



MEDIA CLIPS – Jan. 15, 2019

Bridich tight-lipped about Arenado negotiations

Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 15, 2018

DENVER -- Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich revealed little about his talks with arbitration-eligible third baseman **Nolan Arenado** on Monday night.

"We haven't set any deadlines or ultimatums in any sort of negotiations or any sort of situation with Nolan in the many, many years that he's been in the organization, so why now?" Bridich said at a town hall meeting at Denver's Sam's No. 3 restaurant. "I'm sure there may be more on the line now, in terms of his future, in terms of future dollars, than maybe there has been in the past.

"But we're going to work hard to keep things moving along. At some point, as negotiations always do, you're going to find a point where you're equally happy or equally unhappy. And that's where things get done or they don't. But things are fine. We'll keep things under wraps, under our hat for now, and just kind of keep plugging along."

Arenado is seeking \$30 million, while the team is offering \$24 million. The sides have until an arbitration hearing is scheduled sometime in February to reach an agreement. If no deal is made, the player and club will argue before an arbitration panel that will assign Arenado either Arenado's request or the club's offer.

Whether negotiated or arbitrated, Arenado's salary will break the arbitration record of \$23 million, set last year by **Josh Donaldson**, then with the Blue Jays. But with Arenado in his final year of arbitration, the Rockies have stated that they hope to sign him to a multiyear contract that would prevent him from testing free agency after the season.

There also is the prospect of the talks producing a multiyear contract. Last January, the Rockies signed **Charlie Blackmon** to a \$14 million contract to avoid arbitration, but shortly after the regular season began, they reached a six-year contract guaranteeing \$108 million, replacing the original 2018 agreement with a signing bonus and salary totaling \$21,333,333.

Bridich said during last month's Winter Meetings that a long-term contract north of \$200 million is one the Rockies can handle under their philosophy of "responsible payroll growth."

What bears watching is the Rockies' negotiating strategy -- one that Bridich didn't reveal.

Many, if not most, teams have gone to a "file and trial" system. That means if the process moves to the sides filing figures, the team breaks off negotiations and just waits for the arbitration hearing.

The Rockies do not have a file-and-trial history. In 2016, second baseman **DJ LeMahieu** signed a two-year, \$7.8 million contract on the day of the scheduled hearing. While Bridich refused to discuss the strategy, he said "we're still in conversation" when asked specifically whether a multiyear deal for Arenado is being discussed.

Other subjects

- On seeing three-time Gold Glove second baseman LeMahieu sign a two-year, \$24 million contract with the Yankees as a free agent, Bridich said, "We're happy for him, but we're not going to be able to re-sign or extend everybody that wears our uniform. That's just not the reality of the game or the reality of our organization. So you have to make tough decisions."

- Bridich said he is looking for two 2016 first-round picks -- righty pitchers Riley Pint, 21 (the organization's No. 5 prospect, according to MLB Pipeline) and Mike Nikorak, 22 -- to progress after overcoming early-career injuries. In 2018, Pint was limited to four starts because of a forearm injury, and Nikorak made nine appearances after recovering from Tommy John surgery that cost him the 2017 season.

"It's time," Bridich said. "They're not necessarily kids anymore. They are starting to become grown-ups, and the clock is ticking. They know that, and it's important to start seeing some steps taken in their careers."

- Outfielder **Gerardo Parra**, who did his best work off the bench last season, is a free agent. Asked about Parra by a fan, Bridich said, "You sound like my mom. He was her favorite player, too." Bridich said he has talked to Parra's agent, and they will determine together whether Colorado is still a fit.

Bridich said the Rockies "haven't been overly aggressive" in the outfielder market, which also includes longtime Rockies standout **Carlos Gonzalez**. Bridich said outfielder **Matt Holliday** was a fit down the stretch and into the playoffs in 2018, but it's a tougher fit at this point.

Inbox: Is Arenado's future in Denver?

Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 12, 2018

With Spring Training rapidly approaching, Rockies fans have a lot on their minds, especially in the wake of the announcement that the club and **Nolan Arenado** are heading to what could be a record-setting arbitration hearing. We will look at Arenado's long-term outlook and more in the latest Inbox.

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How realistic is a deal with Nolan? Will he want to test free agency?

Players and teams exchanged figures Friday as part of the arbitration process, and it's expected that Arenado could end up with around \$25 million for 2019. But that's a starting point to what the Rockies hope is a multi-year contract.

All along, I've said the contracts of **Bryce Harper** and, especially, **Manny Machado** will help color Arenado's market value.

What I won't say is Arenado's signing is contingent on his love for Denver or whether the Rockies show him they want to contend. Building a pitching staff answered the latter question. It comes down to whether they can agree on a deal for one of the top players of this generation.

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What name in the pipeline should we be talking about that hasn't come up yet (i.e not Rodgers, Dahl etc), but could make an impact in 2019?

