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## MEDIA CLIPS – Jan. 23, 2019

### **Walker short in next-to-last year on HOF ballot**

*Former slugger receives 54.6 percent of vote; Helton gets 16.5 percent in first year of eligibility*

**Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 22, 2019**

DENVER -- Former Rockies star Larry Walker introduced himself under a different title during his conference call with Denver media on Tuesday: "Fifty-four-point-six here."

That's the percentage of voters who checked Walker in his ninth year of 10 on the Baseball Writers' Association of America Hall of Fame ballot. It's a dramatic jump from his previous high, 34.1 percent last year -- an increase of 88 votes. However, he's going to need an 87-vote leap to reach the requisite 75 percent next year, his final season of eligibility.

Jayson Stark of the Athletic noted during MLB Network's telecast that the only player to receive a jump of at least 80 votes in successive years was former Reds shortstop Barry Larkin, who was inducted in 2012. But when publicly revealed ballots had him approaching the mid-60s in percentage, Walker admitted feeling excitement he hadn't experienced in past years.

"I haven't tuned in most years because there's been no chance of it really happening," Walker said. "It was nice to see this year, to watch and to have some excitement involved with it.

"I was on Twitter and saw the percentages that were getting put out there for me. It made it more interesting. I'm thankful to be able to go as high as I was there before the final announcement."

When discussing the vote, one must consider who else is on the ballot. Two first-timers, Yankees closer Mariano Rivera (the first unanimous inductee in the Hall's history) and the late pitcher Roy Halladay, were roundly expected to make it in.

Many voters felt the desire to get Mariners longtime designated hitter Edgar Martinez in on his final try. Former Orioles and Yankees right-hander Mike Mussina, on his sixth year on the ballot, was another strong contender who had been waiting a while. Taken together, those candidates made this a difficult year for others to garner a large number of votes.

Next year, Yankees star shortstop Derek Jeter is a shoe-in, but after that, it could be argued that there are no must-vote candidates. That could help the odds for Walker, who expressed some disbelief that he has made it as far as he has in the first place.

"I grew up playing hockey," said Walker, a goalie of some renown from Maple Ridge, British Columbia. "Baseball was never on my radar until I was offered \$1,500 U.S., which was two grand [Canadian, from the Montreal Expos] at the time. I couldn't wait to sign that contract, and off I went, and really learned to play the game in the Minor Leagues.

"To be sitting here talking to you about my votes that I just got on my ninth year on the Hall of Fame ballot, it's kind of surreal."

Ahead of Walker among players who didn't make it this year is right-hander Curt Schilling (60.9 percent), who had a similar career to Mussina, but has had a controversy-ridden retirement. There were also two players whose candidacies are clouded by their suspected links to performance-enhancing drug use in the 1990s and early 2000s: right-hander Roger Clemens (59.9 percent) and slugging left fielder Barry Bonds (59.1).

Walker, who spent nearly 10 years of his 17-season career with the Rockies, has his own hurdle to overcome in his quest for the Hall, as he is the first test case of how Coors Field affects voters' view of a hitter. It's something former first baseman Todd Helton -- who spent his entire 17-year career with the Rockies, and is widely considered the most beloved player in the 26-season history of the franchise -- must contend with as well. Helton appeared 16.5 percent of the ballots this year, his first of eligibility.

Prejudice against the famous hitter-friendliness of Coors seems to have tamped down Walker's total, but a look at his stats suggests that's not entirely fair. During the years comprising Walker's career (1989-2005), his Baseball Reference **Wins Above Replacement** of 72.7 trailed only Bonds, Ken Griffey Jr., Alex Rodriguez and Jeff Bagwell; Griffey and Bagwell are in the Hall.

Walker's career **OPS+** (141) -- which adjusts for park factors -- and road OPS (.865) each check in at five points better than Griffey. Walker's road OPS during his full seasons with the Rockies (not counting 2004, when he was traded to the Cardinals in August) was .899. His offensive prowess was by no means limited to Colorado.

Walker said he understands elements of the pro/con arguments about his case, including the criticism that injuries while with the Rockies reduced his availability. But he also defended the way his Coors performance impacts his career numbers.

