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## MEDIA CLIPS – Aug. 7, 2018

### **Freeland twirls gem, 'pen makes it stand**

*Left-hander goes seven scoreless despite 32-minute in-game weather delay*

**By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Aug. 6, 2018**

DENVER -- The seven innings from Rockies lefty starter **Kyle Freeland** against the Pirates on Monday night were at times devastating, at times resourceful and, at any rate, scoreless. But after a rough road trip, the bullpen -- especially, finally, closer **Wade Davis** -- ensured the night ended happily.

After blowing three of their last four save chances, the bullpen prevailed. **Seunghwan Oh** pitched a perfect eighth and Davis rebounded from blown saves in his previous two outings as the Rockies took a 2-0 victory at Coors Field.

"There are a lot of good things that happen in some of these bad outings, and you try to take those from it, and try to forget about the bad," Davis said. "I've always wanted to be at my best later in the season, and that's one thing I'm working toward."

The victory, in a game that included a 32-minute rain delay, began a seven-game homestand for the Rockies, who had gone 2-5 on a road trip to St. Louis and Milwaukee. Colorado began the night trailing the Dodgers and D-backs by two games in the National League West race, and was 2 1/2 games out of the second NL Wild Card spot. After the win, the Rockies are two games out of the second Wild Card spot, though their NL West standing will depend on the outcome of the D-backs' game.

Oh pitched a perfect eighth for his fifth straight scoreless outing since arriving in a trade with the Blue Jays before turning it over to Davis, who had blown saves in St. Louis on Thursday and Milwaukee on Friday -- both in walk-off fashion.

The second, when Davis' breaking pitches were sharp but the Brewers' **Eric Thames** hit a mislocated high fastball for a three-run homer and a 5-3 defeat, left Davis smarting from his sixth blown save and leaning on the positives. He wasn't used Sunday, when **Adam Ottavino** blew a three-run ninth inning lead but the Rockies ended up winning, 5-4, in 11 on **Nolan Arenado**'s solo homer.

But Davis earned his 32nd save by fanning **Gregory Polanco** with the count full, forcing a **David Freese** bouncer to third base and catching **Francisco Cervelli** looking.

"For us to get where we want to be, it's going to take everybody," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "That bullpen tonight, it was Oh and Davis, but moving forward, it's going to take them all. It was good to see Wade bounce back, and Oh's been pretty steady through his five appearances."

Catcher **Chris Iannetta**, who drove in a run on a fifth-inning sacrifice fly, said of Davis, "He's a guy that's not going to let a couple of failures here and there, a couple things that didn't go his way, shape the rest of his season."

2018

Freeland (10-7) held his opponent scoreless for the second time in three starts, and limited the Pirates to two hits while striking out five.

"I felt good from the start, from my bullpen all the way to the seventh inning, really," said Freeland, who lowered his Coors ERA to 2.18 in 10 starts. "I had command on my pitches and could throw them in any counts."

Freeland's biggest problems were three walks and a hit batsman. But after walking two in the fourth, he ended the threat by inducing an **Elias Diaz** pop foul.

In his seventh and final inning, Freeland hit Cervelli with one out, and walked **Josh Harrison** to end an 11-pitch tussle with two outs. But Freeland shook that off and coaxed **Jordy Mercer** to hit a liner to left.

"I thought the changeup to the catcher to get the third out of the [fourth inning], that was one of the biggest pitches of the game," Black said. "The at-bat late, that Mercer lined to left, that was a huge at-bat, obviously. But I thought Kyle pitched."

Pirates starter **Joe Musgrove** (4-6) was almost as effective as Freeland, save for the rain-delayed fifth. Arenado and **Trevor Story** singled, and Arenado scored when Pirates second baseman Harrison fumbled **Gerardo Parra's** grounder.

Musgrove hit **Ian Desmond** to load the bases when play resumed and Iannetta delivered a sacrifice fly to left for a 2-0 lead.

## **THE REAL DAHL**

Black rested center fielder **Charlie Blackmon** after a 3-for-31 road trip, and Dahl -- batting leadoff -- responded with a single and a double.

Black instructed Dahl to stay with his aggressive approach, rather than modify to hit in the top spot. Dahl obliged.

"I led off in the Minor Leagues a lot, especially lower, and I never really change my approach, but having [Bud] say that definitely helps," Dahl said. "It helped me be laid-back up there, [having my manager] tell me to keep my approach."

## **LEAVING RUNS ON THE TABLE**

Poor execution stopped the Rockies from scoring more than two runs in the fifth.

Instead of tagging and taking third against Pirates left fielder **Corey Dickerson**, who was moving left and isn't known for his throwing, Parra went halfway and couldn't advance. Then the runners couldn't move because Freeland popped up his bunt. Parra tried going home when Dahl singled to right field for one of his two hits, but Polanco's throw easily beat Parra to the plate.