Right-handed pitcher Peter Lambert, the **Rockies' No. 3 prospect** according to MLB Pipeline, went 10-7 with a 3.28 ERA at Double-A and Triple-A last season. While there is pitching depth, if Lambert can fully master a mid-80s slider to go with a 92-94-mph fastball and a changeup (currently his best pitch), he is part of the starting rotation's depth picture.

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Does Tom Murphy get another chance at being a regular catcher?

Tom Murphy flashed a power bat on occasion, but he got into some bad swing habits and let some defensive flaws show up at key times in games. The chance is still there, as the Rockies haven't added a veteran catcher to the Major League roster. But he'll have to make clear steps forward without backsliding.

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Thought on Jeff Hoffmann?

The most-touted piece in the 2015 trade that sent shortstop Troy Tulowitzki to the Blue Jays, Jeff Hoffman hasn't gained Major League footing. In 2018, Hoffman had a shot to push his way into the starting rotation, but a right shoulder impingement that he suffered in Spring Training scuttled that chance. Hoffman couldn't find consistency in stints with Colorado, during which he was used as a starter and a reliever.

The Rockies didn't call him up at season's end, believing that he would not be used out of the bullpen, and needed a full offseason to regroup. It's an interesting time for Hoffman. He enters camp in his last year of Minor League options as a big part of the Rockies' depth picture, but if he turns heads or if injuries occur, he could find himself as a member of the rotation.

Position by position: These are the biggest upgrades

Andrew Simon | MLB.com | Jan. 15, 2018

First base: Rockies

In 2018, Colorado first basemen (primarily **Ian Desmond**) finished 28th in the Majors in wRC+ (80) and 29th in FanGraphs' wins above replacement (-1.2), even as the team battled its way into the postseason. Signing veteran **Daniel Murphy** to a two-year contract was a bit of a risk, given that the left-handed batter will be 34 next season and struggled early in '18 as he came back from a knee injury. But Murphy was one of the game's top hitters from 2016-17 and recovered to slash .315/.346/.498 after the All-Star break. He should be a lot more comfortable defensively after moving from second to first.

Win or lose, Arenado in line for arbitration record

Rockies third baseman seeking \$30M; club figure is \$24M

Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 15, 2018

DENVER -- Rockies third baseman **Nolan Arenado** is assured of setting a record for an annual salary via the arbitration process. The only question is how high the bar will be set.

Arenado was the only one of the Rockies' eight arbitration-eligible players this winter to not reach an agreement before Friday's exchange of figures. Arenado is requesting \$30 million while the club is offering \$24 million. The sides can negotiate all the way until a hearing is scheduled for sometime next month.

Asked about the arbitration and the prospect of a multi-year contract, Arenado said, "I have no idea. This is a business and anything can happen."

Asked his timetable for getting things done, Arenado said, "I want to get year one done. After that, what happens, happens. But during the season, the last thing I want to talk about is money. I want to focus on winning and helping this team do something special."

No matter what happens with the arbitration process, the Rockies' real goal is to reach a multi-year deal with Arenado, who can become a free agent after the 2019 season. This year's two biggest free agents, outfielder **Bryce Harper** and infielder **Manny Machado**, are unsigned, and their eventual contracts will help set Arenado's market.

If a hearing occurs, a three-judge panel is limited to picking either the player's request or the club's offer. In either case, the figure will be higher than the current record -- \$23 million to then-Blue Jays third baseman **Josh Donaldson** last year. The Rockies have had just four arbitration hearings in their history -- righty reliever **Dennys Reyes** (2002), righty reliever Sun-Woo Kim ('06), lefty reliever Brian Fuentes ('08) and catcher **Wilin Rosario** ('15). For those scoring at home, the club won all but the Reyes case.

This offseason, Colorado reached a one-year, \$5 million contract with shortstop **Trevor Story**, whose 37 home runs last season were one fewer than Arenado's National League-leading figure, and right-hander **Jon Gray** reached an agreement for \$2.925 million.

Earlier Friday, ESPN cited sources that said there would be no agreement between Colorado and Gray, and that negotiating was over -- meaning a hearing loomed. But by day's end, there was accord.

Gray struggled in 2018, endured a move to Triple-A Albuquerque and was left off the postseason roster. He finished 12-9 with a 5.12 ERA. But Gray's career body of work, which includes 185 strikeouts in 168 innings in 2016 and a 10-4, 3.67 performance in '17 provided a solid argument in the arbitration process.

Here are other cases that were settled with one-year contract agreements Friday:

- Righty **Chad Bettis** (\$3.325 million) will attempt to pitch his way back into the rotation after blister issues forced him to the bullpen last season. Bettis spent the early part of the offseason at Driveline, a performance facility near Seattle, where he not only worked to correct his delivery but worked on his slider -- a pitch he used in earnest out of the bullpen, after using mostly a cutter previously.

