevas said. "The opportunity came pretty big for me today."

Meanwhile Story, amid his first all-star season and mounting Gold Glove consideration, gave further credibility to his emergence as one of baseball's best shortstops by hammering two of the club's home runs, his 27th and 28th of the year, while racking up five RBIs. The performance gives Story 246 RBIs and 79 homers since his debut in 2016, both marks better than every other shortstop in that time frame.

Story's first home run followed DJ LeMahieu's two-run longball in the opening inning — the first time in franchise history that the Rockies hit two two-run home runs within the first four batters of a game — to give starter Tyler Anderson a 4-0 cushion.

San Francisco dinged Anderson for a run in the third inning off Gorkys Hernandez's leadoff homer and a run in the fourth via Evan Longoria's sacrifice fly, but besides that, the left-handed pitcher turned in a decent enough outing after having his start pushed back a few days so that he could work on his command.

"Tyler threw the ball well. He made some really good pitches down in the strike zone, and his stuff was fine," manager Bud Black said. "The fastball-change combination, which I think is his best stuff, came into play. ... He's in a good place."

With the Rockies leading 4-2 in the fifth inning, Story slugged his second homer to set a career season high and give the Rockies a 7-2 advantage. This time, his three-run frozen rope to left field on a full-count hanging cutter brought around Charlie Blackmon and Nolan Arenado and had the Labor Day crowd roaring.

"That was a tough at-bat," Story said. "I got down 0-2 pretty quick, and then after that I was just trying to battle, and just trying to get something up in the air to get the guy home."

All of that damage came off San Francisco ace Madison Bumgarner, who entered the day as one of the game's most dominant opposing pitchers at Coors Field. In his 14 previous games at the stadium, Bumgarner posted a 3.93 ERA, the third-best mark for an opposing pitcher with a minimum of 10 starts.

After Anderson was chased from the game in the sixth inning by Brandon Crawford's RBI single that made it 7-3, recently recalled Yency Almonte got the final two outs of the inning. But San Francisco didn't stop chipping away, plating two more runs in the seventh off the Rockies relief combination of Chris Rusin and Chad Bettis to cut the lead to 7-5.

The Rockies' bullpen broke from there.

The normally reliable Seunghwan Oh came on for the eighth inning, recording two quick outs, before a hit by pitch and then pinch-hit homers by Alen Hanson and Chris Shaw swung the lead to San Francisco, 8-7, before Colorado's rally in the bottom of the frame was begun by Ian Desmond's single and Chris Iannetta's double.

"We know we always have a chance to win with this offense," Iannetta said. "A one-run deficit in Coors Field isn't insurmountable, and we felt like we could get back in front in a hurry. We pride ourselves on doing that."

Wade Davis struck out the side in the ninth to earn his National League-leading 38th save as the Rockies also improved to 24-14 in one-run games, the best such mark in the NL.

Looking ahead

Colorado Rockies starting pitcher German Marquez works against a San Diego Padres batter during the first inning of a baseball game Thursday, Aug. 30, 2018, in San Diego. (AP Photo/Gregory Bull)

Giants RHP Dereck Rodriguez (6-2, 2.47 ERA) at Rockies RHP German Marquez (11-9, 4.11), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Rodriguez has tossed three-plus innings of relief against Colorado this season, allowing five hits and one run while striking out four May 29 in a Colorado win. A converted outfielder, Rodriguez was tagged for three runs on five hits in his last start against Arizona, and his flyball rate of 33.9 percent suggests the Rockies will have plenty of chances to elevate the baseball up and out of Coors Field. Meanwhile, Marquez has turned in eight straight quality starts, including racking up a career-high 13 strikeouts in a no-decision in San Diego last week. But San Francisco has done damage against the right-hander in three starts before this season, hitting a collective .439 (18-for-41) with two home runs by Hunter Pence. – Kyle Newman, The Denver Post

Wednesday: Giants LHP Andrew Suarez (6-9, 4.19 ERA) at Rockies Antonio Senzatela (4-5, 4.88), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Thursday: Off day

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

Rockies' southpaw reliever Mike Dunn to have season-ending shoulder surgery
Meanwhile Drew Butera gets his first start, and promising young right-hander Yency Almonte never removes his gold chain
Kyle Newman | DenverPost.com | Sep. 3, 2018

Mike Dunn is done for the season.

