



MEDIA CLIPS – February 2, 2018

Story aims to parlay '17 lessons into '18 stardom

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | Feb. 1st, 2018

DENVER -- The Rockies' 2017 season ended with shortstop **Trevor Story** on deck without a chance to display a bat that was on fire. The final swing of Story's season was a good one -- an opposite-field homer off the D-backs' **Archie Bradley** in the eighth inning of an 11-8 loss in the National League Wild Card Game.

Story's 2-for-4 performance in the postseason contest followed a 23-game tear to end the regular season: hits in all but four of the games, a .302 batting average, five home runs, eight doubles, two triples and 18 RBIs. Story's numbers over 145 games were problematic with a .239 average and an NL-leading 191 strikeouts to go along with 24 home runs. But the ending of Story's second Major League season may have been a beginning.

"I told him after the last game that whatever we worked on toward the end of the year, don't forget that," Rockies third baseman **Nolan Arenado** said. "Write it down, whatever it is, so you know going into the offseason this is what you've got to work on."

Story, 25, could move toward stardom in 2018 if he internalizes the lessons from the struggles of last season's first five months and the achievements of the final month. Story is picking the brains of Arenado and leadoff hitter **Charlie Blackmon** -- teammates who have demonstrated how to address weaknesses and grow as Major Leaguers.

The visuals are different. Arenado can do damage on pitches Story most likely would not swing at, while Blackmon is a lefty batter with less of a stride. But Story doesn't want their swings.

"I love to talk with Nolan and Chuck about hitting all the time," Story said. "It doesn't necessarily have to look the same, but your thoughts and your actions can be thinking the same thing. It just produces a different personal look."

Story won the Rockies' shortstop job with a standout spring in 2016. He homered twice in his debut and seven times in his first six games, tying Dave Kingman (1972) and **Albert Pujols** ('01) for the NL rookie record for homers at the All-Star break with 21. Before sustaining a season-ending left thumb ligament injury on July 30, Story set an NL rookie shortstop record with 27 homers. He finished with a solid .272 batting average, despite 130 strikeouts.

Early last season, Story tinkered with mechanics to reduce head movement. He talked to Blackmon and other teammates but struggled until he found his comfort zone. Once Story left mechanics behind, he became cerebral and flourished.

"Later in the year, we had another talk, which I think is more important in the sense that we talked about what's your mentality, what are your goals, what are you thinking in the box? What's your approach?" Blackmon said. "All those things that I've been able to learn through lots and lots of experience, well, he's trying to shorten that learning curve, make an adjustment quicker."

What's possible? A random/not-so-random comparison of Story's 242-game career with significant Rockies at the same point is instructive:

Story: .253/.322/.504, 51 HR, 154 RBIs

Todd Helton: .300/.370/.515, 40 HR, 141 RBIs

Matt Holliday: .300/.357/.498, 32 HR, 141 RBIs

Troy Tulowitzki: .271/.343/.424, 28 HR, 128 RBIs

Clint Barmes: .255/.297/.385, 19 HR, 114 RBIs

Charlie Blackmon: .293/.330/.441, 23 HR, 89 RBIs

Nolan Arenado: .279/.316/.453, 28 HR, 113 RBIs

Story out homered and drove in more runs than them all, with only Helton slugging higher. Story is low on the average and on-base scales. Barmes was the only member of this group who didn't become an All-Star, but he ended up with a long career as a winning player because of his defense. Keep in mind, many Rockies personnel felt Story deserved to be a Rawlings Gold Glove Award finalist in 2017.

"This could be an incredible opportunity for growth for Trevor Story, unbelievable," Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich said. "That's where there should be pride for him. There should be pride for me and for us around him that his professionalism -- that he handled his struggles like a professional. And that the other parts of his job, that are very important, especially at a very important defensive position, did not suffer."

However, Story has to strike a difficult offensive balance. It's easy to say shorten up and be content with putting balls in play; however, 22 of his 51 career homers, plus 16 doubles and two triples, have come with two strikes.

Two-strike pitches outside, sometimes off the plate, often lead to a trip back to the dugout. The first of these **Statcast**[™] charts shows the two-strike pitches Story has whiffed on or fouled off.

The second shows barrels and solid contact on the same pitch, same situation:

And often when Story slumps, he is fouling off fat pitches early in counts. Compare the pitches he has fouled off before two strikes with the ones he has barreled up with two strikes:

It all paints a picture of a hitter that could make slight adjustments in pitch selection and know pitchers' tendencies better. Those adjustments could lead to a big year of solid contact, as long as Story isn't paralyzed by the fear of striking out.

"Obviously, the strikeouts are something that I'm going to work on, but I'll never be scared to strike out just because I feel I can do damage," Story said. "I feel like I can be better situationally. It all comes down to the mindset for me. I was starting to get more consistently where I want to be the last month, really.

"You're only as good as the pitches you swing at. That's the mindset that I like to take. It's a lot easier said than done."

Rockies preaching patience to young starters

Second-year hurlers looking to pace themselves for 2018

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | Jan. 31st, 2018

DENVER -- Rockies left-hander **Kyle Freeland**'s playoffs started last February. Hoping to impress new manager Bud Black, he showed up in Scottsdale, Ariz., close to midseason form, and earned not just a job in the rotation but a start in the Coors Field opener -- in his hometown, no less.

Freeland won that one and earned 11 wins to tie teammate **German Marquez** for the Major League rookie lead before learning how long a Major League season can be. Like fellow Rockies rookie starters **Antonio Senzatela** and **Jeff Hoffman**, Freeland struggled in the second half, posting a 2-4 record with a 4.81 ERA after the All-Star break, and admitted, "I got a little tired both mentally and physically."

This year, Black and pitching coach Steve Foster are having pitchers save their arms now in hopes they will be at full strength toward the end of the season, when Colorado hopes to make a run at its second consecutive postseason appearance.

In 2017, the Rockies' rookie quartet made 93 starts. The results were solid. Senzatela had 10 victories and finished tied for second (with the Angels' **Parker Bridwell**) to Marquez and Freeland in rookies wins. But Freeland, Hoffman and Senzatela made just 22 combined starts after the All-Star break, as Black skipped them, and used brief demotions to the Minors and time in the bullpen to spare the innings load. The 2018 plan is to make sure the young starters are ready when the games count, and not so much before.

For example, Freeland began throwing just before the holidays, about two weeks later than in 2017. It's the same for Hoffman, who got married on New Year's Eve and honeymooned in the Republic of the Maldives -- an understandable reason to delay his throwing program. After making just seven starts at Double-A Hartford in 2016 because of a shoulder injury and the death of his mother in Venezuela, Senzatela made up for the time in instructional ball in the Dominican Republic and kept in shape for his Spring Training push.

"We had to see what they could do through February and March, and part of their success was when the season started, they were truly at the top of their game," Black said. "But as the season wore on, you saw the effects of being ready in February. It's very hard to maintain that level of physical performance."

Now that the Rockies know what each of the talented now-second-year pitchers can do physically against big-league competition, they want them to use their heads as much as their arms while preparing for 2018. The arm care will continue when pitchers and catchers begin workouts in Scottsdale, Ariz., on Feb. 14 and during the Cactus League schedule.

"It's all part of growth," Black said. "It's all part of mentally how you go through a season. When can you take a little bit of a blow? It's part of becoming a tenured player."

Senzatela's velocity dipped around midseason. Some of it came back after rest and after being used in shorter bullpen stints. Freeland was hit in the jaw by a **J.D. Martinez** line drive Sept. 11 -- which ended a five-start period that saw him give up 29 hits in 22 innings. Hoffman simply lost command of his fastball, which took his curveball out of the equation.

"As the marathon came to the last few miles, it became a matter of pitching on straight wit and will as opposed to stuff, because the stuff started diminishing," Foster said. "That's no strike against any of the guys. It's experience."

Marquez pitched to the end, but he had less-than-stellar numbers (1-2, 5.28 ERA in 30 2/3 innings over six starts). However, his velocity and pitch action were fine. His struggles were due to learning adjustments at the Major League level.

The Rockies have given their pitchers specific goals, which are more important than what happens during a given Cactus League game. And it's not just the second-year guys. Ace righty **Jon Gray** is entering his fourth big league season, and lefty **Tyler Anderson** is preparing for this third. Righty **Chad Bettis**, who didn't pitch last season until August because of a bout with testicular cancer, will be the oldest starting pitcher, turning 29 on April 26.

"The younger guys specifically, it comes down to consistency, and there's some action on their pitches that we have to make sure that they make the right adjustments," Black said.

Having a clear path to improvement increases Hoffman's confidence.

"When the fastball is in the right spot, that's when it becomes fun -- a lot of punchouts in a game and everything follows through with that," Hoffman said. "Because, really, the curveball is always there."

But all the individual improvement assignments are against the backdrop of competition. Gray, Anderson and Bettis plus four second-year hurlers equal seven -- two more than the rotation can hold. The Rockies also have a beefed-up bullpen and might not have room to carry a starter in the 'pen.

"There is going to be tons of competition for our rotation spots -- I don't think anybody's rotation spot is secure right now," Freeland said.