All Freeland did in response was throw a spotless sixth.

"Pitcher's job is to get the other team retired. You can't let the offensive side of the ball affect your pitching," Freeland said. "That's pretty standard. I got no problem with any of our pitchers in that regard and where their focus is."

## **HE SAID IT**

"I've heard a lot of stories about Coors Field. Everyone in Korea knows about the field situation. A lot of Koreans are actually worried about me. But I just go out there and do my thing, make pitches, try not to think about it too much." -- *Oh, through his translator Eugene Koo, on the altitude factor at Coors Field and how it affects -- or doesn't affect -- his pitches*

## **SOUND SMART**

The Rockies shut out their opponent for the seventh time this season and their fourth at Coors Field. And they won their fifth consecutive home game in which they allowed two or fewer runs -- tied for their longest streak in franchise history.

The other time was July 30-Aug. 11, 2006.

## **UP NEXT**

It's funny how things work out. Last year, Rockies righty **Chad Bettis** and Pirates righty **Jameson Taillon** each went through testicular cancer battles. This year, they both had blister issues on their right middle fingers. On Tuesday, Bettis (5-1, 5.10 ERA), finally recovered from his blister, pitches in the Majors for the first time since July 1 against the Pirates -- and Taillon (8-8, 3.74) -- at Coors Field at 6:40 p.m. MT.

## **Bettis, Taillon share survivor bond**

*Tuesday's starters both dealt with testicular cancer in 2017*

**By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Aug. 6, 2018**

DENVER -- Not long ago, Rockies right-hander **Chad Bettis** called Pirates righty **Jameson Taillon** to discuss an issue that they have in common. This subject -- pesky finger blisters from the force of throwing a baseball -- was much less difficult than the other one. Both dealt with testicular cancer last season.

With the disease behind them, however, Bettis called this year for advice on dealing with the blister that has kept him off the mound since July 1.

Well, Bettis' blister has healed, and wouldn't you know? Bettis will return from the disabled list to start Tuesday night against the Pirates at Coors Field -- with Taillon opposing him.

"We kind of went through the same thing," Bettis said. "It will be fun. Not a lot of times throughout the game that it would happen.

"I reached out to him when he first got the blister just to try to pick guys' brains around the league to see what they're doing, if they're doing something different from what we're doing, and just trying to get it right."

Bettis underwent surgery for testicular cancer in November 2016, but had to undergo chemotherapy when it was discovered late in Spring Training that the cancer had spread to his lymph nodes. Bettis made it back to the Majors in August. Taillon's cancer, discovered last May, was removed through surgery and he missed six weeks.

This year, Taillon had a blister -- more a laceration -- on his right middle finger and left a start against the Giants after three innings. He didn't miss any time.

Bettis had a 3.27 ERA when he had what was first called a "hot spot" on the finger during a May 22 start at Dodger Stadium. Bettis kept pitching, but his numbers suffered for eight starts (7.59 ERA, .294 batting average against) before the injury flared on July 1. Since then, he has made three injury rehab starts for Triple-A Albuquerque, throwing 95 pitches on Thursday in his last one.

Bettis, who will take the rotation spot of righty **Antonio Senzatela** (placed on the 10-day DL Sunday with **right shoulder soreness**), changed the grip on his fastball -- after seeing the risk in his old grip on a slow-motion camera -- and feels good about it.

"It felt normal," Bettis said. "I felt like I was back to where I was before I had any blister problems."

Bettis turned in one of the Rockies' best starts of the season in cold and spitting snow in Pittsburgh on April 17. He held the Pirates scoreless on five hits for 7 1/3 innings.

"He pitched really well at the start of the year," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "He's 5-1; I know his ERA is a little inflated [5.10], but we've seen good work from him. We're optimistic that it can continue moving forward."

### **Senzatela healing**

The Rockies would have had a decision to make, since their rotation is doing well, but Senzatela's DL placement opened a spot for Bettis. Black said Senzatela's shoulder is healing.

The plan, according to Black, is to "give [Senzatela] a few days' rest and do some work in the training room, and I think he's going to play catch in a day or two."

### **Catching outage**

Rookie **Tom Murphy** did most of the catching during the Rockies' 2-5 road trip to St. Louis and Milwaukee, and struggled. He went 0-for-17 with 13 strikeouts. He also committed two errors and missed an **Adam Ottavino** third strike in the dirt that allowed the Brewers to force extra innings in Sunday's 5-4, 11-inning Rockies victory.

**Chris Iannetta**, the primary starter much of the season, went 0-for-6 with two strikeouts on the trip.

**Tony Wolters** went 1-for-2 in mostly a defensive role.

Having three catchers gives Black the luxury of being able to use either Murphy's or Iannetta's right-handed bat off the bench, since Wolters can enter defensively. But when both are struggling, it's a hole in the lineup.