- Lefty **Tyler Anderson** (\$2.625 million) is expected to take a step forward after throwing 176 innings last season and finishing 7-9 with a 4.55 ERA. Because of injuries in the Minors, he had not thrown more than 120 1/3 innings in his pro career, and that was at Class A Asheville in 2012, his first pro season. There was a late-season left shoulder issue, but he finished strong and can build on his relative durability.

- Catcher **Tony Wolters** (\$960,000) is part of a share of the regular duty with veteran **Chris Iannetta**. While the Rockies have looked at upgrades, especially offensively, they like the way Iannetta and Wolters handled the staff. Wolters made some standout defensive plays last season.

Previously, the Rockies reached one-year agreements with lefty reliever **Chris Rusin** (\$1.6875 million) and righty reliever **Scott Oberg** (\$1.3 million).

Fan favorite LeMahieu signs with Yankees

Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 15, 2018

DENVER -- An era of quiet Rockies production ended Friday when fan-favorite second baseman **DJ LeMahieu** agreed to a two-year, \$24 million contract with the Yankees.

LeMahieu's departure leaves second base to a group of young competitors -- **Ryan McMahon**, headed into his second Major League season; **Garrett Hampson**, whose rookie status is intact after 24 regular-season games in 2018; and Brendan Rodgers, the No. 9 prospect in the Majors and No. 1 in the Rockies' system according to MLB Pipeline.

One of them can only hope to provide the accomplishment and stability that LeMahieu provided after arriving in a 2011 trade with the Cubs that goes down as one of the best in club history.

Here are some of the accomplishments that made LeMahieu, a two-time All-Star and the 2016 National League batting champ, the Rockies' pre-eminent second baseman:

- According to baseball-reference, LeMahieu ranks eighth in club history in Wins Above Replacement at 17.6, just behind **Ubaldo Jimenez** (21) and Vinny Castilla (19.4)
- LeMahieu's three Rawlings Gold Glove Awards rank behind **Nolan Arenado** (six) and Larry Walker (five), and are tied with outfielder **Carlos Gonzalez** (a free agent this winter) and Todd Helton.
- LeMahieu started the past five Opening Day games in Colorado. Before him, the high-water mark for a streak was three (Mike Lansing, 1998-2000), and no other player had started more than two Rockies openers in their career. Even more, LeMahieu's 877 games at second (849 starts) were more than twice as many as the next player -- Eric Young (413; 389 starts).

Beyond history, the younger Rockies will be looking to make up for the solid numbers LeMahieu posted in 2018. The veteran slashed .276/.321/.428 with a career high 15 home runs and led National League second basemen in fielding percentage (.993), ultimate zone rating (.859) and defensive runs saved (18). All this was despite three stints on the disabled list that limited him to 128 games.

Patrick Saunders named Colorado Sportswriter of the Year

“He consistently brings the readers closer to the action and off-the-field story lines.”

Patrick Saunders | The Denver Post | Jan. 14, 2018

Denver Post reporter Patrick Saunders was named the National Sports Media Association’s 2018 Colorado Sportswriter of the Year on Monday.

The award is given annually in each state and voted on by peers. Saunders has worked at the Post since 1998 and will be entering his 13th season covering the Colorado Rockies when he heads to spring training next month.

“In my first year on the beat, Patrick’s guidance and expertise were critical in me sliding into the gig after the regular season started and immediately find some footing,” said Kyle Newman, who also covers the Rockies for the Post.

“Patrick knows how to leverage relationships in the clubhouse to get the perfect quote or angle for a story. He can write about big, broad topics with masterful confidence or hone in on the fine details with intrigue like a baseball bard. Either way, he consistently brings the readers closer to the action and off-the-field story lines better than just about any sportswriter I know.”

Some of Saunders’ more notable stories in 2018 include spending a day behind the scenes with Rockies manager Bud Black during the team’s playoff race; explaining how a youth coach in Texas fixed shortstop Trevor Story’s swing; a heartwarming feature on Rockies broadcaster Taylor McGregor; and breaking the news that beloved outfielder Matt Holliday was returning to the Rockies for the pennant chase.

A Denver Post reporter or columnist has won the NMSA’s sportswriter of the year award for 10 consecutive years, and 17 of the last 20.

Also Monday, the NMSA named Vic Lombardi of Altitude the Colorado Sportscaster of the Year. ESPN’s Adrian Wojnarowski was named the national sportswriter of the year and Doris Burke won national sportscaster of the year. Burke is the first woman to win the award.

Saunders: DJ LeMahieu's departure puts pressure on Rockies' young trio, Jeff Bridich

Patrick Saunders | The Denver Post | Jan. 14, 2018

Rockies fan favorite DJ LeMahieu is now a New York Yankee, having agreed to a two-year, \$24 million contract on Friday. He's going to face a new kind of pressure when he plays in the Big Apple.

But here in Denver, some other people are also going to feel the squeeze. Either Ryan McMahon, Garrett Hampson or Brendan Rodgers, all candidates to replace LeMahieu at second base, are going to have to produce big time if the Rockies are going to make it to the postseason for their third season in a row.