The test, then, is for the pitchers to be secure enough to adhere to the new preparation timeline.

Rockies unveil new scoreboard renderings

By MLB.com | Jan. 31st, 2018

DENVER -- Celebrating their 25th Anniversary Season in 2018, the Colorado Rockies are well underway this offseason with several significant Coors Field improvement projects, all of which were voted on and approved Sept. 20, 2017, by the Denver Metropolitan Major League Baseball Stadium District and funded by the Club pursuant to its new 30-year lease agreement. Highlighting the offseason ballpark improvements is a new left-center field scoreboard.

In partnership with Daktronics, the industry leader in large-format LED video displays and more, the Rockies will unveil a scoreboard on Opening Day, April 6, 2018, that will measure 8,369 square feet, 258% larger than the former Coors Field scoreboard. Equivalent in display size to 784 60-inch televisions, the scoreboard will feature a total of 6.8 million LEDs. In addition to being more than two times larger than the former scoreboard, it will have a uniquely Colorado Rockies shape, with the top of the scoreboard featuring a mountain cutout, reminiscent of the Club's mountain logo. (See the visual renderings below and attached, demonstrating the full-board video capability.) Related to the new scoreboard, the Rockies will be updating the technology in the control room to HD1080P; the control room operates the scoreboards, sound and in-game entertainment throughout the ballpark. Also, the next phase of ballpark speaker enhancements will be completed, focusing on the lower bowl of the ballpark.

Due to the amount of construction work happening in and around the ballpark this offseason, safety standards require that only trained personnel be permitted access to these areas in order to ensure the safety and security of everyone involved as they seek to complete these projects before Opening Day.

About Daktronics

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Read more: **Colorado Rockies**

Emotions high as 7 Rockies graduate in DR

Club, MLB work through Dominican Ministry of Education to aid young Latin players

By Thomas Hardin / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | Jan. 30th, 2018

DENVER -- There *is* crying in baseball, especially when it's something bigger than home runs and strikeouts. So Josh Rosenthal, the Rockies' supervisor of cultural development, wasn't afraid to let some tears flow on Friday when he entered Instituto Tecnico Superior Comunitario in the Dominican Republic.

Major League Baseball helped organize and execute an initiative through the Dominican Republic Ministry of Education to help clubs provide educational opportunities for young Latin American players, who are eligible to sign with teams as long as they are 16 by July 2. It culminated with Friday's ceremony during which the Rockies welcomed their first high school graduation class -- seven players. About 40 players representing five teams -- the Rockies, Reds, Giants, Athletics and Yankees -- walked the graduation line at Friday's ceremony.

"When I walked into the graduation ceremony theatre, I got tears in my eyes," Rosenthal said. "It was just a dream realized. That's where baseball is really part of the solution here in helping break the cycle of poverty here."

The Rockies have a complex in Boca Chica, where they not only train players on the field but have a program to prepare them for careers in pro ball by teaching work ethic, leadership, teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking, emotional intelligence and English. But actual schooling toward a high school diploma -- often taken for granted in the U.S. but something precious and hard to achieve in the Dominican -- was a missing piece.

The Rockies have spent years looking to solve that puzzle.

Players in the U.S. and abroad harbor big league dreams when they sign, but roughly only 5 percent overall make it to the Majors. The figure is lower in Latin America, in part because they are not eligible for the MLB Draft and are signed at 16 -- as opposed to 18, when the player's body and knowledge are greater.

Add to that a difficult educational situation in the Dominican. Rosenthal, citing statistics from four years ago on the CIA's website, noted that the Dominican Republic was in the bottom 10 in percentage of gross domestic product contributed to education. The average child went to school between the ages of 7 and 12, generally missed a year or two during that period, and spent just 1.8 hours of class time.

"When you come from a family with limited resources, a lot of these kids aren't going to school because they need to work to help support their families," Rosenthal said. "It's really incredible what these kids do with their signing bonuses. The ones that are really fortunate to sign for a good amount of money, they usually buy a new home for their family, usually put their siblings through school, really just support the family."

Rolando Fernandez, the Rockies' vice president of international scouting and development, approached Rosenthal about attacking the educational issue in 2006, when Rosenthal was finishing his time in the Peace Corps, and stayed in touch while Rosenthal was teaching, coaching and earning a master's degree from Brandman University, through the Chapman University system. Eventually, Fernandez hired Rosenthal, who spends part of his year in the Dominican. Angel Amparo, the Rockies' cultural development coordinator, is hands-on at the Dominican complex.

"Our goal is to put a program in place -- not only a baseball program, but an educational program -- that when a player's career is over, whether it's 10 years in the big leagues, one year, Triple-A, Double-A, Rookie ball, whenever their career is over, they have a better opportunity after baseball," said Fernandez, who grew up in Puerto Rico and -- at the insistence of his parents -- went to Chipola Junior College and Northwestern (La.) State before playing three years in the Cubs' system. "They can become very good citizens of the United States or their country of citizenship, great parents, great teammates, great people for their community. That is a very realistic goal that takes everybody's effort."

MLB, with work from director of Dominican operations Rafael Perez and head of educational operations Neskys Liriano, helped bring the Rockies' dream to reality.

It's a blended program through a charter school that provides teachers, all with master's degrees. They come to the Rockies' complex on Wednesdays, and players take online classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while being responsible for independent assignments. This is in addition to the baseball work, and to the practical instruction in English and adapting to the U.S. the team provides.

Graduating takes effort.

Three players finished the program while playing on the 2017 Rookie-level team in Grand Junction, Colo. Jefry Valdez went 2-3 with a 4.20 ERA in 27 relief appearances, Alexander Martinez posted a 3.41 ERA in 18 relief games, and Aneudy Duarte was 0-0 in six games. Dominican Summer League players who graduated included pitchers Raymells

Rosa (3-3, 4.50) and Helcris Olivarez (0-1, 3.55), outfielder Jose Grullart (.221) and infielder Henry Garcia, who was released from the organization as a player but with a diploma.

Second baseman Shael Mendoza (.364 with 25 stolen bases) and outfielder Ramon Marcelino (.318 with 19 homers and 55 RBIs) moved closer to their diplomas while having excellent years.

It's hard to quantify how much formal education helps a player reach the Majors, although generally U.S. collegiate players (especially position players) drafted in early rounds stick in the Majors at a higher rate than high school players. So any narrowing of the educational gap by Latin American players can only help.

"An educated player is a better player," said Zach Wilson, the Rockies' senior director of player development, who attended the ceremony. "They're certainly a better person. Our goal as an organization -- not just for our Latins but our Americans, too -- is to ensure that as they're Colorado Rockies and after they're done being Colorado Rockies, that they're able to carry on so much of what they've learned on and off the field."

Rockies personnel in Latin America and the U.S. credit owner/CEO Dick Monfort and general manager Jeff Bridich for supporting the program financially and personally.

"I'm pleased with where we are at this point, but it's a never-ending process," Fernandez said. "We're never going to say, 'OK, the process is complete.' Everybody -- from ownership to Bridich to everybody that's involved -- believes in what we're doing."

Todd Frazier might be a great fit for the Rockies

The slugging free agent brings a combination of skills that might fit this team.

By Hayden Kane / Purple Row | @hwkane | Feb. 2, 2018

The **Colorado Rockies were recently linked to two notable sluggers** who are available in the ice-cold free agent market: **Carlos González** and **Todd Frazier**. The attention understandably shifts in CarGo's direction given his history with the franchise and the appeal of another run with a fan favorite.

Frazier might be a better fit for a number of reasons. Let's take a look!

He's not an outfielder

You know by now that the Rockies have a lot of outfielders. In this, the time of year when we focus on best-case scenarios, it seems like they already don't have room for everybody. It's four guys for two spots in the corners between **Gerardo Parra**, **David Dahl**, **Raimel Tapia**, and **Ian Desmond** (probably).

Desmond probably should play the outfield. We'll know the Rockies are going that route if they add somebody to help carry the load at first base. Frazier actually hasn't played very much first in his career, but that's still a lot more than Desmond had played there and Frazier's transition to first seems to have been in the works more so than Desmond's ever was.

Frazier might also be able to handle second base, as that's a position where some teams have reportedly considered him. That's brings us to another attribute the Rockies love.

He's versatile

In what might better be described as a "master of none" situation, Frazier can play first, second, and third base. While he has primarily been a third baseman in his career, we know there's no playing time there with **Nolan Arenado** (and I'm certainly not going to be the one talking about a potential injury there).

Frazier might be able to help the Rockies as a bridge to young talent at those two other spots. Maybe he takes the majority of the playing time this year while **Ryan McMahon** still gets his feet wet. Maybe he shares time with him at first.

Maybe he's around next season to play some second (or some first with McMahon at second) if the team parts with DJ LeMahieu and Brendan Rodgers isn't ready.

None of these are ideal scenarios, but the Rockies presumably champion depth because they want to have options to handle situations over the course of a long season. As a veteran who's been around and can handle a few spots in the infield, Frazier could help fill in a few different situations. And if you'll notice the "as a veteran" in the previous sentence, what's another thing the Rockies love?