The left-handed Rockies reliever, who has been on the disabled list since July 7, will have surgery on his left AC joint sometime in the next couple of weeks, ending an injury-plagued campaign for the veteran as he posted a 9.00 ERA in 17 innings (25 games).

Dunn originally tweaked his AC joint while working out this past offseason. He had been battling the injury all season.

He was originally scheduled to rejoin Colorado for this week's series against the San Francisco Giants, but a platelet-rich plasma injection and two cortisone injections couldn't help him overcome setbacks during his recent rehab stint with Triple-A Albuquerque.

"After my last outing, and the pain that I went through, I woke up the next day and I was at ease with (my season ending)," Dunn said. "I tried to push through it. I tried to come back through every option that I possibly could and then some by getting that extra cortisone shot there at the end. It just didn't hold up."

The left-hander expects to return to a normal throwing program in the offseason in order to be ready for the 2019 season.

Butera gets first start in Colorado

Recently acquired catcher Drew Butera, whom the Rockies traded to the Kansas City Royals for pitcher Jerry Vasto, got his first start in a Colorado uniform for Monday's series opener against San Francisco.

Butera, hitting eighth and known for his defensive prowess, said he's excited to join and contribute to a team in contention.

“Coming into a team that’s in the playoff race, and close to first place, that’s exciting for me,” said Butera, who won the 2015 World Series with the Royals. “We were close to the very bottom (of the American League standings) in Kansas City, so it’s cool to come into a good atmosphere, a fun team and to play for something meaningful.”

About Almonte’s flashy gold chain

Shaban Athuman, The Denver PostYency Almonte #62 of the Colorado Rockies pitches in the eighth inning against the Pittsburgh Pirates on August 7, 2018 at Coors Field in Denver, Colorado.

One of the organization’s more promising young bullpen arms returned via September call-up, as hard-throwing right-hander Yency Almonte yielded one run in nine innings (seven games) of relief for the Rockies earlier in the summer.

The rookie noted he took away lessons in finesse from his first big-league stint.

“My first couple outings, I was trying to throw as hard as I can and just throw it by guys,” Almonte said. “But after talking to the bullpen guys and coach (Darren Holmes), I’m trusting all my stuff more.”

And while the power pitcher has worked to incorporate more strategy into his approach, one thing won’t ever change — Almonte’s flashy gold chain, a hard-to-miss signature that bops around his neck violently as he throws.

“I got it in Miami just after I signed (in 2012), and I’ve never, ever taken it off,” Almonte said.

Dodgers' closer Kenley Jansen might miss upcoming series against Rockies due to concerns over irregular heartbeat

Jansen, who has 34 saves and a 2.93 ERA for Los Angeles this season, missed the previous series in LoDo due to the same issue

Kyle Newman | DenverPost.com | Sep. 3, 2018

Dodgers' closer Kenley Jansen, who missed the team's August series in Colorado due to an irregular heartbeat, might be held out of Los Angeles' upcoming games at Coors Field this weekend due to precautionary concerns related to the same issue.

Los Angeles comes to LoDo for a three-game series this Friday through Sunday, and according to MLB.com's Ken Gurnick, Dodgers manager Dave Roberts is considering keeping his three-time all-star at home.

"With Kenley and altitude and going to Denver, it's certainly going to be a conversation we're going to revisit during this series," Roberts told Gurnick on Monday.

Jansen, second in the National League to the Rockies' Wade Davis with 34 saves, was placed on the disabled list on August 10 following his irregular heartbeat in Denver, an issue he has suffered from on multiple occasions.

The 30-year-old also had an irregular heartbeat in Denver in 2012, which led to ablation surgery, and has said he expects to have another procedure during the upcoming offseason.

The Colorado Rockies have a huge hole in their bullpen

Jake Shapiro | RoxPile.com | Sep. 3, 2018

On Monday, the Colorado Rockies started a pivotal 10-game homestand against National League West opponents. Prior to the first game, left-handed reliever Mike Dunn told reporters that he was due to have season-ending shoulder surgery. "Things didn't go well. I had a couple of setbacks. After my second outing, I had to get a cortisone injection. That didn't hold up either so I'm shutting it down for the season," Dunn told Rox Pile and other reporters. "It's disappointing that I'm not going to be able to be back this year but ultimately I know I gave it everything I could to be back. It just didn't hold up."