"There are ballparks that help every player in some way or another," Walker said. "I took advantage of Coors Field as good as I possibly could, and I'm glad I did it. If I couldn't take advantage of Coors Field, I probably wouldn't be talking. The Rockies would've released me."

## Rockies' rotation if season started today

MLB.com | Jan. 22, 2019

We're less than a month away from Spring Training, so it's a good time to project what each club's Opening Day rotation will look like, or at least what it would look like if the season started today. With the help of all 30 MLB.com beat writers, here's a roundup of how they might shake out.

### D-backs

The rotation, which was a team strength in 2018, will be without Corbin and **Clay Buchholz** in 2019, but the D-backs still have **Zack Greinke** and **Robbie Ray** and expect to get **Taijuan Walker** back from Tommy John surgery. To build some depth behind Greinke, Ray and **Zack Godley**, the D-backs acquired right-hander **Luke Weaver** from the Cardinals in the **Paul Goldschmidt** trade, and they signed righty **Merrill Kelly**, who spent the past four seasons pitching in Korea.

Arizona does have some depth at the top end of the **farm system** in **Matt Koch**, **Taylor Widener** and Jon Duplantier among others. -- *Steve Gilbert*

### Rotation if season started today

1. Zack Greinke, RHP
2. Robbie Ray, LHP
3. Zack Godley, RHP
4. Luke Weaver, RHP
5. Merrill Kelly, RHP

### Dodgers

To those worked up over whether the top two on this list should be reversed, what a fantastic dilemma that is. Not making the top-five cut for now are **Julio Urias** and **Ross Stripling**, another high-quality surplus. Even without Kluber, who has been tied to the Dodgers in trade rumors all winter, Los Angeles' starting rotation is the envy of most clubs. -- *Ken Gurnick*

### Rotation if season started today

1. **Clayton Kershaw**, LHP
2. **Walker Buehler**, RHP

3. **Hyun-Jin Ryu**, LHP
4. **Rich Hill**, LHP
5. **Kenta Maeda**, RHP

## **Giants**

**Madison Bumgarner** has been the subject of numerous trade rumors this offseason, but president of baseball operations Farhan Zaidi has said he isn't making any outgoing calls regarding the club's longtime ace, so he remains in line to be the Giants' Opening Day starter. The Giants will miss **Johnny Cueto**, who will be unavailable for most of the season while rehabbing from Tommy John surgery, but they added some durability to their rotation by re-signing **Derek Holland** last week. **Jeff Samardzija** is a bit of a question mark after struggling with a persistent right shoulder issue in 2018, though he is progressing well in his throwing program. Despite their impressive rookie campaigns, **Dereck Rodriguez** and **Andrew Suarez** aren't necessarily locks for the Opening Day rotation, as the Giants would prefer to ease pressure on their young arms by having them begin the year in the bullpen or in the Minors. -- *Chris Haft*

### **Rotation if season started today**

1. Madison Bumgarner, LHP
2. Derek Holland, LHP
3. Dereck Rodriguez, RHP
4. Andrew Suarez, LHP
5. Jeff Samardzija, RHP

## **Padres**

It seems likely the Padres add another arm to this mix before the start of Spring Training. Their rotation posted the highest ERA in the NL last year, and **Garrett Richards** has been the only addition. He might not even pitch this season. Still, it's clear San Diego wants to give its young arms a chance. **Logan Allen** and **Jacob Nix** will compete for places this spring, while **Joey Lucchesi** and **Eric Lauer** could headline the rotation. Meanwhile, keep an eye on left-hander **Matt Strahm**, who was outstanding in the 'pen last season in his return from knee surgery. The Padres have asked him to bulk up for a transition into a starting role. If his body holds up, he's got front-of-the-rotation stuff. -- *AJ Cassavell*