He's a strong veteran presence in the clubhouse

So is CarGo. So is Mark Reynolds. We don't need to spend much time on this, but we know it matters and we know Frazier has a stellar reputation as a leader. As with Desmond and the veterans in the bullpen, that matters for a franchise that plans to win with a lot of young talent already on the roster and graduating in the years to come.

He hits those good, good fly balls

Frazier has hit a bunch of dingers in his career. He hit 27 last year and 40 two years ago as a member of the **Chicago White Sox**. He started his career with the **Cincinnati Reds** and then played part of last season with the **New York Yankees**. What do those three teams have in common? Hitter-friendly parks, of course.

Coors Field rewards guys who hit fly balls. Frazier has shown he can take advantage of those environments, with a 47.5 fly ball percentage last season (and a similar percentage the two seasons before that). That batted ball profile has kept Frazier's power numbers up as he's aged (he'll be 32 next season).

Frazier would presumably be able to sustain that production with the huge Coors outfield at altitude, and if he showed any flashes of his previous elite power, the Rockies might be onto a real value.

He can still be valuable with a plummeting batting average

If this rumor gains any additional heat, you might see some concern about Frazier's batting average. He has been declining in that area the last couple seasons, with a .225 average in 2016 and a .213 average last year.

Despite those struggles, Frazier was still good for a 105 OPS+ last season. As Jordan Freemyer **noted when this rumor first surfaced**, a lot of that had to do with a marked improvement in his ability to gain walks. His 14.4% walk rate would have been best on the Rockies. If he continues to draw walks and hit the ball in the air, a low batting average won't be so much of a problem.

He might be a bargain

Insert commentary on the state of free agency here. Every team has the opportunity to take advantage of the halted market to get good value. If things start to move, free agents will presumably be settling for less money than they expected to get.

It's important for the Rockies to find guys who are a good fit as they look for opportunities in free agency. There are a number of reasons to think that **Flava Fraz** (which is a great nickname for Todd Frazier) has those attributes to be a fit for the Rockies.

Brendan Rodgers is the Rockies' best prospect

Rodgers tops the pre-season 2018 PuRPs list

By Jeff Aberle / Purple Row | Feb. 2, 2018

1. Brendan Rodgers (1,017 points, 34 ballots)

Rodgers stands alone atop **Rockies** prospects according to Purple Row. 2015's no. 3 overall pick (and the consensus top talent in the draft at the time) signed for a Rockies record of \$5.5 million because the high school shortstop was a potential five tool player at a premium defensive position. The 21-year-old, 6'0" righty possesses elite bat speed and doesn't have any glaring holes in his game, making him a tantalizing prospect indeed. To wit, according to Baseball America, Rodgers is **the best hitter for average and best infield arm in the system.**

Midseason Rank: 1

High Ballot: 1 (31)

Mode Ballot: 1

Future Value: 65, All-Star infielder

Contract Status: 2015 1st Round, Not Rule 5 Eligible, three options remaining

MLB ETA: 2019

Rodgers showed his prospect pedigree in 2016 with Low A Asheville against players on average 2.6 years older than him. In 491 plate appearances with the Tourists, Rodgers hit a respectable .281/.342/.480 with 19 homers and 31 doubles, good for a 135 wRC+. More notable was that Rodgers didn't just hold his own as one of the youngest players in the league. He thrived in his full season debut.

In 2017 Rodgers didn't just thrive for High A Lancaster at age 20, he obliterated pitching from guys 2.6 years older than him on average. In 236 plate appearances with Lancaster (including a late season playoff stretch cameo), Rodgers hit .387/.407/.671 with 36 extra base hits, including 12 homers—that's an unreal 184 wRC+. It absolutely needs to be noted that Rodgers took advantage of a hitter-friendly park in a hitter-friendly league as few before him ever have. In 115 home at-bats for Lancaster, Rodgers hit an impossible .461/.488/.809 with 23 extra base hits! Compare that to a fine but not world-beating .308/.312/.523 road line and you have a data point worth considering with Rodgers.

After a well-deserved June promotion to Double A Hartford, Rodgers faced a much tougher hitting environment and a set of pitchers that was on average 4.2 years older than him. Correspondingly he hit for a weaker .260/.323/.413 line in 164 plate appearances with 11 extra base hits for the Yard Goats with a 22% strikeout and 5% walk percentages. While those numbers don't look like much, they still represented an above average 104 wRC+. In addition, after the All-Star break Rodgers hit .278/.340/.474 in 97 at-bats after a tough start to his Hartford tenure. It seems like Rodgers began to figure out the level.

Defensively, Rodgers played mostly shortstop (80 games) with a smattering at second (10 games) with 18 errors on the season across the two levels. It is also worth noting that Rodgers had two DL stints in 2017, one for a hand injury in April and another for a quad injury in August. Combined, the injuries cost Rodgers about six weeks of the season.

Here's some video of Rodgers from June 2017 courtesy of Baseball Census:

The numbers are great, but the scouting reports are what really elevates Rodgers to an elite plane. According to national prospect writers, Rodgers is not only clearly the best prospect in the organization (he swept that position for all major prospect gurus I've read), he is a top 30 prospect in MLB overall.

MLB.com represents the high organization on Rodgers thus far this off-season, **ranking him 15th overall with a 60 Future Value** and giving him a 50 or better on all five tools:

Rodgers offers more upside at the plate than most middle infielders, possessing all the tools to hit for average and power. He has a quick right-handed swing, good feel for the barrel, fine pitch-recognition skills and plenty of strength. He makes consistent hard contact, and the only quibbles with his offensive game are that he rarely walks and occasionally gets pull-conscious.

When Rodgers was in high school, scouts debated whether he was a long-term shortstop. The consensus now is that while he doesn't have the quickness and range teams typically desire there, his arm strength and instincts allow him to get the job done at short. He could be a solid defender at second or third base, though **Nolan Arenado** blocks him at the hot corner in Colorado.

Keith Law **placed Rodgers 29th on his top 100** for **ESPN.com**:

The Rockies' top prospect has great feel to hit, with a smooth, balanced right-handed swing that also provides some pull power. He has a good eye at the plate but has yet to walk much or show he can work deep counts

...

Rodgers is a 40 runner with some stiffness in his hips, so there's some question whether he'll have the lateral quickness to have above-average range at shortstop. His hands work well, his instincts at the position are good, and he has a plus arm, but there's a longstanding bias in the industry against below-average runners at short. The Rockies have played him a little at second base, but they'll likely exhaust the shortstop possibility before considering a switch.

He also needs to stay healthy for a full season, with just 199 games played over the past two years around a bunch of minor nicks and cuts.

He could be anything from a solid-average regular at second base who makes a lot of contact with average power to a fringe star at shortstop who hits 20-some homers without hurting anyone on defense.

Baseball Prospectus **hung a 70 OFP and 60 Likely role** on Rodgers. Here's Wilson Karaman on Rodgers:

The Good: There isn't much this kid can't do on a baseball diamond. The swing is mechanically simple, with explosive wrists and quality lower-half engagement generating big bat speed. He generates extension and leverage without getting too big, helping drive solid bat-to-ball skill while retaining the ability to translate plus raw power into games. He's an average runner with a head for running the bases. The glove can play above his raw physical tools, which aren't as quick-twitchy as a typical shortstop's. He's fluid and balanced on the dirt, maintaining crisp body control in his lateral movements and reading batted ball trajectories well. The arm features plus velocity on the run and solid accuracy.

The Bad: He made precious little progress in tamping down an aggressive approach at the plate this year, too often getting himself out early in the count on fastballs in tough-to-reach corners of the zone or breakers outside of it. The natural hitting ability was enough to overcome those tendencies at High-A, but he struggled accordingly once he bumped up to Double-A. The range is borderline at short, and while he can play a decent game there he'd be closer to average than asset at the six. Lower-half injuries nagged him all year, which took a further bite out of his foot speed and lateral agility for most of the season.

The Risks: Between a bat capable of producing electric contact on the regular and enough physicality and arm strength to maintain value as a shortstop, there's a big-time ceiling here. The unbridled aggressiveness of his approach at the plate raises at least half an eyebrow for now, but the full sum of the package is lower-risk.

For good measure, **Baseball America rated Rodgers as the 22nd best prospect** in baseball.

The scouts and national prospect writers think that Rodgers is the best prospect in the system, a future All-Star shortstop (or second baseman), and middle of the order bat. The electorate and I both happen to agree with them, which is why Rodgers was first on my personal ballot and why I gave him a 65 Future Value.

Rodgers held his own in 2017 at a Double A level that I didn't expect him to reach until 2018, so I've re-calibrated my MLB ETA expectations accordingly. He's a candidate to repeat the level at the beginning of 2018 with a midseason move to Triple A, but the Rockies might just put him with the Isotopes to start 2018. Either way, it's not inconceivable that Rodgers will be a big leaguer as soon as the end of the year, though 2019 is more likely. What position he'll play when he gets there is up for debate, but I'm hopeful the offensive impact will be there regardless.

Rockies' Chad Bettis, cancer free, working to regain his fastball velocity

Right-hander saw his fastball dip from 92.8 mph to 90.4 mph.