Dunn was to be Colorado's primary late-game out-getter against left-handed batters down the stretch had he recovered. Though he has a 5.61 ERA in 93 games in purple, his career numbers against left-handed hitters is solid, with them hitting .233 against him.

With Dunn's injuries holding him to just 17 innings, this has been a problem for the Colorado club all year. In fact, the team is the fifth-worst in baseball by wOBA in left-on-left situations, with opponents tagging a mark of .341.

The Rockies did not do anything at the deadline to help their southpaw problem. The addition of Seunghwan Oh helped the bullpen big time ... though his numbers against lefties aren't good. And Colorado actually let a left-hander go as they waived Zac Rosscup, who held left-handed hitters to a .140 batting average against in his career.

So where do the Rockies go from here?

Jake McGee, Harrison Musgrave and Chris Rusin make up the left side currently, with Tyler Anderson and Sam Howard being possible additions down the stretch.

Except none of those players are actually a solution to the Rockies' problems. As you can see here, left-on-left situations have been favorable to the Rockies only when starter Kyle Freeland has been in them. The Swiss army knife, Rusin, and the rookie longman, Musgrave, have been okay ... but neither is a high-leverage left-on-left guy. That has been McGee, who has frankly been horrible in that role.

Anderson could be a guy who bounces to the bullpen in September and is likely the first cut from the rotation to the pen for a playoff series. His left-on-left stats, however, are also not good. Howard, meanwhile, is seeing left-handed batters hit .316 off him at Triple-A this year.

With the Dodgers, D-Backs and Rockies all within a game of each other atop the West and Colorado having six games against Los Angeles and seven against Arizona in September, the season could very well come down to a late game left-on-left situation.

Obviously displaying these numbers shows enough evidence that this situation might not be a good for the Rockies ... but breaking it down further, you find something more alarming.

Cody Bellinger is 2-for-4 with a home run and two RBI off McGee, and he's 3-for-10 with a home run and two RBI off Anderson. However, Rusin and Musgrave are a combined perfect 8-for-8 in getting him out. Max Muncy is 2-for-5 against the current crop of Rockies relieving lefties, and Jon Jay has taken them to the woodshed getting hits in seven of his 18 at-bats against Rusin and McGee.

Even Daniel Descalso has gotten his off Rusin. Joc Pederson, meanwhile, has been taken to the woodshed by that duo of Rusin and McGee.

The whole point of this is that you're likely to see one of these matchups this month in a tied or close ballgame. The Rockies will turn to the lefty in their pen to get one of those batters because that's what the game dictates. But neither the numbers nor history will be in the favor of the left arm of the Rockies' relievers.

Colorado Rockies: This is where we separate the men from the boys
Lucas Coryell | RoxPile.com | Sep. 3, 2018

The Colorado Rockies have done what they needed to do to be in the hunt for the division and/or postseason. Now they have to do it all over again to win it.

The Colorado Rockies have six games left with the Los Angeles Dodgers and seven games left with the Arizona Diamondbacks in the last 25 games to finish the season. That makes those games paramount to the Rockies' playoff chances.

Of course, the Rockies must first take this current series against the San Francisco Giants ... and then they get seven straight all-important games at Coors Field against National League West division opponents. That's the stuff only big market teams often get to watch in September. This year, it's in Denver.

Colorado's offense is heating up this month with Nolan Arenado due for an MVP-caliber bounce back from his recent road trip struggles. The Rockies will send Jon Gray, Kyle Freeland and Tyler Anderson to the mound against the Dodgers to start off this wild race to the finish. I like Colorado's odds of taking that series from Los Angeles, but as the title says, this is where "we separate the men from the boys." The cards have been dealt, the bets are being placed and the Rockies have to come out and win ballgames.

The lineup is flush with players who can go on dynamic streaks with Trevor Story having a two-homer, five-RBI day Monday in a comeback win against the Giants. Charlie Blackmon has been more like himself in recent games, hitting 6-for-13 in three September games. Arenado will return to form because he's one of the best in the business, and the rest of the lineup has potential too with DJ LeMahieu, Carlos Gonzalez and Ian Desmond each contributing to each series and players like Gerardo Parra and David Dahl chipping in. Oh yeah, Matt Holliday is back and seems to be rejuvenated.