### **Rotation if season started today**

1. Joey Lucchesi, LHP

2. Eric Lauer, LHP
3. **Robbie Erlin**, LHP
4. **Bryan Mitchell**, RHP
5. Matt Strahm, LHP

### **Rockies**

Rare in the Rockies' history have they had such quality and depth. Lefty **Kyle Freeland** finished fourth in NL Cy Young Award balloting, righty **German Marquez** finished eighth in the NL in strikeouts, and hopes are high for lefty **Tyler Anderson** after he set career highs for innings pitched and strikeouts last season. **Jon Gray** is trying to rebound from a season that saw him optioned to the Minors and left off the postseason roster, and **Chad Bettis** hopes blister problems that marred his 2018 season are in the past. But the listed rotation is not chiseled in granite. Pushing hard for jobs are righties **Antonio Senzatela**, who started last year's NL Division Series opener; righty **Jeff Hoffman**, who suffered a shoulder injury last spring and never had a chance to challenge for a job; and righty prospect Peter Lambert, who climbed to Triple-A last season at age 21. -- *Thomas Harding*

### **Rotation if season started today**

1. Kyle Freeland, LHP
2. German Marquez, RHP
3. Tyler Anderson, LHP
4. Jon Gray, RHP
5. Chad Bettis, RHP

**Kiszla: The Hall of Fame life of Colorado pitcher Roy Halladay. Short, but as sweet as ice cream.**  
*Roy III will be the first player elected posthumously to the Hall by the writers since Roberto Clemente in 1973.*

**Mark Kiszla | Denver Post | Jan. 22, 2019**

As baseball lovers in Colorado, we will always remember the late, great Roy Halladay like this: A big right-hander for the Phillies, standing tall on the mound in 2010, as cool and hard as granite, as he mowed down Cincinnati batters with a nasty cutter to become only the second pitcher in major-league history to throw a no-hitter in the playoffs.

But on the wintry Tuesday that the greatest baseball player in our state's history was voted into the Hall of Fame, the first image that crossed the mind of a man who loved Halladay like a father was not from any of the 203 victories or two Cy Young awards earned in the big leagues. It was the sight of a towhead toddler smiling as brightly as the sun on a perfect Colorado summer afternoon, delighting in the discovery that life never gets sweeter than a kid's first lick of an ice cream cone.

"As a father, my thoughts of him run a lot deeper than being proud he was a major-league pitcher," Roy Halladay Jr. told me when Roy III — his namesake — got a reservation in Cooperstown alongside Babe Ruth, Bob Gibson and other legends larger than life. "What I remember is the kindness and the wisdom about him from a very young age. To tell you the truth, there were times I thought he'd be a better dad for me than I was for him."

We live in Broncos Country, where snow is known to fly sideways in spring. Larger-than-life legends of the diamond aren't supposed to be born here. But want to know how the improbable magic happened in the Denver 'burbs during the 1980s?

Big Roy, a flight instructor by trade, and little Roy, no more than 5 or 6 years old, ventured down to the basement in the Halladay family home. The kid liked swinging a bat. So his father built a small hitting cage, then grinned at the sound of baseballs smacking against a cinder-block wall with destructive force. Isn't wrecking the basement together about the coolest method of father-son bonding ever invented?

"To keep from ruining the balls, I put a mattress against the wall," the father recalled.

In the beginning, there was no master plan. It was pure fun. But before long, a tire was hung in front of the mattress propped against a basement wall. Voila! Little Roy had a strike zone to master. And by the time the little towhead grew into a teenager at Arvada West High School, nobody around here had ever seen any Colorado pitcher throw strikes the

way the son of a pilot could. He led the Wildcats to a prep state title in 1994 and was selected No. 17 overall in the 1995 draft.

"I enjoyed catching him all the way until he was in high school," said Roy Halladay Jr., the memory punctuated with a chuckle. "Then Bus Campbell (a local pitching guru who had tutored Hall of Famer Goose Gossage) told me: 'You better put down the catcher's mitt before you get killed.' So I lost my job."

On days like these, baseball poets liked to write sonnets about how a Colorado native was adopted as the favorite baseball son of Canada, because Halladay sent mighty Yankees trudging back to the dugout as the Toronto Blue Jays' ace, then became one of only six pitchers to win a Cy Young Award in both leagues after joining the Phillies.

All the poets, however, have been replaced by analytical wizards. So let's drop this statistic on you: From 2002-11, the 2.97 earned run average over 2,100 innings posted by Halladay was more dominant pitching than any of his peers except for Roger Clemens, who awaits admission to the Hall because of all those nasty steroids questions.