The Rockies did not obtain a catcher at the non-waiver Trade Deadline, and are using a combination of mostly Murphy and Iannetta rather than a starter-backup system.

"We need some production out of the position," Black said. "I think it's coming."

Both hit for higher average at home (Murphy .278, Iannetta .237) than on the road (Murphy .198, Iannetta .192).

**Journal: Chad Bettis returns to Rockies' rotation while Seunghwan Oh does his part to stabilize bullpen**

*With Antonio Senzatela on the disabled list due to shoulder soreness, Bettis is set to make his return from a finger blister*

**By Kyle Newman / Denver Post | Aug. 6, 2018**

It never hurts to have six dependable starters, especially down the stretch of a divisional title chase that's still wide open.

And with Antonio Senzatela placed on the disabled list Sunday because of a sore shoulder, the depth and legitimacy of the Rockies' rotation is again set to keep things running smoothly, as Chad Bettis is slated to start Tuesday night against the Pirates, making his first appearance since being sidelined by a finger blister July 3.

"When he joined us on the road trip, I could tell from the way he and I spoke that he felt confident in where he was as far as his finger, and even as far as how he threw the ball with his pitch mix and how the ball was coming out of his hand," manager Bud Black said.

Bettis tossed 95 pitches in six innings of work in his third and final rehab start for Triple-A Albuquerque on Aug. 2, when the right-hander allowed four earned runs but said he felt no discomfort where the blister once was.

Bettis, 29, will return to Coors Field with an altered fastball grip, one specifically designed by the right-hander and the Colorado pitching coaches to alleviate pressure on the middle throwing finger, where the blister was problematic.

"There's some things we switched up on the grip after looking on the slow-motion camera," Bettis said. "That was the main concern — with me being fastball heavy, just to make sure nothing came up again, and the new grip hasn't affected anything (negatively)."

Bettis will start against the Pirates' Jameson Taillon who, like Bettis, is also a survivor of testicular cancer and dealt with a minor digit issue (a laceration on his middle finger) this season— topics about which the two right-handers have exchanged information and support.

Meanwhile, Black noted Senzatela's progress has trainer Keith Dugger feeling confident about the 23-year-old's impending return.

"He's probably going to play catch here in a day or two, but early reports are that he feels good and that a lot of the initial soreness he felt over the weekend in Milwaukee has sort of gone away," Black said of Senzatela.

As for beyond Bettis' Tuesday start, and for when Senzatela does return, the staff's senior starter said he has no qualms about a potential bullpen role — something Black has said is a possibility.



“It would be a little bit different, if that’s what happens, but I think I’m better suited for it now than I was four years ago,” Bettis said, referencing his 21 relief appearances in 2014. “Hopefully I can take some of those trials and errors from that season and be a little bit better for it.”

### ***Oh, steady from go***

Since being traded from Toronto on July 26, Seunghwan Oh has quickly become a much-needed third stabilizer out of the Rockies’ bullpen alongside Adam Ottavino and Wade Davis. And Oh’s contributions have been even more critical considering the recent struggles of Davis, who blew his last two saves.

Oh earned the save in Colorado’s 11-inning win over Milwaukee on Sunday, punctuating the victory with acrobatic hustle at first base to cover for the tail end of a double play. And in five appearances so far with Colorado, he has yet to allow an earned run.

“He’s stepped right in, he’s given us some big innings and he’s gotten some big outs,” Black said. “The thing I like about his style is that he knows how to get his outs — he does it (uniquely). He’s very confident in all four of his pitches to be used at any time, and he’s acclimated extremely fast to the group.”

Plus, Oh and his interpreter, Eugene Koo, did their part to raise the collective confidence of the clubhouse amid the 2-5 Midwest road trip marred by three walk-off losses.

“As other guys struggled throughout the road trip, he was one of the guys who would show up and do the opposite, and bring everyone up with his energy and his performance,” outfielder Carlos Gonzalez said.

Oh, a 36-year-old veteran who first made a name for himself as a professional in South Korea and Japan, is currently living at a Denver hotel and can still be sighted in the clubhouse, alongside Koo, rifling through cardboard boxes shipped from Toronto, which contain gear and other personal possessions.

And even though Oh hasn’t yet found a new permanent residence — and even though he’s still working to familiarize himself with Colorado’s three catchers — he noted the whirlwind of the trade hasn’t distracted him from his purpose on the mound.

“Baseball’s a universal language, and we all try to get the W every time we go out there,” Oh said. “It makes it easier when you have guys with the same mentality out there, so I’m just focused on pitching like every game counts, and like every game is very important to get us to the playoffs.”