The Rockies have a lineup that makes opposing managers nervous, no matter who they put on the hill. They have a rotation that has given mostly quality outings and, if the bullpen can find its stride when it matters most, they are also quite a unit.

So if the Rockies can find a way to get the most out of their players in the most important times, they can win the NL West and scare everyone in their way to the World Series. They can ill afford, however, to give any games away or have anyone not show up to the ballpark without their A game.

Colorado Rockies start pivotal 10-game homestand vs. San Francisco Giants
Jack Etkin | TheSportsXchange.com | Sep. 3, 2018

Colorado Rockies starting pitcher Tyler Anderson pitches against the Houston Astros in the first inning on August 15, 2018 at Minute Made Park in Houston. Photo by Trask Smith/UPI | License Photo

DENVER -- The Colorado Rockies will begin a crucial 10-game homestand Monday against the San Francisco Giants followed by three games against the Los Angeles Dodgers and four against the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The Rockies, Dodgers and Diamondbacks are locked in a tight National League West race. Colorado is in second place, a half-game behind the Dodgers and a half-game ahead of the Diamondbacks.

Winning a second straight game Sunday in San Diego enabled Colorado to salvage a split of a four-game series with the Padres and conclude a 3-3 road trip. The victory also left the Rockies 1 1/2 games behind the St. Louis Cardinals for the second NL wild-card spot.

The Rockies are 8-5 against the Giants this season and 5-1 at Coors Field. Left-hander Tyler Anderson (6-7, 4.79 ERA) will start for the Rockies and try to rebound after struggling in August. Left-handed ace Madison Bumgarner (5-5, 2.68) will start for the Giants.

Despite losing five of the past eight games, the Rockies have gained a half-game in the standings during that stretch. They are 34-30 at home, including 11-7 since the All-Star break.

In the Rockies' 7-3 win over the Padres on Sunday, key late-game relievers Scott Oberg (2.64 ERA) and Adam Ottavino (2.01) each pitched a scoreless inning. Both have worked in two straight games and three of the past four.

After the victory, Rockies manager Bud Black said, "'Otto' will be down [Monday]. Oberg will be down. And the other guys who pitch in relief, if it's a tight game with the Giants, have to come through for us. That's what it's going to take."

Improvement from Anderson could determine whether it's a tight game. He gave up seven hits and six runs on Aug. 26 against St. Louis and lasted a career-low two-thirds of an inning as the Cardinals romped to a 12-3 win.

The Rockies pushed back Anderson's next start, and he will take the mound with seven days' rest and hoping to improve his wayward command.

Anderson went 0-4 with an 11.39 ERA in five August starts and allowed nine homers in 21 1/3 innings along with a .368 batting average and 1.174 OPS by opponents. He has gone nine starts since he last won on July 4 when he blanked the Giants on two hits for eight innings at Coors Field.

Bumgarner threw seven shutout innings Tuesday against Atlanta but ended up with a no-decision in the Giants' 1-0 win. He has allowed two or fewer earned runs in six of his past seven starts -- the exception when he gave up a season-high five earned runs on Aug. 18 at Cincinnati -- going 2-2 with a 2.11 ERA during that stretch while holding opponents to a .199 average and .676 OPS.

Bumgarner is 12-8 with a 2.93 ERA in 28 career starts against the Rockies, including 0-1 with a 1.38 ERA in two starts this year. He's 5-6 with a 3.93 ERA in 14 starts at Coors Field.

In the past eight games, the Giants' starters have a 1.20 ERA (seven earned runs, 52 1/3 innings). But San Francisco has scored three or fewer runs in six of its past nine games.

The Giants (68-70) have dropped three of their past four games, including the final two of three to the New York Mets after trading right fielder Andrew McCutchen to the New York Yankees for two prospects just before the Aug. 31 trade deadline.

The Giants acquired McCutchen last winter. No longer the middle-of-the lineup force he was in Pittsburgh, McCutchen nonetheless played regularly for the Giants. But they are mired in fourth place, and with McCutchen eligible for free agency after the season, a trade, while not welcome, made sense.

"Contrary to some other general managers, our front office, we don't necessarily relish the trade deadline and being involved in this," Giants executive vice president for baseball operations Brian Sabean told the San Jose Mercury News. "You've got people going out the door that you're invested in and you're never really sure of the return, etc. We all know the drill."