And you know who else is on the hot seat? General manager Jeff Bridich.

Last season, LeMahieu told me repeatedly that he wanted to return to Colorado. However, Bridich and his front office decided to let LeMahieu test free agency, choosing to go with the promise of youth and spend owner Dick Monfort's money in other ways.

Thus far, the Rockies' only major offseason move has been to sign veteran, slugging infielder Daniel Murphy to a two-year, \$24 million deal to play first base. That's the same deal the Yankees gave LeMahieu. So you can add Murphy to the pressure cooker.

McMahon, Hampson and Rodgers have a combined 132 games and 240 at-bats at the big-league level. Rodgers, the club's top prospect, has yet to make his major-league debut.

The Rockies are asking a lot from their baby-faced trio. They must replace LeMahieu, who is a two-time all-star, a three-time Gold Glove winner, the 2016 National League batting champ and the best second baseman in Rockies history. He's been a rock in the lineup. LeMahieu's 877 games at second (849 starts) were more than twice as many as the next player — Eric Young (413; 389 starts).

And, oh yes, LeMahieu was one of the most-respected and well-liked players in the Rockies clubhouse.

This is no knock on the kids, but they have a lot of prove for a team that is on the record saying that its goal is nothing less than the World Series

Rockies fail to meet Nolan Arenado's \$30 million demand as possibility of arbitration looms

When asked if he thinks he'll avoid arbitration, Arenado said: "This is a business, we'll have to see what happens."

Patrick Saunders | The Denver Post | Jan. 14, 2018

The Rockies and all-star third baseman Nolan Arenado failed to agree to a one-year deal for the 2019 season on Friday, meaning that salary arbitration next month remains a possibility.

Arenado was seeking \$30 million but the Rockies countered with a \$24 million offer. A number of national baseball writers, including ESPN's Jeff Passan, reported that the two sides will likely reach an agreement and won't need an arbitration hearing. Speculation is that Arenado will ultimately land a deal around \$27 million. He is scheduled to become a free agent after the 2019 season.

When asked if he thinks he'll avoid arbitration, Arenado said: "This is a business, we'll have to see what happens."

Colorado has had just four arbitration hearings in its history: Dennys Reyes in 2002, Sun-Woo Kim (2006), Brian Fuentes (2008) and Wilin Rosario (2015).

Arenado, 27, has won a Gold Glove in each of his first six seasons in the majors and is fresh off a season in which he batted .297 and led the National League with 38 home runs and was second with 110 RBIs and a .935 OPS. He finished third in the NL MVP voting behind Milwaukee's Christian Yelich and runner-up Javier Baez of the Cubs.

Rockies shortstop Trevor Story, a first-time all-star, signed a \$5 million deal in his first year of arbitration. It's a hefty raise for Story, who made \$555,000 last season. The 26-year-old Story hit .291 with 37 home runs, 108 RBIs and 27 stolen bases last season.

The Rockies entered the offseason with eight players up for arbitration.

Here's a breakdown of the other contracts signed:

- Right-handed starter/reliever Chad Bettis, one year, \$3.35 million (signed Friday)
- Right-handed starter Jon Gray, one year, amount unavailable (signed Friday)
- Left-handed starter Tyler Anderson, one year, \$2.625 million (signed Friday)
- Catcher Tony Wolters, one year, \$960,000 (signed Friday)
- Right-handed reliever Scott Oberg, one-year, \$1.3 million (signed Thursday).
- Left-handed reliever Chris Rusin, one-year, \$1.69 million (signed in November)

Larry walker's Hall of Fame chances are improving. Here's what's fueling the former Rockies OF's rise.
Coors Field's reputation and injuries stand in right fielder's way

Patrick Saunders | The Denver Post | Jan. 14, 2018

Back in the day, when Larry Walker was the sultan of swing in LoDo, he strode to the plate with Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train" reverberating throughout Coors Field.

Now, with Cooperstown as his ultimate destination, Walker is riding the crazy train again.

Just a few years ago, his candidacy appeared to be going off the rails, but as the former Rockies right fielder enters his final two years of eligibility for the National Baseball Hall of Fame, he's gaining steam.

Candidates need 75 percent of the vote to make it and he's on track to get upwards of 60 percent when results are announced Jan. 22. That means that next year, in his 10th and final year on the ballot, Walker just might become the first Rockie to get a plaque in Cooperstown. It's a remarkable rise. In 2015, halfway through his candidacy, Walker garnered just 11.8 percent of the vote.

What's going on?

It's a combination of the logjam easing on the 10-player ballot as elite players ahead of him have been inducted, the fact that many voters are giving Walker a second look, and a growing appreciation of his career as his window for induction closes.

"I have voted for Larry Walker as long as I've had a ballot, so this year isn't any different," said Derrick Goold, the longtime Cardinals beat writer for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, who has had a ballot since 2015. "It does appear like he's gathering momentum in the voting...But this year's ballot is one of the most-clogged ballots, perhaps ever, and we still see support for him building into a high tide. And next year's ballot looks a lot looser, so this trend bodes well for him."