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Feb. 1, 2018

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Life is sweetly normal for Chad Bettis.

When he's not busy chasing down Everleigh Rae, his energetic, 10-month-old daughter, he's building his strength and concentrating to regain his fastball velocity. This week, he's been dealing with starry-eyed fans at the Rockies' fantasy camp.

"I'm not sure if I'm a manager, or a coach, or a teacher, or what," he said with a laugh. "But it's a lot of fun."

The cancer that invaded his life last year has become a faint shadow.

"I don't think my mentality has ever been in a much better place than it is now," the veteran right-hander said. "That's because of everything we had to go through last year. So, from my standpoint, it will not get harder than that, for me. Knowing that I'm on the other side of that now, it helps my mentality."

On Nov. 21, 2016, at age 28. Bettis was diagnosed with testicular cancer, receiving the news on his first wedding anniversary. Bettis underwent surgery eight days later and thought he was cancer free. He reported to spring training in shape and eager for the 2017 season but during a check-up in March, doctors discovered that his cancer had spread to his lymph nodes. Bettis underwent nine weeks of chemotherapy, beginning treatment nine days before his wife, Kristina, gave birth to Everleigh Rae.

Bettis' received his final cancer treatment on May 16 and after a minor-league rehab stint, he made an emotional return to the mound on Aug. 14. He pitched seven scoreless innings against Atlanta and ended up making nine starts.

In life's big picture, Bettis emerged a winner. He's off his medications and expects that blood tests in mid-March and a CT scan in May will confirm that he is cancer free.

That's allowed him to concentrate on baseball and embrace his role as the veteran in the Rockies' young starting rotation.

“There is a little bit of feeling like I’m ‘just a baseball player again.’ But I’m also coming back with a bit of a chip on my shoulder,” he said. “I mean, I missed, essentially, a whole year. Some of those games went the way I wanted them to, and some didn’t. It still feels like it’s time for me to step up a little bit and take control and be a better pitcher.”

Bettis finished 2017 with a 2-4 record and a 5.05 ERA over nine starts (46 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings), with 30 strikeouts and 11 walks. He slumped in mid-September, but finished strong with a seven-inning start on Sept. 29 vs. the Dodgers, hurling seven innings, allowing one run on four hits and throwing a season-high 95 pitches.

The most disconcerting aspect of Bettis’ season was a lack of zip on his fastball. He averaged 90.4 mph with his fastball, down from 92.8 mph in 2016 and considerably slower than his 94.2 mph average in 2013.

“When I finally made my debut last season, and then during those first couple of starts, it was really strange,” he said. “Because I was using words like ‘being connected,’ and ‘feeling strong in my core.’ I did feel all that, I did feel strong.

“But the ‘velo’ wasn’t necessarily there yet. It was something was talked about internally, and we discussed ways to get that back up a bit. Toward the end of those starts, it was creeping back up.”

In his final start vs. the Dodgers, Bettis’ fastball averaged 92 mph and touched 94 on a few occasions.

“I look at last year as a growth opportunity, and a chance to get to know my body better,” he said. “Now I know I have to prepare so that my fastball velocity doesn’t dip down too low. When that happens, all (of my pitches) start to crunch down into one speed, and then I don’t give hitters enough different looks.”

Rockies unveil rendering of giant new scoreboard at Coors Field

Video display will be the equivalent of 784 60-inch televisions

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Feb. 1, 2018

The Rockies are building a scoreboard to match the mountains.

On Wednesday, the club provided a sneak peek of its huge new video scoreboard being constructed in left-center at Coors Field. The massive new scoreboard will measure 8,369 square feet — 258 percent larger than the board it's replacing.

The new addition to Coors Field is not just the Mount Elbert of scoreboards, it will also feature the shape of a mountain cutout, reminiscent of the club's Colorado mountains logo.

According to the Rockies, Daktronics, the industry leader in large-format LED video displays, is creating a display that is the equivalent of 784 60-inch televisions, and will feature 6.8 million LEDs (light-emitting diodes).

The Rockies will officially unveil the scoreboard on the home-opener on April 6 when the Rockies host the Atlanta Braves.

The ballclub, embarking on its 25th anniversary season in 2018, is also making other improvements to Coors Field. New "ribbon scoreboards" have already been installed on the facades around the ballpark, and an improved sound system is on the way, too.

The projects were voted on and approved on Sept. 20 by the Denver Metropolitan Major League Baseball Stadium District and funded by the Rockies pursuant to its new 30-year lease agreement.

Rockies star center fielder Charlie Blackmon is looking forward to seeing the new addition at 20th and Blake. "It looks ginormous! I can't wait to see it in person," Blackmon said.

An updated scoreboard has long been on owner Dick Monfort's to-do list.

"The new scoreboard, I'm hoping, will last 15 years. The last one lasted 10," Monfort told The Denver Post last March, after the Rockies signed a \$200 million, 30-year lease. "And the software that runs it, we are so far behind everybody else, it's a joke. We're worried things will break down. We have a real concern we can do the basics (with the current scoreboard)."

Fans curious to get a peek at the new scoreboard are being asked to stay away from Coors Field: "Due to the amount of construction work happening in and around the ballpark this offseason, safety standards require that only trained personnel be permitted access to these areas in order to ensure the safety and security of everyone involved as they seek to complete these projects before opening day.

Rockies starting pitcher Jon Gray is a fan of what he has seen of the new scoreboard. "I think it's gonna make the games more exciting for fans and I love the mountain shape," Gray said.

Rockies' David Dahl, finally healthy, looking to compete for starting outfield spot

Former first-round draft choice is taking batting practice again

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Feb. 1, 2018

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — David Dahl worked up a good sweat under the warm desert sun Wednesday morning at Salt River Fields. He looked every bit like a big-league ballplayer: a sculpted, 190-pounder running sprints with graceful ease. But the most striking thing about the Rockies' outfielder was his broad smile. It rarely left his face.

"I feel good, I'm in a good place," Dahl said.

With spring training set to open in less than two weeks, the pain in his upper back that wiped out his 2017 season is a distant memory. Tuesday, he roamed the outfield, and, best of all, took batting practice for the first time since July 31. Next on his comeback list? Facing live pitching.

Step by step, Dahl is working his way back toward being the player who tantalized Rockies fans in the summer of 2016 when he made his big-league debut, recording a hit in each of his first 17 games. Dahl ended up hitting .315 with seven homers and 24 RBIs in 63 games.

If Dahl remains healthy, he'll likely compete with Gerardo Parra and Ian Desmond for a starting job in the Rockies' outfield, helping plug the hole left by the departure of Carlos Gonzalez, who remains a free agent.

"I'm not worried about where I will play, I just want to make the team out of camp," said Dahl, who is open to playing all three outfield spots. "I'm going to try to pick up where I left off; try to get my timing back during spring training."

Ten days ago, manager Bud Black expressed optimism about Dahl's rehabilitation, pronouncing him "full go" for the beginning of spring training.

"He's engaged, he's running, he's lifting weights, he's swinging at 100 percent," Black said. "Right now there are no concerns, and medically everybody feels really good about David."

It's been a bumpy professional road for the talented 23-year-old outfielder whom the Rockies selected with the 10th pick of the first round in the 2012 draft. In 2015, while playing in Double-A, Dahl suffered a violent outfield collision that resulted in a ruptured spleen. He underwent surgery to have his spleen removed and played in only 73 games that season. Last spring, he suffered an injury to a rib during spring training and played in just two Cactus League games

before he was shut down. The stress reaction (a shade away from being a stress fracture) caused pain and tenderness in his upper back, near where the rib connects with the spine. Every time Dahl swung a bat, the injury flared up again. Finally, the Rockies decided prohibit him from all baseball activities for nearly sixth months.

Now it appears that Dahl is all the way back.

“Everybody kind of forgets about you when you have a lost year,” he said. “Now I have to reestablish myself, but I think I can help this team out. I just have to come into spring camp, show them I’m healthy and show everybody I can play again.”

Brendan Rodgers' goal is to make major-league debut for Rockies in 2018

Colorado's top prospect working at shortstop, second and third'

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Feb. 1, 2018

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The kid is growing up.

Growing up, not grown up. Not quite yet.

But it's clear that infielder Brendan Rodgers, the Rockies' top prospect and the third overall pick in the 2015 draft, is miles removed from the wide-eyed, \$5.5 million bonus baby who started his professional career at age 18, fresh out of Lake Mary (Fla.) High School.

"There isn't any question that Brendan's matured," said Zach Wilson, the Rockies' director of player development. "He has certainly been very intentional about doing what it takes to be a professional. He's done all the work. It also means he's learned to be all about the team, realizing it's about helping out everybody around him."

Rodgers' objective is to make his big-league debut this season, and he's not shy about saying so.

"Yes, absolutely, that's my goal," he said Tuesday after wrapping up an offseason workout at the Rockies' complex at Salt River Fields. "My first goal is to stay healthy, the next goal is to get to (the majors) this year. I definitely think it's achievable and that's what I'm going to keep my eye on."

Wilson likes the sound of that.

"We'll see what happens, but it certainly doesn't hurt to have those aspirations and those goals this year," Wilson said.