MLB roundup: Rockies claim first in NL West
Reuters | YahooSports.com | Sep 4, 2018

Pinch hitter Noel Cuevas delivered a two-run single in the eighth inning Monday afternoon, allowing the Colorado Rockies to survive a late rally by the San Francisco Giants and record a 9-8 victory in Denver.

The Giants had scored three times in the top of the eighth inning to take an 8-7 lead in a game they had once trailed 7-2.

The Rockies moved into first place in the National League West when the Los Angeles Dodgers lost Monday night.

Colorado is a half-game up on Los Angeles and 1 1/2 games in front of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

With his team down by one, Ian Desmond led off the Colorado eighth with a single off the fourth Giants pitcher, left-hander Tony Watson (4-6). One out later, Chris Iannetta's pinch-hit double sent Desmond to third. Both runners raced home when Cuevas singled to center field.

Mets 4, Dodgers 2

Brandon Nimmo delivered a pinch-hit, three-run home run in the ninth inning to give New York a victory at Los Angeles.

Mets starter Jacob deGrom gave up one run on just two hits over six innings with a walk and six strikeouts. He even drove in a run in his second consecutive game with an RBI single in the fifth.

The outing gave deGrom sole possession of a pair of Mets records. He has now allowed three earned runs or fewer in 25 consecutive starts, breaking a tie with Dwight Gooden. He also delivered his 20th consecutive quality start, breaking a tie with Tom Seaver.

Padres 6, Diamondbacks 2

Rookie Franmil Reyes had his first career two-homer game and drove in four runs, and San Diego extended Arizona's losing streak to four games with a victory in Phoenix.

Reyes hit a three-run homer in the second inning and a bases-empty shot in the fourth, his 14th and 15th homers of the season, to extend his hitting streak to nine games and lift the Padres to their fifth victory in seven games.

Paul Goldschmidt and Steven Souza had RBIs for the Diamondbacks, who lost for the sixth time in eight games.

Brewers 4, Cubs 3

Christian Yelich beat out a potential inning-ending, double-play grounder to give Milwaukee a walk-off victory over visiting Chicago.

Erik Kratz walked to open the ninth off Steve Cishek (4-3) before being replaced by pinch runner Keon Broxton. Orlando Arcia was hit by a pitch, and both runners advanced on a passed ball before Curtis Granderson struck out against a five-man infield. Lorenzo Cain was then hit by a pitch to load the bases.

Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant backhanded Yelich's grounder and stepped on third for the second out of the inning, but Yelich easily beat the throw to first to give the Brewers their fifth victory in six games.

Red Sox 8, Braves 2

Ian Kinsler hit a two-run single in the eighth inning and finished with three RBIs as Boston won at Atlanta.

Kinsler was 2-for-5 with a walk and a run. His single against Atlanta reliever Jesse Biddle produced two unearned runs. The hit came after a rare throwing error by Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman allowed the bases to be loaded.

Brandon Workman (3-0) earned the victory by getting the final two outs of the fifth inning. He was the first of seven pitchers used by the Red Sox bullpen. Craig Kimbrel pitched around a walk to throw a scoreless ninth inning in a non-save situation.

Astros 4, Twins 1

Dallas Keuchel worked six strong innings, Alex Bregman homered for a third consecutive game, and Houston claimed the opener of a three-game series with visiting Minnesota.

Keuchel (11-10) allowed just one run, which was unearned, on five hits and two walks. He struck out six.

Brad Peacock entered with two on and two outs in the ninth inning, and he immediately allowed a single to Logan Forsythe that loaded the bases. Peacock then struck out Jorge Polanco for his third save.

Nationals 4, Cardinals 3 (10 innings)

Bryce Harper tied the game with a two-run homer in the ninth and added a game-winning sacrifice fly in the bottom of the 10th as Washington topped visiting St. Louis.

Harper's two-run homer off Bud Norris sent the game into extra innings. Then, in the 10th, Mark Reynolds led off with a double against Chasen Shreve (3-3), and pinch runner Michael Taylor moved to third when Adam Eaton reached on a bunt single. One out later, Harper drove in Taylor with a sacrifice fly to left.

Greg Holland (2-2) earned the victory with two innings of shutout relief.