Jay Jaffe, a former contributing baseball writer for Sports Illustrated and a Hall of Fame aficionado, has changed his opinion regarding Walker.

"Initially, I came down on the side of a "definite maybe" on Walker, but with further study, I've become increasingly convinced that he is worthy of a spot in Cooperstown," Jaffe wrote recently in Fangraphs. "Circa 2015 and 2016, the 10-slot ballot was so crowded that I left him off my virtual one (I don't get a real one until the 2021 cycle, the first after his eligibility lapses), before finding room again. Even virtually, those were agonizing cuts, because I'm convinced Walker belongs."

Walker is thrilled with the surge in support — his vote total jumped from 15.5 percent in 2016 to 21.9 percent in 2017 and up to 34.1 percent last year — but insists he won't feel jilted if he doesn't end up in Cooperstown.

“Listen, I never really let my head swell up enough to think I would be in the Hall of Fame,” Walker said in a phone interview... “I’m completely honored to be on the ballot of 10 years, and to see my (vote) percentage climb like it has, for me that’s a big honor. I can take that and live with that.”

A hitting machine

Over his 17-year career (1989-2005), Walker slashed .313/.400/.565 and belted 383 home runs. After beginning his career in obscurity in Montreal, Walker, who grew up playing hockey in his native Canada, played the majority of his career in Colorado. He thrived during his nine-plus years with the Rockies, hitting .334 with a 1.044 OPS and 258 homers. Walker was also regarded as a true “five-tool player,” blessed with good speed, terrific baserunning skills and an excellent glove.

Walker won three batting titles, three Silver Sluggers and seven Gold Gloves while making five all-star teams. He was named the 1997 National League MVP when he had a mind-boggling season with the Rockies, slashing .366/.452/.720 with a 1.172 OPS, 130 RBI and 49 home runs.

But for some, those credentials simply aren’t good enough for a ticket to Cooperstown. Walker’s frequent injuries, and the fact that his best seasons came at the hitter’s paradise known as Coors Field (pre-humidor), leave him short of baseball immortality.

“I have never voted for Walker and that is highly unlikely to change,” said Dan Shaughnessy, a columnist and associate sports editor for The Boston Globe. “He was very good, just not Hall of Fame.”

Tom Verducci, the longtime baseball writer for Sports Illustrated, considers Walker a wonderful talent, but still struggles with the idea that he is a Hall of Famer.

“I have not voted for Walker but continue to consider his candidacy, as I have changed opinion on others over the years,” Verducci said. “Walker was a brilliant five-tool player, but in the past I found his reliability and volume of work below Hall of Fame standards. Walker played 17 seasons, but only once played 145 games and only once had more than 175 hits. He never played 140 games in back-to back seasons.”

Verducci also points out that the Baseball Writers’ Association of America has never elected a right fielder with fewer than 2,500 hits or fewer than 2,100 games played. Walker finished with 2,160 hits and 1,988 games played.

“Walker would, by far, drop both such minimums,” Verducci said. “He wound up with nine qualified seasons with an OPS+ of 125 or better, fewer than Carlos Delgado (11), Jack Clark (11), Sherry McGee (11), Fred McGriff (10), Lance Berkman (10), Dick Allen (10) and Harry Stovey (10), to name several non-Hall of Famers not tainted by steroids.”

Miami Herald columnist Greg Cote pegs Walker as an “almost-Hall of Famer.”

“I thought Larry was a close vote and have thought that for years, Cote said. “The thing is, in all categories and all sports, somebody has to just miss. Everybody can’t get it in, so lines must be drawn somewhere. Also, as sort of a tiebreaker, his numbers are naturally inflated to a degree by the ‘Colorado Bump,’ having played the heart of his career for the Rockies in high altitude. All of that puts Walker right on the outer edge for me.”

Yet one remarkable aspect of Walker’s 1997 season was his performance away from Coors Field. Twenty-nine of his 49 homers were on the road, and his average away from Coors that season was .346.

Coors effect hurts Walker

Still, Coors Field casts a long shadow more than 13 years after Walker’s final game. At the ballpark in LoDo, he put up astronomical numbers: .381/.462/.710 with 154 homers in 2,501 plate appearances. In other ballparks, his line was a solid .282/.372/.501. In other words, Coors added 28 points of on-base percentage and 64 points of slugging percentage to his lifetime batting line.

“Like any question that might be tiresome, Coors Field is question that has to be dealt with, because it’s there,” Walker said. “I think eventually it’s going to go away, just as it did with the old Yankee Stadium or Tiger Stadium, or Fenway (Park) for that matter. Ballparks that were good to hitters.

“But I guess the one thing I’m happy about is that if it was that easy to hit in Coors Field, then damn, I’m glad I was able to do it. If I didn’t do that well, then we wouldn’t be having this conversation.”