"But I will also say this: we'll make sure he is ready for the next step before he takes it."

Wilson called Rodgers earlier this month to let him know he was receiving a non-roster invitation to his first major-league camp.

"When Zach called me, I didn't know what to say, I was so excited, and it kind of took my breath away," Rodgers, then laughed and added, "Of course I had just finished working out, so I was kind of out of breath. It's definitely a big honor. I can't wait."

In order to make a leap forward, Rodgers must stay healthy.

In 2015, he had a series of nagging injuries while playing 37 games of rookie ball for Grand Junction. In 2016, he played in 110 games, batting .281 with 19 home runs for Class-A Asheville (N.C).

But last year, he first suffered a hand injury to begin the season at high-A Lancaster (Calif.), and then missed three weeks at Double-A Hartford (Conn.) with a right quadriceps injury. Still, he flashed his tantalizing potential, hitting .336, with 18 home runs, 64 RBIs, 26 doubles and three triples in 89 games over two levels.

“The biggest thing I’ve learned is that you have to take care of your body, that’s part of being a professional,” said Rodgers, who is now a sculpted 205 pounds, down from the muscled-up 215 pounds he played at last year. “It’s funny, because in high school I could eat pretty much whatever I wanted and my body would pretty much stay the same. But now, playing 130-150 games a year, you have to take care of your body. You have to be in the gym, doing the little things and eating right.”

Rodgers is a power-hitting shortstop by trade, though some scouts project him to eventually become a second or third baseman. Currently, the Rockies are loaded with talent at all of those positions, with Trevor Story at short, five-time Gold Glover Nolan Arenado at third, and two-time Gold Glover DJ LeMahieu at second.

“I played 90 percent shortstop last year, a little bit at second base, and I’ve taken a few groundballs at third, but I’ve never played there before,” he said. “So I think I’ll see time at different positions this spring. So my goal is just to be able to play all the positions the best I can — as well as I do shortstop.”

Wilson said the plan during spring training is to play Rodgers at short and second during Cactus League games, while getting him plenty of side work at third base.

“We’re going to start working on third base outside of games, but I don’t think you’ll see him play in games there during spring,” Wilson said. “But we are going to introduce him to the position and really start to get after it.”

Rockies, all other MLB teams, extending protective netting at ballparks

Netting will extend at least as far as the end of both dugouts

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Feb. 1, 2018

A giant, new scoreboard isn't the only thing Rockies fans will notice when they go to Coors Field this season. There also will be protective netting extending to at least the far end of both dugouts.

On Thursday, Major League Baseball announced that all 30 big-league parks will have protective netting.

"Providing baseball fans with a variety of seating options when they come to the ballpark, including seats behind protective netting, is important," Commissioner Rob Manfred said in a statement. "Major League clubs are constantly evaluating the coverage and design of their ballpark netting and I am pleased that they are providing fans an increased inventory of protected seats."

By the end of last season, Atlanta, Houston, Kansas City, Minnesota, the New York Mets, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Texas and Washington had already installed netting that reached the far ends of the dugouts.

According to a 2014 study by David Glovin of Bloomberg News, 1,750 fans are injured each year by foul balls or broken bats that fly into the stands.

Last year, a young girl at Yankee Stadium was injured by a 105 mph foul ball off the bat of Yankees third baseman Todd Frazier during a game against Minnesota, leading many players and baseball executives to call for the protective netting to be extended.

"I thought of my kids. I have two kids under 3 years old and I just hope she's all right," Frazier told reporters after the game. "I know the dad or whoever it was that was with them was trying their hardest, but the ball's coming at 120 miles an hour at them and the ball's hooking. So it's like if you've never seen a ball like that, which most people in the world haven't, it's very tough."

When Yankees rookie slugger Aaron Judge was asked about extending the netting, he said: "We need it."

Colorado Rockies should sign Logan Morrison to boost offense

By JD Jensen / Rox Pile | Feb. 2, 2018

The Colorado Rockies have always been known to have a great offense, especially within the last decade. Even in seasons where they were one of the worst teams in baseball, they have always had an offense that's towards the top of every hitting statistic. Last season, players like Nolan Arenado, Charlie Blackmon and DJ LeMahieu made this offense great once again ... at the top of the lineup. Mark Reynolds was hitting at an All-Star level before the All-Star break after signing on a minor league deal.

The Rockies took a chance when they re-signed Reynolds last season. They should take another chance by signing a free agent who could fit in beautifully in Denver.

After having a relatively good offseason in the pitching department, the Rockies are the team most likely to sign first baseman **Logan Morrison**. At least, according to **this article**. Here's why he is a perfect fit in the Mile High City.

Morrison was quite clearly one of the premier power hitters last season, hitting a whopping 38 home runs. Just imagine what that number could be if he were to play at Coors Field. Hey, 38 is already really impressive and valuable to any major league ball club. If he could hit 40-45 home runs this coming season, the Rockies would have yet another great slugger in an already stacked lineup.

Sure, he only hit .246 last year, but that shouldn't be too much of a problem. If **Michael Cuddyer** can take home the batting title in a Rockies uniform, I'm sure Morrison can raise that average a significant amount next season and be hitting over .280, which is all the team really needs.

Reynolds hit .267 with 30 home runs for the Rockies last year on a minor league deal. Given the 30-year-old Morrison would be there to replace the 34-year-old Reynolds, the Rockies could be getting exactly what they need.

From a statistical standpoint, Morrison appears to be the way to go. If the Rockies can lock him up to a deal for at least next season, we would be one of the premier offenses in the league.

Just take a look at this batting order: Blackmon, LeMahieu, Arenado, Morrison, **Trevor Story**, **Gerardo Parra**. Who knows ... maybe later on, we could see **David Dahl** finally make an appearance (as we have been hoping to see for almost an entire year now). That right there is seven players who can hit for power. Include in that lineup LeMahieu, the former batting champion, and you have a good mix.

Throw that lineup in with an improving rotation and a bullpen with **Wade Davis** as the closer, and you have a team with a real shot at winning the division and could potentially compete for a pennant within the next couple of years.

Colorado Rockies: Where they stand at first base and where they could go

By Ryan Ladika / Rox Pile | Feb. 2, 2018

The Colorado Rockies made an early splash in free agency, signing Jake McGee and Bryan Shaw during the Winter Meetings and Wade Davis shortly after to shore up the back end of the bullpen, but have stayed relatively quiet since. Despite Rockies GM Jeff Bridich making noise in the free agent market, though, there is still uncertainty that surrounds the first base situation.

Bridich did an exceptional job this offseason coming up with a plan to replenish a Rockies bullpen gutted by free agency and following through with that plan. As we stand, though, it would behoove the Rockies to be thinking about a more permanent option at first base than an **Ian Desmond/Ryan McMahon** platoon.

Desmond had a tough first year in a Rockies uniform. Due to injury, he played in only 95 games and spend most of his time in left field, mostly because of a career season from **Mark Reynolds** in which he barely missed his first career All-Star selection. McMahon was a late-season call-up from Triple-A Albuquerque and saw limited time on the field during Colorado's push for the Wild Card, playing in only 17 games.

During last season Desmond showed that he still needs some work at the position in order to cement himself as the club's everyday first baseman. The problem with the McMahon situation is the fact that Rockies manager **Bud Black** couldn't give him significant playing time during the last month of the season, so there is an element of uncertainty that would come with him making the Opening Day roster. This leaves Colorado in a bit of a pickle looking ahead to 2018.

Reynolds is still on the free agent market, as is veteran Rockies outfielder **Carlos Gonzalez**, and Rockies beat reporter Thomas Harding reported that the club is exploring their options regarding the two. Harding also included an interesting name in his tweet: **Todd Frazier**.

Frazier is an interesting, and possibly lucrative, option for the Rockies to pursue at first base. He has always been a low-average, high-power type of hitter. Last season between the White Sox and the Yankees, Frazier hit .213/.344/.428 with a .772 OPS. He hit 27 home runs and drove in 76 runs, and was worth 3.4 WAR.

Moving to a park with a much more spacious outfield than Yankee Stadium could be beneficial to Frazier, and having played at third base for most of his career, he has valuable experience as a corner infielder. He has also logged 740.1 innings in 94 games at first base in his career, and has a career .988 fielding percentage at the position.

Reynolds would probably be a fine option for the Rockies, but he significantly regressed at the plate during the second half of the 2017 season, slashing .284/.379/.513 before the All-Star Break and .243/.314/.449 after the break.

Frazier is probably the best option for the Rockies to pursue at this point. He is 31 years old, three years younger than Reynolds, and would probably come with a lower risk of such regression, as well as valuable experience at first base that Desmond just doesn't have.

Whichever direction the Rockies choose to go, sticking with a Desmond/McMahon platoon is a risky move for a club expected to contend for a playoff spot for the second year in a row.

Colorado Rockies: 5 numbers to know about the new scoreboard

By Kevin Henry / Rox Pile | Feb. 2, 2018

On Wednesday afternoon, the Colorado Rockies gave us all a sneak peek of what the new scoreboard in left field will look like when the Rockies open the home part of their 2018 schedule against the Atlanta Braves on Friday, April 6.