## **Looking ahead**

*Pirates RHP Jameson Taillon (8-8, 3.74 ERA) at Rockies RHP Chad Bettis (5-1, 5.10), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM; 850 AM*

Taillon has been a slightly better pitcher on the road this season with a 3.59 ERA, and his lone career start against Colorado came last year when he turned in five scoreless innings in a Pirates victory at PNC Park. Colorado's best bet is to be aggressive against the right-hander, as hitters are averaging .336 when the count is 0-0, 1-0 or 2-0. Meanwhile, in his first start since coming off the disabled list, Bettis looks to regain the groove he had earlier in the season, when the right-hander posted a 3.68 ERA through the season's first two months before coming back to earth with a 8.28 June ERA. Pittsburgh has hit Bettis for a .314 average (22-for-70).

**Wednesday:** Pirates RHP Chris Archer (3-5, 4.49 ERA) at Rockies RHP German Marquez (9-8, 4.70), 1:10 p.m., ATTRM

**Thursday:** Dodgers RH Ross Stripling (8-3, 2.68) at Rockies LHP Tyler Anderson (6-4, 4.05), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

**Friday:** Dodgers RHP Kenta Maeda (7-7, 3.73) at Rockies RHP Jon Gray (9-7, 4.73), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

**After a shaky road trip, Kyle Freeland sets a much-needed tone for the homestand in Rockies win over Pirates**  
*The second-year southpaw turned in seven innings of two-hit, shutout baseball and was aided by a two-run Colorado fifth*

**By Kyle Newman / Denver Post | Aug. 6, 2018**

Coming off a 2-5 road trip that made the club's scorching July quickly feel like a distant memory, the Rockies needed someone to set the tone during Monday night's opener of a seven-game homestand.

Fortunately for Colorado, it was the turn in the rotation for its unquestioned 2018 ace — both by statistical analysis and the old-fashioned eye test — to take the hill. And when he did, Kyle Freeland did as he has so often done this season: He pitched like a guy hungry for October lights in LoDo.

The second-year southpaw turned in seven innings of two-hit, shutout baseball, and a pair of Colorado runs in the fifth — sandwiched around a 32-minute rain delay — were enough to overcome the Pirates 2-0 at Coors Field.

"He had his mix of pitches really working today," manager Bud Black said. "The fastball in to the right-handed hitters was outstanding, the fastball in to the left-handed hitters was outstanding, and the slider came into play... He really pitched outstanding by keeping the ball down, and pitching in well to their lineup."

Beyond Corey Dickerson's leadoff single in the first inning and Pittsburgh pitcher Joe Musgrove's double in the third, Freeland was exceptional, and he used five strikeouts to work around his three walks as well as a hit batsman.

With the latest gem in front of the home crowd, Freeland lowered his Coors Field ERA to 2.18 in 10 starts while also earning his sixth win there. And with a handful of starts left at the stadium this year, he's on track to post the lowest single-season home ERA in club history (Jorge De La Rosa, 2.76 in 2013).

The guy born and raised at altitude doesn't let the thin air get to his head.

"It's just another fifth day for me — I enjoy pitching at home, and I like it here because the team plays well here," Freeland said. "I don't let the whole 'Coors Field effect' come into play for me. I pitch my game, and my game is pitching to contact, getting weak contact and keeping the ball on the ground."

In the early parts of Monday's game, Musgrove was outpitching Freeland in the right-hander's Coors Field debut. Musgrove retired the first dozen Colorado hitters he faced before Nolan Arenado broke up the perfecto to begin the fifth inning.

"(Musgrove)'s got good stuff," Black said. "He's got a couple different fastballs, including a sinker in the mid-90s and he cuts the ball so it's going the other way. He's got a slider that was pretty consistent too, down and away from the righties and into the lefties."

But Arenado's opposite-field single to right was followed by a Story single, on which Arenado hustled to third. Gerardo Parra then grounded to Pittsburgh second baseman Josh Harrison, who booted the ball as Arenado scored to give Colorado a 1-0 advantage.

The delay followed, and Colorado added another run via a Chris Iannetta sacrifice fly a few batters later to extend the score to 2-0 in an inning in which Colorado squandered an opportunity to bust the game open. The Rockies gave away one out on a failed sacrifice bunt that Freeland popped up, and handed the Pirates another when Parra was easily thrown out at home by Gregory Polanco to end the threat.

After Freeland exited, Seunghwan Oh pitched a flawless eighth inning as he turned in his sixth consecutive scoreless appearance since joining the Rockies July 26. And Wade Davis, who had blown two straight saves coming into the night, locked down the ninth, earning his 32nd save.