Goold, who covered Walker in St. Louis for part of 2004 and all of 2005, doesn’t believe the Coors Field factor should disqualify Walker, just as some other 2019 Hall of Fame candidates should not be penalized for their specialized roles.

“There may be some voters who want to make a Coors correction to his statistics. Not me,” Goold said. “I consider it in the same way I consider that (designated hitter) Edgar Martinez didn’t play the field much and (closer) Mariano Rivera didn’t start.

“Given what we know about current vote totals, neither has been held back by what they weren’t — they are being celebrated for the player they were.

“In Rivera’s case, he played for a team that called October home and burnished his Hall of Fame career under baseball’s brightest lights. Walker played for a team that called Denver home. Did they make the most of the role they had? Did they make the most of the situation baseball offered them? Were they greater-than-elite in that situation? Did they rise beyond it? To me, the answer for Martinez and Rivera is the same as the answer for Walker: emphatically yes.”

Walker’s Path to Cooperstown

Larry Walker’s year-by-year vote totals in Hall of Fame balloting:

Year	Percentage
2011	20.3
2012	22.9
2013	21.6
2014	10.2
2015	11.8
2016	15.5
2017	21.9
2018	34.1
2019	66.0

Note: 2019 vote percentage based on tabulations by Hall of Fame tracker Ryan Thibodaux. Through Wednesday, Walker had received votes on 66 percent of the ballots that had been made public (162 of 412, or 39.3 percent).

Whatever Arenado wants, the Rockies should oblige him

Coors Field's reputation and injuries stand in right fielder's way

Justin Michael | Mile High Sports | Jan. 12, 2018

As the 2019 season approaches, the Colorado Rockies have many questions surrounding the future of the roster. The one that most Rockies fans are focused on is whether or not Nolan Arenado and the club can come to an agreement on a long-term contract extension.

With his impending free agency approaching, the feeling that Arenado will leave the purple pinstripes hangs around LoDo like a fog on a cloudy day.

The 27-year old third baseman turned down a \$24 million offer and is reportedly looking to receive a \$30 million deal for 2019. The \$24 million offer would be the highest ever for an arbitration contract, but whatever Arenado is looking to receive, Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich needs to make it work.

Bridich already got Trevor Story to settle on a \$5 million agreement for 2019, when it looked like the Rockies shortstop was headed to arbitration as well. So, with the money Colorado is saving on Story, Colorado can afford to spend a little more on one of the best third basemen of all-time.

Obviously \$6 million is a lot of dough, but Colorado can solidify the foundation of the lineup for years if the Rockies are able to lock down Arenado to a multi-year deal; and even if the Rockies are not able to ink Arenado to a long-term deal this offseason, showing they're committed to him seems like the smart way to go.

After watching him blossom into one of the league's most complete players, losing Arenado would be a nightmare for Rockies fans on multiple levels. It would bring out the anti-Rockies crowd, who wear orange jerseys year round and hang onto the narrative that Colorado isn't committed to winning. It would also be a massive blow to the die-hards that have supported the Rockies since Day 1 and stuck with the team through the ups and downs of the last 25 years.

The Rockies have an opportunity to build off the success of the last two seasons and really solidify itself as a National League contender for years to come. Quality pitching will play a big role in Colorado's future potential. The core of that success begins and ends with Arenado though. It is time for Bridich to show Arenado the money.

Colorado Rockies Quick Hits: Bridich on Arenado, Ottavino latest, more

A new week has started and it is also the start of another week of news and notes surrounding the Colorado Rockies.

Kevin Henry | RoxPile | Jan. 15, 2018

With the departure of DJ LeMahieu from the Colorado Rockies to the New York Yankees, there is at least a sigh of relief from Rockies fans that the franchise's best second baseman didn't end up within the division. With both the San Francisco Giants and Los Angeles Dodgers rumored to be in the hunt for LeMahieu, the 30-year-old second baseman could have returned plenty of times to Coors Field in 2019 and beyond.

It is now said that another National League team had interest in LeMahieu. The Miami Marlins expressed interest in bringing LeMahieu on board but it is reported that the talks didn't go very far. It's a bit of a head-scratcher to think the Marlins might pursue the two-time All-Star when many consider them to be in rebuild mode and looking to trade off the centerpiece of their lineup in J.T. Realmuto.

Speaking of interest, it appears the Texas Rangers are interested in adding Adam Ottavino to their bullpen. There is little question that adding Ottavino would improve any bullpen but the Rangers are a bit of a surprise entry into the Ottavino sweepstakes.

There have been mixed messages on whether the Rockies are still in the hunt for landing Ottavino for 2019 and beyond. However, it seems likely that Colorado is moving on from Ottavino and will look to Scott Oberg and others to fill the role that Ottavino succeeded in so often last season.

But will Nolan Arenado move on from the Rockies soon? Right now, Colorado general manager Jeff Bridich is trying to work through arbitration with his All-Star third baseman.

Bridich sat down with Tracy Ringolsby from InsideTheSeams.com to discuss Arenado and how things are progressing.