We looked at the drawings and our first thought was, "Wow." **Check them out here.** Then we dove into some of the numbers behind the scoreboard and were pretty darn impressed as well.

Here are the numbers you should know behind the new Coors Field scoreboard.

258 – This new scoreboard measures 258 percent larger than the scoreboard you last saw at Coors Field. It tops out at 8,369 feet, more than two times larger than its predecessor (you know, the one we have pictured at the top of this article). That's equivalent to 784 60-inch televisions, all working in perfect harmony to show you the latest defensive gem from **Nolan Arenado**.

6.8 million – That is how many LEDs will be featured in the new scoreboard. You know, at altitude, Coors Field is closer to space than any other Major League Baseball stadium. Haters of Coors Field are more than happy to point that out, right? So, warning, the bright lights may now blind an astronaut or two.

1 – Yep, Coors Field is the only stadium in all of baseball can boast the amazing mountain views with the sunsets that we all love to see from 20th and Blake. It will also be the only stadium with a mountain cutout on top of its scoreboard, beginning in 2018.

25 – It is all part of the 25th anniversary of the Rockies, a celebration that is sure to last all season and will hopefully result in another trip to the postseason. If that happens, it will be the first time in team history the team has made it to Rocktober in back-to-back campaigns.

30 – Don't forget that this all comes after the Rockies **signed a new 30-year lease** to stay at Coors Field. It is part of what is being called "several significant Coors Field improvement projects." Sound and speaker enhancements are said to be coming soon as part of these projects. If you love the video looks, just wait until you hear the sound. Or so we're told.

Colorado Rockies: They need to sign Mark Reynolds

By Olivia Greene / Rox Pile | Feb. 2, 2018

It seems like every time I start off my articles I talk about the fact that Spring Training is rapidly approaching, which it is. I also talk about the how the hot stove was hot for the Colorado Rockies for the month of December, but went ice cold after. Here I am again to talk about a potential signing so I'll just cut to the chase with this one: The Colorado Rockies need to sign Mark Reynolds

This would be one of the obvious signings that should happen. I'm not sure if it's Reynolds that holding out or if it's the Colorado Rockies overthinking what they really need to do. Signing Reynolds would be a smart and final move to end the offseason as we look ahead to seeing them in Arizona.

You may be thinking "why in the world do they "need" to sign him?". Well, you could call it a "safe" type of signing, but don't let that sway your opinion about **Mark Reynolds**.

He is a clutch guy that had a great season with the Rox. Reynolds, 33, put up a nice 30 homers with a .267/.352/.487 slashline and a whopping 97 RBI. Those stats got him ranked as number 3 for last season's RBI total of Rockies players, according to **Baseball Reference**.

If those aren't good enough for you look at his stats as a 1st baseman. Last season he had 138 games at 1st along with that he only had 6 errors and turned 131 of double plays. Don't forget about the amazing plays he makes to save the balls out of the dirt to get outs.

Now an important thing to consider is that Mark Reynolds is 33. He'd be one of the oldest guys on the team. You make think it's a bad thing, but is it really? No, with age comes experience and he has plenty of it. He's played in 6 different postseason series, which is a great thing for the guys on the team that don't have that much experience in that department.

Another thing with age is it might not cost too much to sign him again. His 2017 contract was 1 yr/\$1.5 million. It was reasonable so I wouldn't be surprised if it was in-between the \$1.3-\$1.5 range. Even if his salary does increase, it won't be an exorbitant amount, like free agent first baseman Eric Hosmer **wants**.

Let me also mention how much this signing makes sense. If the Rockies sign Reynolds they have a 1st baseman, obviously. This will clear up who will play left and right field, **Ian Desmond** in left and **Gerardo Parra** in right. It just makes

perfect sense Mark Reynolds just brings back the balance that Rockies need in order to make their way up the top of the mountain.

Final Thoughts

Love him or hate Mark Reynolds is a clutch guy that the Rockies will regret not signing. I keep reiterating the fact that the Rox need to find their missing puzzle pieces in order to become a team that can win the World Series.

Reynolds could be the piece that brings the big picture together. If the Rockies truly want to contend this year, they need to get a proven first baseman. And Mark Reynolds will do that better than just about anybody else out there, for a lot less.

Colorado Rockies: They need to sign Mark Reynolds

By Noah Yingling / Rox Pile | Jan. 31, 2018

According to Thomas Harding of MLB.com, the Colorado Rockies have three players that they are looking at in particular in improving their offense in 2018.

The Colorado Rockies offense was not particularly a shining area for the team in 2017 and, apparently, they are looking to address it before spring training. Thomas Harding of MLB.com reports that the Rockies have three targets for helping the offense: **Mark Reynolds**, **Carlos Gonzalez**, and third baseman **Todd Frazier**.

With Reynolds and Gonzalez, familiarity would obviously be a key factor in them resigning. They would also help solve the issue of first base or a corner outfielder. Gonzalez obviously had a down season in 2017 but, perhaps, his September numbers could prove that he can be the Carlos Gonzalez of old.

In September, he played in 24 games and he had 22 runs, 29 hits, 12 doubles (he only had 34 all season), 6 home runs (he only had 14 all season), 16 RBI (he only had 57 all season), 15 walks, and a .377/.484/.766. Extrapolated out to a full 162 game season, **according to Baseball Reference**, that would be equivalent to 196 hits, 82 doubles, 41 home runs, 108 RBI, and 102 walks. Obviously, even if he had a great year, the slashline and doubles would come down significantly but if the Rockies could sign Gonzalez to an incentive laden one (or even two) year contract and he puts up those numbers, that will be the steal of the 2018 offseason.

Reynolds had 30 home runs and 97 RBI and was nearly an All-Star in 2017 so if he puts anything like he did last season, the Rockies would be very happy with that.

Todd Frazier

The player that is most interesting on this list is Todd Frazier. He plays third base and, with the Rockies, he sure as heck wouldn't be playing third because he's no where near as good as **Nolan Arenado**. Between the Chicago White Sox and New York Yankees last season, he had 27 home runs and 76 RBI in 147 games so that would obviously help the Rockies but the main problem is that he has a terrible batting average. Since 2016, his batting average is .220 so that's obviously not good by any stretch. He does get his fair share of walks but his on-base percentage since 2016 is still only .322.

He has played 94 games at first base in his career so he'd obviously play it for the Rockies, if they were to sign him. At third base, he is good defensively as he had 10 Defensive Runs Saved but in a very small sample size of four games at first in 2017, he has -2 DRS. In the 94 games total at first, he has -8 DRS so, in the small sample at first, he's not that great defensively.

Final Thoughts

Reynolds and Gonzalez would be good resignings for the Rockies, especially if they are on one- or two-year contracts, which they almost certainly would be.

For Frazier, just hearing his name in rumors is puzzling to me. He did do well in the hitter's haven known as Great American Ballpark when Frazier played for the Reds but I don't think he is a fit for the Rockies. He's relatively inexperienced at first base, he isn't particularly breathtaking with his defense at first, and he is a bit inconsistent with the bat.

Signing Frazier would be a mistake in my eyes. If they can't make a trade or get Reynolds, they should just keep **Ryan McMahon** at first. I'd be more confident in his abilities there than Frazier's.

Rockies 10 Best Moments: A tearful return

By Drew Creasman / BSN Denver | Jan. 29, 2018

Life can often feel defined by a series of "I remember where I was when..." moments. The most poignant are marked by *I remember how I felt*.

In sports, even the euphoria of victory and the devastation of defeat can pale in comparison to those in-between moments that grab at your very consciousness and shake you to your core.

Robinson takes the field. Gehrig says goodbye. Mays makes a catch. Aaron breaks a record. Piazza homers for a reeling nation. Ortiz reminds everyone who's city it is. Human beings overcome.

With spring rapidly approaching, and a new season on the horizon, it's time we finish up our countdown of the Colorado Rockies Top 10 moments from the 2017 season. In this part, we look back on two moments that---while wildly different in tone---can be more than remembered, they can be relived simply by closing one's eyes. And feeling with one's heart.

HONORABLE MENTION: BLACKMON'S SPRINT FOR HOME, APRIL 21

A ballplayer never knows for sure exactly what will happen after striking the ball with the bat. With the exception of that blissful feeling---knowing they've clipped one just right surely to see it land beyond the fence---players have been conditioned since their earliest days in the game to sprint to first upon making contact regardless of the possibilities that such effort won't be necessary.

Even so, it's not uncommon to watch seasoned veterans standing stunned in the batter's box as a ball they were *certain* they pulled foul somehow hooks into fair territory. It happens, it seems, to almost everyone.

When Charlie Blackmon smashed a line drive into right field on April 21, he knew immediately that the ball was in play and unlikely to escape the confines of the park. It did, however, seem headed directly at right fielder Hunter Pence. But the universe laughs in the face of everything we know.

In a play you're unlikely to see exactly repeated, Pence appeared to lose the ball---and somehow his footing---in the lights turning what looked to be a tough-luck out into a race for a run.