All the "SportsCenter" moments on the mound are curated in a video library of the Halladay family home. But after the son of a pilot died in light aircraft crash, with the retired 40-year-old pitcher at the controls, off the Florida coast a little more than 14 months ago, what a grieving father reached for were photos of Halladay celebrating birthdays as a child, snapshots of the happy day an athlete married Brandy and mementos of laughter shared with two sons of the pitcher's own.

Roy III will be the first player elected posthumously to the Hall by the writers since Roberto Clemente in 1973.

Shortly after 4 p.m. in the Rocky Mountain time zone, the land baseball forgot, a Colorado kid who grew into a major-league legend joined Mariano Rivera, Mike Mussina and Edgar Martinez in the distinguished class of 2019.

I asked Roy Jr. how he would celebrate.

"It will be low-key," said a father who misses his son every day. "I just want to reflect on how really thankful I am about the whole thing, the life we shared together and how many people in Colorado helped him get (to the Hall) out of the goodness of their hearts."



On the summer day when Halladay is enshrined in Cooperstown, here's hoping that in addition to all 203 of his major-league victories being celebrated, we all remember a little towhead enjoying every last bite of an ice-cream cone.

Life's short. Make it sweet.

## **Hall of Fame voting results: Larry Walker takes large leap, Todd Helton fares decently in first year**

*Most notably, Walker's tally underscores a marked shift in how BBWAA voters are perceiving the three-time batting champion.*

**Kyle Newman | Denver Post | Jan. 22, 2019**

Larry Walker took a large leap in his ninth year on the Hall of Fame ballot, while fellow Rockies great Todd Helton posted a decent showing Tuesday in his first year of eligibility.

Walker finished with 54.6 percent of the vote, shy of the 75 percent needed but a big increase from the 34.1 percent mark the right-fielder received last year. Helton, meanwhile, got 16.5 percent of the vote, putting the first baseman about four percent shy of how Walker debuted in 2011.

Most notably, Walker's vote totals underscore a marked shift in how BBWAA voters are perceiving the three-time batting champion and 1997 National League MVP. In 2015 — halfway through his candidacy — Walker's Hall prospects appeared bleak, as he only garnered 11.8 percent of the vote. Coors Field's hitter-friendly reputation and recurring injuries hurt Walker's chances.

But, after incremental gains from 2016-18, Walker's jump this year sets the stage for a realistic Cooperstown push in the 2020 voting, his final year of ballot eligibility. Over his 17-year career in Montreal, Colorado and St. Louis, Walker slashed .313/.400/.565 and hit 383 home runs.

He had a .334 average and 258 home runs in nine-plus seasons with the Rockies, and will need another huge jump in voting to get in. If he's elected next year, he'd be the sixth player to get inducted in his last year of eligibility, after Seattle's Edgar Martinez this year.

"Obviously the jump was very gratifying, rewarding," Walker said. "I was quite pleased with that. I don't know if it's enough to make that final leap next year. Probably not, in all honesty. But to see the way the needle moved this year was pretty incredible."

While some voters see Walker as a true five-tool player who stacks up among the best outfielders ever, to others his offensive numbers were unduly helped by playing at Coors Field and he lacked durability. All of which will make his final push next year all the more interesting, even if Walker himself insists he won't feel slighted if he doesn't get in.

"I'm completely honored to be on the ballot for 10 years and to see my (vote) percentage climb like it has, for me that's a big honor," Walker told *The Denver Post* recently. "I can take that and live with that."

Helton, too, will likely face the hurdle of the Coors Field bias throughout his candidacy, especially considering he played the entirety of his 17-year career with Colorado.

"I think with all of the analytics and the new numbers, those will start popping up and helping Todd as well," Walker said. "Todd was an amazing player, but unfortunately if I am falling into the Coors Field bias, then Todd falls into it more because he played his whole career there. It's something that might never go away."

The first baseman averaged .316 and belted 369 home runs for the Rockies, although the final four seasons of his career didn't do much to help his case as his numbers dropped significantly.

"I really don't think about it that much," Helton said in September. "Obviously, it's the pinnacle of being a baseball player, but in the end, it's out of my hands."