"Both Davis and Oh came in and attacked hitters, and fed off what myself and Chris (Iannetta) were doing for the first seven innings," Freeland said. "They made them uncomfortable, attacked them, and let them know that we're not afraid to throw strikes and attack the zone."

## Colorado Rockies: Just how good is Trevor Story this season?

By Luke Mullins / Rox Pile | Aug. 6, 2018

Colorado Rockies shortstop Trevor Story is having a career season. Earlier this summer, I argued that he was the best shortstop in the National League. But as we head into August, he continues to raise his game to another level, making a case to be regarded among the most talented players in baseball.

The league has been well aware of his immense power potential since he announced his presence in the big leagues with a record seven home runs in his first six games in a legendary rookie season that was abruptly ended after just 97 games **due to a thumb injury**. At the time of his injury, his 27 home runs led the National League. He missed out on winning Rookie of the Year that season to the Dodgers' **Corey Seager**, but this year he has a chance to get back at Los Angeles by helping the **Colorado Rockies** dethrone their division rivals for the first time since the San Francisco Giants won the West in 2012.

Story's power still has the ability to frighten any Major League starter. However, teams would be setting themselves up to be blindsided if they thought that his power was the only threatening part of his game. Story is well-developed in every area of the game and he is only getting better the longer the season goes on (he already has four home runs and 10 RBI in just six games in August).

Maybe the most overlooked area of his game is his speed. It is not often that a player with the kind of power Story possesses (tied for seventh-most home runs in the NL with 24, fourth in RBI with 79, and sixth-best in slugging percentage at .551) can also steal bases. But its not just about base-stealing ability, Story has been clocked as one of *the fastest* players in the game. His average 29.7 feet per second sprint speed is fifth-best in the NL, just 0.1 feet/second behind the Braves' **Ronald Acuna, Jr.**

Our own Jake Shapiro talked about Story's speed **in this article**.

In addition to his incredible speed, another big reason for Story almost doubling his previous career-high in stolen bases with 14 by early August is his improved batting average. Story is hitting just under .290, which, if it continued, would be a huge improvement over his .239 batting average in 2017. All signs indicate it will continue to climb, considering Story has hit better with the start of every month, including hitting .333 in June and .358 in July. If he keeps that up, he could end the season with an average north of .300.

Story's speed, power and ability to hit for average make him one of the biggest offensive threats in the National League, but much like teammate **Nolan Arenado**, Story can hurt you on both sides of the ball. He has the range to make plays like **this diving catch** and the arm strength to make **this off-balance throw**.

Story should win his first Silver Slugger this season. There's a good chance he'll also add a Gold Glove. Despite the attention he's received, Story might still be the most underrated position player on the Rockies. But for those who watch him every day, there's no question that he's not only the best shortstop in the NL, he's also one of the best five-tool players in the game.

## Colorado Rockies morning after: Why Tuesday night will be special

By Kevin Henry / Rox Pile | Aug. 6, 2018

Chad Bettis and Jameson Taillon have been mentioned in the same breath often for more than a year now. On Tuesday night at Coors Field, the Colorado Rockies and Pittsburgh Pirates starters will be linked together by opposing each other on the mound.

Starting against each other in a pivotal National League series and having that be the connection is a much better reason than why the duo have been linked in the past. Bettis and Taillon both have battled through testicular cancer last season and blisters this season. Both ailments have cost them time away from the **Colorado Rockies** and Pittsburgh Pirates, respectively. Both have been frustrated to miss time on the mound.

Each is hoping to put the past behind them and get off to a fresh start on Tuesday night in downtown Denver.

Taillon, the 26-year-old right-hander, is 8-8 this season with a 3.74 ERA in 22 starts. He also made headlines earlier this season with, shall we say, **an interesting remedy** on how to possibly cure the cut on his pitching hand.

Bettis, the 29-year-old right-hander, is 5-1 this season with a 5.10 ERA in 17 starts. He was placed on the disabled list on July 3 with a blister on his right middle finger. After three starts in Triple-A, Bettis will be activated prior to Tuesday's outing and take his place in the rotation, Colorado manager **Bud Black** told media members, including Rox Pile, on Monday afternoon.

"That will be really cool," Bettis said of the matchup against Taillon before it was officially announced he would be starting. "It would be really nice for that to happen.

"We still stay in touch here and there. I reached out to him when I first got a blister. Just trying to pick some other guys' brains around the league who have been affected. Seeing what they're doing and if they're doing something different than what we're doing. Really just trying to get it right. He had some good insight. There were a couple of things that he was doing that we could try and see how it worked out. It was good to get some feedback from him."

**Taillon reached out to Bettis** to ask questions after being diagnosed with cancer. Bettis reached back to Taillon to get some advice to overcome a blister. It is said that baseball players have a certain camaraderie within the brotherhood that can't be understood unless you've put on a pair of cleats and stepped onto a Major League field. It's obvious that these two have a bond that has served them both well, mentally and physically.