Blackmon did what he was taught to as a kid and ran hard out of the box, which ended up paying massive dividends as it became clear he would have a chance to score. Describing himself to **BSN Denver a few weeks later** as the "tireddest

guy in baseball," the Rockies centerfielder turned on whatever afterburners he could muster after having played the most demanding outfield spot in MLB for the last several years. He appeared to labor a bit but kicked it into gear around second, clearly anticipating the inevitable green light from Stu Cole at third base.

He wheeled around the bag as the ball came to the relay man and the crowd grew to a fever pitch. In the final stretch, Blackmon was practically leaping with each stride, culminating in a perfect feet-first slide that just barely avoided the tag at the plate. In one continuous motion, he slid up to his feet and emphatically high-fived DJ LeMahieu in one of the best singular images from the season.

As it would turn out, this odd play pretty well encapsulated the 2017 season for both teams.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWXrZHQ8Ms4>

NO. 4: CHAD BETTIS RETURNS FROM CANCER, AUGUST 14

Putting aside considerations of competition, from a purely human perspective, the best moment for the Colorado Rockies family---players, front office personnel, coaches, ballpark employees, and fans---was the 15-second walk Chad Bettis made from the dugout to the mound on August 27.

Beating back cancer is one of the most grueling things a person can endure. Cancer *and* the treatments put the body through absolute hell. You can become unrecognizable. Your body, the main vehicle by which to interact with the world, begins to betray you. Rest and nutrition, which anyone needs to feel normal, become almost impossible to come by in any meaningful way. And that's just the physical stuff.

The toll it can take on the mentality of even the strongest people and families can be catastrophic. And millions of people, including myself, have had their lives dramatically changed forever because of this horrific disease. It's an all-too-familiar story.

When Bettis took the hill on that emotional day, he carried with him the hopes of a better future.

Some of his teammates and his manager talked to us about the feelings heading into the contest:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3R9xc4avGM&feature=youtu.be>

As if the energy in the building wasn't intense enough, Bettis was greeted by Ender Inciarte of the Atlanta Braves with a near inside-the-park home run, only to be gunned down at home plate for the first out of the game. You could watch 162 games a year for the next 20 years and not see another first out made on a relay throw at home.

If Incinerate had scored, the night might have gone a bit differently. A poor performance would by no means have dampened the magic of seeing Bettis return, but watching him go seven strong scoreless innings meant that the palpable emotion at Coors Field sustained its glorious high for an almost exhausting amount of time.

In fact, all other things aside for a brief moment, it was quite the ballgame.

The Braves, as mentioned, had a few opportunities erased by magnificent defense, and the Rockies were thwarted in each scoring opportunity as well, keeping the team deadlocked and scoreless going into the final two frames.

The crowd was very much aware that Colorado needed to score now if Bettis was to pick up the win and erupted for the hundredth time on the evening when Blackmon led the eighth off with a triple. The Rockies would ultimately plate three in the inning on singles from veteran Gerardo Parra and Carlos Gonzalez, securing the win and putting the final touches on a perfect night in LoDo.

Bettis did more than beat a physical setback and return to form to compete at an elite level, he inspired everyone who was watching. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. Those who had lost loved ones were given a moment to mourn them while simultaneously being able to share in the joy that another family had been spared their own sad fate. Those who were currently undergoing the chemotherapies and surgeries could look at a real-life example of making it all the way back, even under the toughest of circumstances.

And even those who just appreciate outstanding athletic achievement had to stand in awe of the work and dedication it took to go from a spring training diagnosis to being a pivotal rotation piece down the stretch for a postseason team.

Beat that, Hollywood.

Larry Walker and the strange anti-Coors Field bias in baseball

By Jeff Morton / Mile High Sports | Jan. 31, 2018

In my 25 years of watching Major League Baseball in Colorado two inescapable truths have been born out to my eyes:

1. Larry Walker is the best all-around positional baseball player (fielding, batting) *in his prime* that I have ever seen come through this organization (that will likely change as Nolan Arenado goes further into this baseball prime).

2. Walker, along with every player who has played a significant portion of their career in Denver, will struggle to get even token consideration from baseball elites because of *where* he played so many games (Coors Field, Mile High Stadium).

In a recent interview with TSN Montreal, Walker gave a strikingly honest assessment of his Baseball Hall of Fame chances after falling short for the eighth straight year:

"I can't fault myself. I played for a major league team that happened to be in Denver. If that's a problem and if that's going to be an issue for them, then get rid of the team and move it elsewhere if it's going to be that big of an issue. No needles went in my ass. I played the game clean, but I played in the ballpark and it's almost like Coors Field is my PED."

No, Walker wasn't throwing the city of Denver or its baseball under the bus. He was saying what fans and media members have known for ages — that the anti-Coors Field (and by extension anti-Denver) bias within Major League Baseball and its media elites, most notably Hall of Fame voters, is basically insurmountable.

We can debate the numbers with Walker. You can make the case that, even with the baseball park included, Walker's numbers don't quite make it to Hall of Fame level. We would be foolish, however, to deny the not-so-subtle "if it happens in Colorado it doesn't count" sentiment among the older baseball guard who weren't terribly fond of the concept of baseball in Denver in the first place.

Prime Larry Walker was a sight to behold. A rare combination of incredible baseball intellect (anyone who saw Walker throw out someone at first base from right field can attest to this), base running ability and sheer power. These are called five-tool players and they don't just grow on the same trees they make Louisville Sluggers out of. Walker's 1997 MVP season came amidst the peak of the steroids era in baseball and no one has ever accused the notably goofy Canadian Rockies player of even a hint of being involved with PEDs.

Except...

Coors Field hangs over his head like a cloud, and there's no end in sight as long as the "old guard" Major League Baseball media/voters remain as dominant as they do. Todd Helton will likely suffer the same fate once he comes up for consideration next year and — as unfair as it seems — the Rockies will need to either win a World Series or become a perennial contender to break through the anti-Coors stigma. I'm convinced that last year, despite Charlie Blackmon and Nolan Arenado splitting the National League MVP vote, that the "you played at Coors" stigma hurt both guys and led to the eventual election of Miami Marlins outfielder Giancarlo Stanton as MVP (narrowly over Cincinnati Reds first baseman Joey Votto).

You would think that because, you know, there's a bias against fielders and hitters who play at Coors Field that the opposite would apply. By that I mean you'd believe that pitchers who excel and have extraordinary years despite pitching half their games at Coors Field would be rewarded for that achievement. This hasn't been true at all, as standout seasons by pitchers — Ubaldo Jimenez in 2010 for example — have not been rewarded with postseason honors or recognition. It's almost as if the cloud of Coors covers all.

It's not right, but it is what it is.

The Rockies' Twitter account is probably the best in baseball and *maybe* all of sports. They have taken the longtime Rockies media/Rockies Twitter meme of *COORS* and applied it in a good-natured way to poke fun at themselves. It's the only thing you can do when 70-year-old men who remember the "good old days" pre-1993 expansion are still writing about baseball on dusty typewriters in smoke-filled rooms.

I'm convinced there will be a time, and soon, that the Rockies and players such as Walker, Helton, Troy Tulowitzki and (hopefully) Nolan Arenado get their due with the awards that count. Until then the Rockies will just have to keep getting better and better, taking some satisfaction in knowing that the more they succeed the greater the old guard that's fading away will grumble in frustration at their success.

In the meantime, you'll always be a Hall of Fame player to me ...

Now batting: Right fielder... Larry WALK-errr!!

LOOK: The Rockies' new LED scoreboard has digital rockies

By Casey Light / Mile High Sports | Jan. 31, 2018

The Colorado Rockies are getting an upgrade for the 2018 season, and we're not just talking about the addition of Bryan Shaw and Wade Davis to the bullpen.

Coors Field this year will feature an all-new scoreboard that is more than 2.5 times larger than its predecessor.

Scoreboard rendering courtesy of Colorado Rockies

The club tweeted out a preview and some fun facts about the new scoreboard on Wednesday.

The coolest thing about the new scoreboard? It's not your typical rectangular display. Sure, it may look somewhat like the old scoreboard at first glance, but the 6.8 million LEDs turn the entire board into one giant mountain-shaped video display.

The new LED display will still have the purple mountain Rockies logo and clock at the top, but it appears based on the rendering that those are all digital now and will convert to part of the video display.

Scoreboard rendering courtesy of Colorado Rockies

Expect some very cool visuals from the game ops crew this season to take advantage of this slick new design.

The preview pictures don't show a home for the Rockies' 2007 National League pennant (previously featured just below the logo/clock) so keep an eye out inside the stadium for the pennant's new home.

Fans will get their first look at the scoreboard in action at the Rockies' home opener, Friday, April 6, 2018 against the Atlanta Braves.

Colorado opens the regular season on Thursday, March 29, 2018 against the Diamondbacks. They face Arizona for three games before a rest day on Monday, then travel to San Diego for four games with the Padres.

2018 Rockies Preview: This could be DJ LeMahieu's last season in Colorado

By Aniello Piro / Mile High Sports | Jan. 31, 2018

The Colorado Rockies turned heads last season with their impressive 87-75 record, returning to the postseason for the first time in eight years while establishing themselves as a perennial playoff threat for the foreseeable future.