## **Denver Sports Omelette: Can someone explain the Rockies to the new guy, please?**

*Your morning dish of Denver sports news, cooked up daily*

**Matt Schubert | Denver Post | Jan. 22, 2019**

I'm new here. Can someone please explain to me just what the Colorado Rockies are doing?

Fresh off back-to-back trips to the postseason and consecutive years with more than 3 million in home attendance, the Rox let their all-star caliber second baseman walk, gave his money to someone on the wrong side of 33, and failed to back up the Brinks' truck for a guy who's finished in the top five of NL MVP voting three consecutive seasons. Oh, and they also let their best middle reliever sign elsewhere because the lights-out trio of Bryan Shaw, Jake McGee and Michael Dunn are about to make \$24 million combined in 2019.

Yikes.

It's not like the Rockies are cheapskates. They had the 13th-highest payroll in the majors last season, according to spotrac.com, and should be in that neighborhood again in 2019. This despite being the No. 23 valued MLB franchise by Forbes in 2018.

Unfortunately, when you throw big bags of cash at Ian Desmond, Wade Davis, and the aforementioned three musketeers, there are consequences. I just don't understand why one of those has to be breaking up one of the best infields in baseball.

Why not just bite the bullet and lock down Nolan Arenado, Trevor Story and DJ LeMahieu for the foreseeable future?

We already know they can be the backbone of a playoff-caliber team. What was the point of developing them if all you're going to do is let them walk once the big checks start rolling in?

Again, someone please explain, because I just don't get it.

## Colorado Rockies prospect rankings: No. 15, Justin Lawrence

*Lawrence is riding a big fastball to prospectdom*

Jeff Aberle | Purple Row | Jan. 22, 2019

### 15. Justin Lawrence (393 points, 27 ballots)

Like fellow PuRP Reid Humphreys, Justin Lawrence was a two-way player in college. Unlike Humphreys, Lawrence wasn't really successful at either "way" initially. A lack of game action gave the righty plenty of time to monkey with his motion, including a lowering of his arm slot that improved his fastball's velocity and life. This success was enough to get Lawrence noticed by the **Rockies** as a 12th round pick out of a Florida community college in 2015 and earn him a \$100k signing bonus.

**Mid-season Rank:** HM

**High Ballot:** 7

**Mode Ballot:** 12, 15, 16, 19

**Future Value:** 40, middle reliever

**Contract Status:** 2015 12th Round, 40 Man Roster, three options remaining

**MLB ETA:** 2020

Thomas Harding of **MLB.com** has **more on Lawrence's epiphany in a 2015 profile**.

Lawrence (who, fun fact, was born in the Panama Canal Zone) did not find immediate success as a pro. In fact, in his professional debut season Lawrence allowed 23 earned runs, 31 hits, and 16 walks in 24  $\frac{2}{3}$  frames between Grand Junction and Boise. For many prospects, that would mean a trip to extended spring training or even a release, but the quality of Lawrence's stuff was intriguing enough that the Rockies assigned him to Low A to start 2016. In Asheville, Lawrence again produced poor results (7.18 ERA, 5.7 K/9 rate in 36  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings) before getting sent down to Short Season A Boise.

Finally with Boise in a return engagement something clicked. The 6'3" hurler finished with a strong 28  $\frac{2}{3}$  inning stint in the Northwest League with a 2.20 ERA and strong 12.6 K/9 and 1.9 BB/9 rates. Given another chance at Asheville in 2017, Lawrence continued his strong form by posting an elite 16  $\frac{1}{3}$  inning stretch where he allowed 3 runs on 10 hits and 4

walks while striking out 20 — that's a 1.65 ERA, 0.86 WHIP, and 11.0 K/9 rate. Unfortunately, a torn lat muscle ended the season prematurely, but his dominance and stuff got him on the radar of national prospect watchers entering 2018.