Examining the future for the Colorado Rockies at second base

Drew Creasman | BSN Denver | Jan. 11, 2018

For their entire history until the moment that DJ LeMahieu arrived in 2012, the second base position had been a revolving door of question marks for the Colorado Rockies.

Over the next seven seasons, LeMahieu emerged as easily the most prolific and beloved player to ever man the position for the franchise. He began slowly at first, surprising most of the baseball world with the way he continued to get better and better, eventually placing a trio of Gold Gloves and a Batting Title on his mantle.

But the writing had been on the wall for some time that 2018 was likely the final year for LeMahieu in Denver. It was announced on Friday that he will be trading in the purple pinstripes for the more traditional kind, joining the New York Yankees on a two-year \$24 million contract.

And now, the Rockies are back to the drawing board with plenty of plans in place, but a future shrouded in mystery much the same as the one that had followed second base for so long.

So, what happens now?

Let's take a look at what Colorado can do to absorb the loss of one of the most important players in their history.

RYAN MCMAHON

The most likely candidate to step immediately into the majority of the playing time at second base will be sophomore Ryan McMahon.

Not his natural position, McMahon has played third base for most of his pro career and has a decent number of reps at first, with second lagging a bit behind. But he has taken to the position well and sources inside the Rockies have continuously confirmed that they are thrilled with the way he has taken to the position defensively.

If he can learn enough of the nuance (footwork, etc) that his athleticism and size (6'4) can play up and maybe even turn him into a similar defender as the one who is departing. High praise indeed, but the tools are there.

Furthermore, McMahon represents a potential coup offensively if he can take to the position. While there are still some wrinkles to figure out in his offensive profile at the MLB level, he again has the raw power and bat speed to be a 20-30 home run guy at some point in his career. That kind of power can be tough to find in an up-the-middle spot.

His struggles early in 2018 may have some a bit more hesitant but his huge late-game moments further along in the year have most of the fanbase clamoring to see more of what McMahon can do.

He is the young (yet unproven) player on the roster most deserving of additional opportunities and unless there is an injury elsewhere, second base is the most logical spot to put him to make sure he gets those at-bats.

GARRETT HAMPSON

While he may not be able to finagle his way into the starting lineup, Garrett Hampson may end up being among the most important players on the 2019 roster.

As it stands, he makes the most sense as a first option off the bench for contact and speed and an insurance policy on... well... everyone.

His ability to play third, short, second, and center field make him an ace-up-the-sleeve for the Rockies to counter ill-timed injuries and slumps. Furthermore, he fits naturally as a platoon player should a young lefty (David Dahl, McMahon, Raimel Tapia) struggle against same-handed pitching.

Hampson represents a high floor option for the Rockies at second. At the very least, he will defend well and run the bases as well as anyone on the roster. Like with McMahon, we are still waiting to see what he can do with the bat at this level.

BRENDAN RODGERS

A couple of things ought to be remembered to temper some of the excitement and expectations surrounding the Rockies top prospect, Brendan Rodgers. First, he is still just 22 years old and, even though he rocketed through the farm system and up to Triple-A with impressive haste, he only has 19 games played at that level.

The prodigious hitter also looked slightly overmatched at the plate for the first time in his young pro career in that stint, batting .232 and slugging just .290.

Ok... are you done tempering expectations?

In my view, the only question with Rodgers is *when* he will show up to be an impact player and not *if*. It would be foolish to rush him, especially with the two players we've already discussed available. But before too long, probably around June or July, we will get a look at one of the most exciting players to debut since Trevor Story.

Much like Hampson did in 2018, Rodgers will be ready on Alert 5 should anything shake up the middle infield for the big league club. And I suspect he will be ready to answer the call.

The other nice thing about all three players we have detailed here is that they can also play third base in the potential scenario that a certain third baseman leaves the team in the future.

DANIEL MURPHY

Should there be a rash of injuries or flameouts or just general terrible luck, the Rockies can always look to veteran Daniel Murphy to take some time at second base. His defense won't get anyone excited but his bat has played so well over his career that sometimes it matters a lot less.

It's unlikely to ever be the first option, but don't be surprised if Murphy gets a handful of games at his old stomping ground, especially as a fill-in for any short-term needs.

But the acquisition of Murphy is more about replacing, and arguably improving upon, LeMahieu's offense which often served as a consistent rock for the rest of the lineup.

What is most interesting about the decision to let LeMahieu go is that it can be applauded or criticized for much of the same reasons.

Colorado has three guys that are making league minimum who can play the spot and might, just might, end up being even better than the player they are losing. That said, they are handing a spot that has long been a quagmire over to a series of largely unknown commodities.

This decision will end up being fully judged in hindsight. If the new era doesn't pan out, Colorado will be rightfully panned for allowing one of their best ever to walk away for a price they could almost certainly have afforded to pay.