Sure, to many fans, it will look like two pitchers taking the mound in a regular game on Tuesday night. But there is more to it than that. These are two survivors who are now trying to help their team survive a jumbled and frantic National League race to the postseason ... and will do it while facing each other.



## The Colorado Rockies will probably miss the playoffs, and I'm OK with that

By Colin Gaiser / Rox Pile | Aug. 6, 2018

Even after a nightmare road trip through the Midwest, your Colorado Rockies are firmly in the playoff chase.

But the odds are not in the favor of the **Colorado Rockies**. Their remaining strength of schedule is the highest in the National League as only two of their last 17 series are against below .500 teams (both versus the pesky San Diego Padres). They have to overcome the Arizona Diamondbacks and Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West, and a host of impressive clubs are battling for the Wild Card.

So, pardon me for being sacrilegious ... but I am okay with the Rockies missing the playoffs in 2018.

Obviously, I *want* the Rockies to play October baseball. I'll watch every pitch when I can and agonize over MLB Gameday when I cannot (is there anything more tense in digital sports consumption than "in play, run(s)"?). I'll check the standings too often for sanity's sake and torture myself doing mental calculations and predictions.

But, most likely, the Rockies are not going to make the playoffs. FanGraphs agrees, **giving them a 18 percent chance**. And if/when they don't, 2018 will not have been a "lost season" as many will claim.

How quickly we forget where we spent most of this decade. After reaching the postseason in 2007 and 2009, the Rockies scraped the bottom of the National League barrel from 2011-2016. In 2017, the lone morsel of playoff baseball was one long, agonizing night in Arizona.

Expectations are high, and that is a good thing. A real fanbase should expect success. But we shouldn't let lofty expectations warp our perspective.

The 2018 National League is absolutely stacked. Over the deadline, other NL contenders made significant moves to shore up their rosters. The Rockies did painfully little, despite their glaring flaws.

The problems with the bullpen are well known, but offensive struggles rarely give the Rockies bullpen a cushion. The Rockies' wRC+ — a park-adjusted offensive metric — is 85, good for 26<sup>th</sup> in all of baseball. And that's not just Coors bias, as they are slashing .230/.298/.391 on the road for a dismal road wRC+ of 84. While **Trevor Story**, **Carlos Gonzalez** and **Nolan Arenado** are raking, the rest of the lineup is smoldering.

Even if the Rockies make the playoffs, these flaws could derail a run before you could say "Rocktober."

So yes, I've accepted there might be no block party on Blake Street this year. But part of my acceptance lies in my belief that the Rockies are set up tremendously well for 2019, 2020 and perhaps beyond.

The young rotation of **Jon Gray**, **Tyler Anderson**, **Kyle Freeland** and **German Marquez** offers startling potential. In 2018, Rockies starters have an ERA of 4.29 — 11th in all of baseball — and that includes a miserable first-inning ERA of 7.70. Once they fix their first-inning woes (and they will), this is easily the best rotation in franchise history.

**DJ LeMahieu** and **Carlos Gonzalez** will probably be gone next year. However, some Rockies prospects are tantalizingly close to being Major League starters, including golden child **Brendan Rodgers**. Guys like **Garrett Hampson**, **Ryan McMahon** and **Raimel Tapia** offer encouraging upside once they get regular playing time.

You can fairly criticize the front office for bad signings and lackluster results at the trade deadline. But as other teams sell the farm for short-term success, the Rockies are equipped to make big moves this offseason.

Yes, the waiting is the hardest part. But the Rockies have gone 25 years without a division title. They've made the postseason just four times. We can survive another year.

## Colorado Rockies: NL Wild Card is out of the question

By Olivia Greene / Rox Pile | Aug. 6, 2018

The Colorado Rockies are currently 59-52 coming off a win in the 3-game series against the Milwaukee Brewers. This puts the Rockies 2 games out of first place in the NL West and 2.5 back in the Wild Card. With the rest of August and September being the last two months of the regular season, the Colorado Rockies are really going to have to go after winning the division in order to contend. Them getting a Wild Card spot is no longer an option.

Before the series against the St. Louis Cardinals, the Colorado Rockies were coming off a 4-game winning streak and moved up to 2nd place in the NL West while the Los Angeles Dodgers fell to 3rd. This was a move that was needed to boost the Rockies further towards contending. However, after hitting a snag while playing the Cardinals and Brewers with many blaming the bullpen for the losses (**as well as the offense**), they are once again back to 3rd with the Dodgers and Arizona Diamondbacks being tied for 1st.