Assigned to High A for 2018, Lawrence quickly showed that his 2017 small sample size dominance wasn't a fluke. Facing the daunting hitter's haven of Lancaster and the California League, Lawrence renewed his mastery over minor league hitters. In 54  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings, Lawrence compiled 62 strikeouts (10.3 K/9) and 11 saves en route to a 2.65 ERA, 1.16 WHIP, and .188 BAA. Yes, the walks were elevated at 4.5 BB/9 and his 3.61 FIP indicated some luck in Lawrence's results, but a 6.0 H/9 rate is phenomenal especially in that environment. Furthermore, Lawrence demonstrated the ability to pair strong strikeout stuff with extreme ground ball tendencies, as over 63% of his batted balls allowed were on the ground, the 3rd straight year he'd eclipsed that mark.

To put a cherry on top of Lawrence's 2018, while he wasn't given the mid-season promotion to Hartford that Humphreys earned, he was selected for the prestigious Arizona Fall League. There he served as a part-time closer for Salt River, allowing 4 runs on 10 hits and 6 walks while striking out 13 over 10  $\frac{2}{3}$  frames. It's a small sample against other top prospects, but I'll take the strong K rate even if the results overall weren't elite. It certainly was enough for the Rockies to protect Lawrence from the Rule 5 draft after the season with a 40 man roster slot despite his zero innings above A ball.

In the below video of Lawrence from the AFL, you can see why it might be very difficult to hit against him:

In their recently posted system overview, **Wilson Karaman of Baseball Prospectus ranked Lawrence 12th**:

Lawrence got beat in a couple high-profile prospect showcases and ran out of steam a bit by Arizona, but he was absolutely disgusting for most of the year. At his peak he threw a nice stretch of innings in the Antelope Valley summertime elements. He sits in the high-90s with a **darting, two-plane slider** a dozen mph slower, all out of a twisting, slingshotting delivery that creates a real tough pick-up for righties and a pretty difficult one for lefties too. It was unclear to the naked eye why he never graduated to Hartford last season, but if he brings that stuff with him when he does, he'll force his way into Colorado's bullpen development plan this season.

2080 Baseball's **John Eshleman spotlighted Lawrence** in May:

The obvious advantage of a side-arm pitcher is the funk; it's tough for hitters to pick up a low slot that they aren't used to. In addition to command challenges, the unique angle of a sidearm or submarine pitcher often brings on a corresponding

loss in velocity—but not in Justin Lawrence's case. He pitches from a true side-arm slot, pumping gas up to 98 mph that feels like it's coming straight at the ear of a right-handed hitter. Needless to say, it's an uncomfortable at-bat.

The fastball movement was downward, and in my two April looks, Lawrence beat lefties with the heater on the outer-third of the plate. He isn't pinpoint to spots within the zone, but his velocity, angle, and movement are enough to give him some breathing room in the command department. His fastball plays as plus, with 70 velocity, 60 movement, and 45 command. An 87-to-91 mph splitter dominates A-Ball hitters playing off his fastball, as he's able to release it through the same tunnel and generate separation and finish on the pitch down in the zone. Lawrence's splitter is more a chase pitch than one he lands for early-count strikes; how well he's able to incorporate secondary pitches such that better hitters can't just sit fastball is the biggest determinant to Lawrence reaching his ceiling.

**MLB.com** currently places Lawrence **16th in the organization**:

Healthy again this year, Lawrence is thriving again thanks to his fastball. Most pitchers don't throw harder after dropping their arm angle, but he went from a mid-80s heater when he used a more conventional three-quarters slot to working at 92-94 mph and reaching 97 while in junior college. Now he deals at 94-98 mph with premium sink that generates plenty of groundouts.

When Lawrence keeps his sinker down in the zone, hitters have a hard time putting the barrel on the ball. He also throws a short slider in the low 80s and will mix in a decent changeup to counteract left-handers. His control hasn't been as sharp in 2018 as it was a year ago, but if he can provide more strikes he could advance quickly.

The profile of Lawrence, as is the case with most relief prospects, is headlined by a plus fastball. In Lawrence's evaluation, the fastball receives a 65 grade but the slider (50), changeup (45) and control (45) grades leave the 24-year old looking a bit one dimensional. At least it's one heck of a dimension!