After years filled with shortcomings and underachievement, general manager Jeff Bridich figured out a way to tap into the minds and wallets of the Monfort family, the Rockies ownership group, which until recently have often been branded as cheap and disinterested in winning. The Rockies currently claim the 14th-highest payroll with \$123.64 million dedicated to the 25-man roster which is a significant increase from 2017 (\$105.03 million) and 2016 (\$88,354,041).

Is this DJ LeMahieu's last season in the Mile High City?

The Rockies made a strong effort to bolster their bullpen ahead of the 2018 campaign by dedicating over \$100 million in new money to the relief corps, making this the most expensive bullpen of all time.

However, despite spending big this offseason, the Rockies front office understands that tough decisions will need to be made at the end of 2018.

Nolan Arenado, Charlie Blackmon, and DJ LeMahieu have been the faces of the franchise for the past five years, but 2018 is likely the last season the trio will be unified in Colorado with Blackmon and LeMahieu both set to hit free agency following this season. Arenado's contract is set to expire following the 2019 season, which means the Rockies must be prepared to pony up over the next two years if they want to keep their three best players, the 1-2-3 hitters in the lineup and the core of their clubhouse nucleus intact for the foreseeable future.

All three players should command long-term contracts valued over \$100 million, except Arenado whose projected valued is between \$200 and \$300 million. With price tags that high and the Rockies' reluctance become a big-market spender like the New York Yankees or Chicago Cubs, it's realistic that only two (perhaps even just one) of the three will remain with Colorado through 2019. A decision on who will be the odd man out is likely coming at the end of this season.

The Rockies are expected to go all-in on their purist to retain Arenado, which means either Blackmon or LeMahieu will likely be searching for a new home come season's end. At this point, Blackmon is the logical frontrunner to land a contract

with the Rockies based on his impact and versatility in the lineup. That's not to discredit LeMahieu, a two-time All-Star and the 2016 batting champ, who has been one of the best and most consistent hitters in the sport over the past few seasons.

LeMahieu has hit above .300 in three consecutive seasons and last year once again demonstrated why he is one of the best pure hitters in the sport by finishing in the top three among all second basemen in batting average (.310), hits (189), and OBP (.374). LeMahieu is not a one-dimensional player either, as he hits both left-handed and right-handed pitching exceptionally well, .362 and .293 career averages respectively, and is a two-time Gold Glove winner. LeMahieu is also the epitome of consistency and has always been a reliable bat for the Rockies. Last season, outside of the opening month of the campaign, LeMahieu never saw his batting average dip below .280 in any month and was once again atop the leaderboards in offensive production for the Rockies alongside Areando and Blackmon.

It comes down to the Rockies' long-term financial landscape and the end goal of bringing the first World Series title in franchise history home to 20th and Blake. Two of the top three prospects remaining in Colorado's farm system are infielders, specifically middle infielders who are cheaper, younger, and have the potential at some point to be more productive than LeMahieu for Colorado.

Brendan Rodgers, 21, is the No. 15 prospect on MLB.com entering the 2018 season and for a good reason. The youngster breezed through Single-A in 2017 before settling in Double-A Harford for the remainder of the season. Rodgers was impressive in his stint in the minors as he managed to hit .336 with an OBP of .373 and an OPS of .940 between levels. A strong 2018 season could have Rodgers in the Rockies' plans when the roster expands in the last month of the season. Colorado has already shown their desire to begin to install Rodgers with the major league club as he highlighted the list of 2018 non-roster Spring Training invitees.

Ryan McMahon has toyed with playing second base in addition to first base. While it seems like a platoon at first is the most likely scenario for McMahon entering 2018, the Rockies could view him as an option at second base with Rodgers also capable of playing shortstop.

The bottom line is the Rockies will be able to find cheaper alternatives to LeMahieu within their farm system. That said, losing LeMahieu would be a difficult pill to swallow, especially with how well the Rockies 1-2-3 punch at the top of the lineup has been over the course of the past few seasons.

The old get old, and the young get stronger, and while LeMahieu has not shown any signs of slowing down at age 29, Colorado has some extremely enticing infield options in the minor leagues. It could mean the end of an era for Colorado at second base. LeMahieu will be the Rockies' guy at second base this season, but it could be his last year playing in the Mile High City.

The biggest remaining hole and a solution for (almost) all 30 teams

By David Schoenfield / ESPN | Feb. 1, 2018

OK, it was a little weird that so few of these free agents were signing. But we're now into February, spring training is a couple of weeks away, and all these guys have new teams ... WAIT, WHAT? There are still about 130 free agents out there?

Things will happen -- soon. Because guess what? Teams still have holes to fill! Let's take a look at each team and some possible moves that could be made to fill those holes.



Colorado Rockies

Hole: Outfield

Targets: Carlos Gonzalez, Carlos Gomez

The Rockies are also high on my list of disappointing offseasons. This team needs offense, and it hasn't added anybody besides catcher Chris Iannetta. The Rockies rank 26th in projected WAR at first base, last in left field and 26th in right field. I can understand going with Ryan McMahon at first after his strong performance at Triple-A, but the corners need help. The trouble is, it isn't clear that the remaining options are big improvements. The Rockies should have been in on Yelich or Cain, and we can dream what kind of numbers Martinez could put up in Coors.

Behold the incredible new scoreboard the Colorado Rockies bought to celebrate their 25th anniversary

By Alex Myers / Golf Digest | Feb. 1, 2018

This is the time of year when people scrap together whatever cash they have left over from Christmas to buy new TVs ahead of the Super Bowl. But it sounds like the best place to watch the big game this year might be on the Colorado Rockies' giant, new scoreboard. Behold this modern marvel:

OK, so watching outdoors at Coors field in February might not be the best idea (and that's actually just a rendering), but what a screen. The size (8,369 square feet) is impressive enough, but how about the design? That's state-of-the-art art right there.

According to 9News.com, the Rockies are paying for the Daktronics creation to celebrate the team's 25th anniversary season, but didn't disclose how much it costs. Considering it's the size of 784 60-inch TVs, we're betting the Rockies spent more than your entire state did at Best Buy this month.

Paul Klee: Colorado Rockies star Nolan Arenado says 'I think our window is right now'

By Paul Klee / Colorado Springs Gazette | Jan. 30, 2018

DENVER — Leave it to the bearded, wise fly fisherman in the Rockies clubhouse to come up with a plan. How can the local ballclub avoid losing the core of a franchise revival after the eagerly anticipated 2018 season?

“You can really extend that window if you just sign everybody,” Charlie Blackmon, the All-Star center fielder and history-making leadoff hitter said with a laugh.

If Rockies CEO Dick Monfort and the folks who write the checks want to dig deep on pricey contract extensions for Blackmon and stud infielders D.J. LeMahieu and Nolan Arenado, few folks around these hills are going to steal the pen from their hand. Two former National League batting champs and the best third baseman in baseball for another half-decade or so?

That'll do, Rox.

Klee:

Rockies unafraid to raise expectations in 2018

But Chuck's not trying to pull the hair over our eyes. He knows better than anyone that when the clock strikes midnight on the 2018 season, Blackmon and LeMahieu are scheduled to be free agents. And the vacuum over at third base, Arenado, is due for a juicy new deal after the 2019 season.

“I think our window's right now,” said Arenado, whose next contract, if it comes from the team that drafted him in 2009, appears destined to make him the highest-paid athlete in state history. His top priority is playing in October.

The big three in the lineup knows the time and score. So does the front office, which spent over \$100 million to build a trustworthy bullpen, including a record \$17 million annual salary for ex-Cubs closer Wade Davis, to alleviate some concerns about sophomore slumps along the starting pitching staff.

“We've got to guard a little against the sophomore season,” manager Bud Black said.

“It's exciting for me to know that if we have a lead late, we have a really good chance of winning the game,” Blackmon said.

Has there been a time in Rockies history when expectations entering a season were as big as the left-field scoreboard that's in the process of being doubled in size? I can't remember one. And by signing Blackmon to a one-year contract —

one year after signing LeMahieu to a two-year deal — the Rox gave themselves an out if things don't go as planned. As Black repeats roughly 162 times during the course of a season, "That's baseball." But since it's fun to spend other people's money, I would give Blackmon a long-term deal after his sensational season in 2017. His value is more than the 104 RBIs, a record from the leadoff spot. When a relatively young clubhouse sees how no-nonsense ball-aholics like Arenado, Blackmon and LeMahieu invest 100 percent of themselves into the process, it tends to impact the rest of the room.

Blackmon wants to stay in Colorado for the long term. Is it possible they reach a deal prior to the opener at Arizona on March 29 and Coors Field's Opening Day against the Braves, April 6?

"That's a two-way street. I really like playing here. It's a great place to be. I like the people. I like my teammates," Blackmon said. "I've also been on a one-year situation for the past 3-4 years. It doesn't really change anything for me. I'm used to that 'go out and produce' mindset. Hopefully something happens. That would be great. I don't plan to let that get in the way of playing baseball. I don't want to be thinking about that during the season. That's my time to work."

There are no guarantees with the 2018 Rockies.

"You don't want to look too far ahead," Arenado said.

The men in the dugout believe the window of opportunity is open now.