Looking at the NL Wild Card, the Colorado Rockies are in 5th place with the 1st spot going to the Brewers, who are up by 1.5 games with the Atlanta Braves following in 2nd. Both of those teams are also playing in very close division races, but if they prove to not take 1st in their respective divisions, they'll be the teams to get the Wild Card spots. This puts the Rockies in a bind when it comes to the WC. So where does it lead them? If they want to contend, the best chance they have is by winning the NL West pennant.

It's not inconceivable for the Rockies to get back in first place as they had a small stint in June of holding the 1st place crown. However, the key question really will be how do they essentially get there and when that happens how do they stay on top?

In all honesty, the change is most clearly starts with the bullpen. If they can't get their stuff together and hold off an opposing offense, the Rox won't be a competitive team but with guys like **Scott Oberg** and **Adam Ottavino** having dominant outings, it shows that there is hope for the Rockies bullpen.

Although we want to point fingers at the players, we also have to look at the decisions manager **Bud Black** is making during critical situations. It's quite obvious we're all confused as to why Black would give the nod to **Wade Davis** after letting the Cards walk-off and then to only have the Brewers do the same thing when he was back on the mound in the 9th.

Pitching is, of course, not the only aspect Black has to manage. The decision to have their 7th batter in the lineup bunt was a bit questionable to many during Saturday's game. In other words, there have been many puzzling decisions that were made by Bud Black, but whichever decision he makes he'll have to live with and answer for the consequences whether good or bad.

Let's jump on the hypothetical train that the Colorado Rockies have reclaimed 1st place in the NL West, now how do they stay on top? The Rockies games have almost turned into a very repetitive formula.

The way the starting rotation has been pitching they can go for around 7-8 innings a game which leaves the need for only 3 relievers at the most. Though the Rockies can't forget that they have to put up an offensive effort as well. Though it shouldn't be hard with hard hitters like **Trevor Story**, **Carlos Gonzalez**, **Ian Desmond** and **Nolan Arenado** putting up the numbers that they have.

In the end, the Colorado Rockies could overtake the NL West and hold out both the Dodgers and Diamondbacks. However, they have to actually want it enough by playing well and they have to pinpoint the problems they have right now. That can be hard for a team especially when we're in the final months of regular season baseball, but it's what needed if they want to contend.

This is a team that has the keys to victory, but they just appear to be jamming the key into the lock while they should be easily sliding it in. They're next few games will most likely be competitive, should prove to be a strong outcome in their favor. Either way, they most likely can't make the playoffs via a Wild Card spot.

Note: Want to read an opinion on why the Rockies will miss the postseason? **[Click here.](#)**

## Freeland, Rockies shutout Pirates at Coors Field

By Drew Creasman / BSN Denver | Aug. 6, 2018

DENVER – When the Colorado Rockies drafted the hometown kid in the first round of the 2014 Draft, nights like these are what they had in mind and what fans began to dream about.

Kyle Freeland has become *the* response to the notion that pitching with consistent quality in Colorado, at Coors Field, is impossible.

He tossed another beauty on Monday night against the Pittsburgh Pirates in a 2-0 win, allowing just two hits over seven innings of shutout baseball.

He was simply superb, working all corners of the strike zone with every pitch. One of the two base hits he surrendered was a double to his opposite number who took a total guess swing on the first pitch of the at-bat, lining a double into the gap.

The only other time a Pirate made it into scoring position came in Freeland's final inning after he hit a batter and walked one in an 11-pitch at-bat. But he got a soft liner to left to end his night, able to walk off the mound looking at a big fat zero in the opposition's run column.

Freeland has a 2.18 ERA in his home ballpark this season.

The Rockies entered the fifth inning without having recorded a hit against Joe Musgrove, the closest they came was in the previous frame when Carlos Gonzalez was robbed by Josh Harrison at second base on a beautiful diving stop and throw.

But Nolan Arenado got his club off the schneid with a base hit to right field to lead off the sixth. Trevor Story followed with a single of his own, back up the middle. Arenado cut the bag perfectly at second and made an aggressive baserunning decision to get to third, barely beating the throw. That paid off when Gerardo Parra hit a grounder toward second that was going to be difficult for Harrison to get two, but in his hurry he dropped the baseball and ended up getting zero.

Arenado scored (which he would have even if the double play had been turned) and then the skies opened up and a fury of rain descended on the ballfield. It was so intense and immediate that the game had to go right into a delay in the middle of Ian Desmond's at-bat.

After a relatively short break, Desmond stepped back in against Musgrove and was hit in the back by a pitch, loading the bases with nobody out.

Chris Iannetta fought off some tough pitches, working the count full, eventually lining one toward the gap in left that Corey Dickerson was perfectly positioned to catch. But the productive out got Story across the plate. Freeland couldn't get the bunt down but David Dahl slashed a two-out single to right. Unfortunately for the home team, Pirates right fielder Gregor Polanco has a missile launcher instead of an arm and he gunned Parra down at the plate trying to score a third run.