Conversely, if just one of McMahon, Hampson, or Rodgers reaches their full potential, the Rockies have just made a shrewd business move that could help keep them competitive for years to come.

Rockies Re-Sign Sam Howard

Mark Polishuk | MLB Trade Rumors | Jan. 13, 2018

Also from Eddy, the **Rockies** re-signed left-hander [Sam Howard](#) to a minors deal, after originally non-tendering Howard at the start of December. Howard was a third-round pick for the Rockies in 2014, and he made his Major League debut last season, tossing four innings over four games with Colorado. MLB.com ranks Howard as the 24th-best prospect in the Rockies' farm system, describing him as a potential fourth starter in the big leagues "if he can improve his slider and command."

Colorado Rockies prospect rankings: No. 23, Robert Tyler

Tyler has a big arm, but injuries have held back his progress

Jeff Aberle | Purple Row | Jan. 15, 2018

23. Robert Tyler (261 points, 28 ballots)

Robert Tyler looks like a pitching prospect straight out of central casting. He possesses a rocket right arm that flirts with triple digits, stands 6'4", 226 pounds, and has the pedigree of a (supplemental) first round pick with a \$1.7 million signing bonus. Of course, Tyler could only be accurately cast for a baseball movie like *Major League* in which you really only need one hellish fastball to mow down big-leaguers left and right. Okay, that's not exactly fair: Tyler also boasts a 55 grade change-up to pair with his 75 grade fastball (which beyond heat also offers good movement).

Mid-season Rank: 22

High Ballot: 13

Mode Ballot: 13, 18, 26

Future Value: 40, MLB set-up man

Contract Status: 2016 Competitive Balance Round A, Not Rule 5 Eligible, three options remaining

MLB ETA: Late 2020

So why isn't Tyler higher on the PuRPs list? For one, he's been hurt so far as a professional, losing all of 2017 to shoulder fatigue. Before that, he was hurt throughout his college career as well. More importantly, the 23-year old has been given just a 40 grade on his command, well below average for a prospect of note. Those two items combined (durability and reliability) have led the Rockies to confine Tyler to a relief role, in which his stuff certainly plays up over shorter outings. In a full-time relief role in 2018 after a year away, Tyler showed markedly improved command (and therefore results) with Low A Asheville. In 38 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings over 34 appearances with Asheville, Tyler posted a 3.99 ERA (1.83 xFIP) and 8 saves with 52 strikeouts against just 7 walks — which is incredible considering he walked 16 men in just 7 innings in 2016. Those are excellent results indeed, and they came despite a short DL stint in May.

Unfortunately, the good numbers didn't follow Tyler to High A after a late July promotion. In 12 appearances with Lancaster, Tyler only provided five outings in which he was un-scored upon, allowing 11 runs (10 earned) on 17 hits and 5 walks, striking out 5 in 9 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings against age appropriate competition in the hitter friendly California League. Obviously that's a sour ending to what had up to that point been a sweet season for Tyler, but let's hope he gets it corrected for 2019.

Here's some tape on Tyler from June 2018 courtesy of 2080 Baseball:

MLB.com thinks enough right now of Tyler's arm to rank him 12th in the system:

Tyler could sit in the mid-90s with his fastball while working in the rotation and pitches at 96-99 mph coming out of the bullpen. Besides its overpowering velocity, his heater also features run, sink and downhill plane that make it tough to square up. His second-best pitch is a changeup with sink and fade that's a plus offering at times.

Tyler has struggled to come up with a reliable breaking ball and currently employs a knuckle-curve. Given his inconsistent track record of throwing strikes and staying healthy, he was destined to end up in the bullpen. If he can continue to find the strike zone as easily as he has in the first part of 2018, he could develop into a high-leverage reliever.

Eric Longenhagen of FanGraphs rated Tyler the 14th best prospect in the system back in May 2018, slapping Tyler with a 40 FV grade:

Tyler did not pitch in 2017 due to a shoulder injury but has been 93-96 this spring with his signature changeup. The reps needed to develop his breaking ball and command enough for him to start are gone, and he has moved into the bullpen. Tyler's long arm action and recent severe injury make him riskier than typical pitching prospects, but he has late-inning stuff if he can stay healthy.

The bottom line is that Tyler represents arguably the highest ceiling of Colorado's bevy of relief prospects, a shut-down late inning reliever, thanks to the explosiveness of the fastball/change combo. Then again, his floor is also low for such a high octane arm due to the durability and command concerns he still presents.

Tyler's lost 2017 put him behind the development curve, and he'll be Rule 5 eligible after the 2019 season. With an arm like Tyler's, he's nearly certain to be selected if left un-protected, so the Rockies will hope Tyler shows better in Lancaster (presumably) in 2019 than he did in 2018. If things go well, Tyler could be in the 2020 bullpen conversation. On my personal ballot, Tyler's ceiling and Asheville success slightly outweighed his Lancaster failure and flame-out risk, as I ranked him 15th (one of the highest in the electorate on Tyler) with a 40 Future Value grade.