Seunghwan Oh pitched a clean eighth inning with a strikeout.

Wade Davis, after having blown his last two save opportunities, worked his cleanest inning in quite some time, getting a 1-2-3 inning with a pair of emphatic strikeouts.

#### **FINAL STATS:**

*Kyle Freeland: 7 IP, 2 H, 0 ER, 3 BB, 5 K*

*Seunghwan Oh: 1 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 1 K*

*Wade Davis: 1 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 2 K (S: 32)*

#### **WHAT'S NEXT:**

Chad Bettis makes his return to the mound on Tuesday after missing a few weeks with a finger blister. He faces off against Jameson Taillon. First pitch at 6:40 Mountain Time.

## **Freeland, bullpen limit Pirates to 2 hits as Rockies win 2-0**

**By Associated Press / ESPN.com | Aug. 6, 2018**

DENVER -- Kyle Freeland has the stuff of an ace. He delivers in the clutch like an ace, too.

Just don't expect Colorado manager Bud Black to label the left-hander one yet. Not even a dominating performance like this could sway him.

Freeland threw seven sharp innings and combined with the bullpen on a two-hitter to help the Rockies beat the Pittsburgh Pirates 2-0 on Monday night in a game that was interrupted 32 minutes by rain.

"I'm a critical judge of an ace," Black said. "For me, an ace is somebody that does it over a long period of time. This is no knock on Kyle. I mean, for me, an ace is the guy who's passed the test of time, who's been an All-Star, maybe conceivably won a Cy Young.

"But, hey, don't get me wrong: I love the way Kyle's pitching. He's been great."

Freeland (10-7) allowed two hits and struck out five. It was his fourth career game of seven or more shutout innings at Coors Field.

"The one thing is not letting the old Coors Field effect come into play for me," said Freeland, who grew up in Denver. "I pitch my game."

Relievers Seunghwan Oh and Wade Davis combined to close out the win. Davis pitched a perfect ninth for his 32nd save in 38 chances.

It was a positive step for a beleaguered bullpen that endured three walk-off losses -- two by Davis -- during a 2-5 road swing.

"Good to see Wade bounce back," Black said.

Joe Musgrove (4-6) retired the first 12 batters he faced before allowing a single to Nolan Arenado on the first pitch of the fifth. The right-hander scattered four hits over seven innings and allowed two runs, one earned.

Colorado scored both of its runs off Musgrove in the fifth. Arenado raced home with the first when Josh Harrison booted Gerardo Parra's grounder. Just then, the rain picked up intensity and the grounds crew brought out the tarp.

"I was locked in," Musgrove said. "I didn't realize how hard it was raining until I walked off the field."

After the delay, Musgrove hit Ian Desmond to load the bases and Chris Iannetta followed with a sacrifice fly to bring in another run. The damage could've been more if not for right fielder Gregory Polanco throwing out Parra trying to score from second on David Dahl's single.

"I would've rather not had it," Musgrove said of the delay. "The delay kind of caused me to lose my rhythm a little bit."

Freeland allowed a single to Corey Dickerson to lead off the game and Musgrove's double in the third. Other than that, Freeland was tough to solve against a Pirates team that scored five runs off him in four innings on April 18.

"Pretty much everything" was working, Freeland said. "Fastball command was really good."

#### TRAINING ROOM

Rockies: RHP Antonio Senzatela (shoulder inflammation) will rest a few days before playing catch. "He feels good. We're optimistic there," Black said. ... OF Charlie Blackmon was given a day off.

#### HEAVY AIR

The wind picked up intensity and the temperature dropped about 14 degrees, making it hard for the baseball to leave the ball park. David Freese hit a deep drive to center in the fourth and Starling Marte another in the sixth that got held up by the breeze.

"They squared a couple up to dead center that I thought off the barrel had a chance to go," Freeland said. "I just think the wind might have been swirling up there."

#### NEW INFIELDER

The Pirates acquired infielder Adeiny Hechavarria from Tampa Bay for minor league reliever Matt Seelinger. Hechavarria is expected to arrive Tuesday.



"Very good feedback from our scouts following him," Pirates manager Clint Hurdle said. "Be a good addition all the way around."

#### UP NEXT

The Rockies will bring RHP Chad Bettis (5-1, 5.10 ERA) off the disabled list to start Tuesday against the Pirates. Bettis hasn't pitched for Colorado since July 1 due to a blister on his middle finger. Pittsburgh will throw RHP Jameson Taillon (8-8, 3.74), who's been charged with three runs or less in each of his last 12 starts.

Both pitchers dealt with testicular cancer a season ago.

"Both healthy. Both in the big leagues," Taillon said. "Life's good."