Lawrence should begin the year in Double-A and, thanks to his 40 man roster slot and ability to serve as a ROOGY at a Major League level right now, could be a factor for the big league bullpen as soon as this year. Of course, he'll have plenty of competition for those opportunities as the Rockies already have an over-stuffed pen without even considering any prospect arms. Even with the congestion though, Lawrence is too nasty not to consider an integral future building block for the Rockies, which is why I ranked him 19th on my personal PuRPs ballot with a 40 Future Value as a middle reliever with late inning potential.

## Baseball Hall of Fame: Community ballot selects 4, including Larry Walker

*Rockies fans. They know.*

Eric Garcia McKinley | Purple Row | Jan. 22, 2019

A few hours from now, we'll know who will be included in the 2019 Baseball Hall of Fame class. It looks like it will be either three or four players — **Mariano Rivera** for sure, **Roy Halladay** and Edgar Martínez likely, and **Mike Mussina** maybe. Last month, we published our annual community ballot. Like the official one, the Purple Row community gave four players the 75% minimum for election. They just weren't the same four. Here are the players selected on our community ballot:

Larry Walker (94.2%)

**Todd Helton** (86%)

Roy Halladay (83%)

Mariano Rivera (83%)

Not bad! This year, the election comes from 171 ballots cast. It's down from last year, but this year we required a Google sign in to reduce duplicate ballots and instill a little more voter accountability. That worked, even though there was still that one vote for **Darren Oliver**.

As far as Martínez, who should get in this year, he received 65.5% of the vote, which is far short. Mussina, who may get in this year but who is still well on his way if he doesn't, only received 49.5%. That sat behind Roger Clemens (53.8%) and Barry Bonds (53.2%).

Overall the vote turned out pretty well. We voted like partisans should while also giving the nod to two other deserving players. It was a huge improvement over the last time we did this, when Walker fell short with just 66.4% of the vote.

So, nice job, Purple Row. Let's hope the people with real ballots are listening



## Colorado Rockies: Larry Walker gets boost, falls short of Hall induction; Todd Helton falls far short

Noah Yingling | Rox Pile | Jan. 22, 2019

At 4 PM MT on Tuesday, the President of the Baseball Hall of Fame, Jeff Idelson, announced the 2019 inductees to the Hall. Inducted were former Yankees closer and the all-time saves leader Mariano Rivera, former Seattle Mariners designated hitter Edgar Martinez, former Blue Jays and Phillies starting pitcher Roy Halladay, and former Yankees and Orioles starting pitcher Mike Mussina. The two Colorado Rockies on the ballot fell short of induction.

**Larry Walker** and **Todd Helton** fell short of induction to the Baseball Hall of Fame on the 2019 ballot, a ballot which inducted four new members into the baseball Hall of Fame.

Earning induction were former Yankees closer and the all-time saves leader **Mariano Rivera** to become the first player in Baseball Hall of Fame history to be elected unanimously, former Seattle Mariners designated hitter **Edgar Martinez**, former Blue Jays and Phillies starting pitcher, the late **Roy Halladay**, and former Yankees and Orioles starting pitcher **Mike Mussina**.

For Walker, while he fell just short of induction, he received a massive gain this year from last year as he got 54.6 percent this year, which is a 20.5 percent jump from the 34.1 percent he got in 2018. That 34.1 percent mark was also a big jump as he jumped 12.2 percent from 21.9 percent in 2017.

He will look to gain that 20.5 percent again next year, which will be his tenth and final year on the ballot. If he gets a 20.5 percent jump again, he will get 75.1 percent of the vote, which will get him inducted.

According to the ballots announced publicly before the announcement via Ryan Thibodaux (@NotMrTibbs on Twitter), Walker had one of the highest gains in the "tracker era," which is since 2009.

Below are the biggest gains in the era, as of Monday night.

Net Gained Vote Leaderboard 2009-Present			
Rank	Year	Candidate	Net Gained Votes on Public Ballots
1	2018	<i>Vlad Guerrero</i>	+56
2	2016	Edgar Martinez	+51
3	2017	Edgar Martinez	+48
4	<b>2019</b>	Larry Walker	+46
T5	<b>2019</b>	Fred McGriff*	+45
T5	2018	Larry Walker	+40
T7	2016	Alan Trammell*	+39
T7	2016	Mike Mussina	+39
T9	2017	<i>Tim Raines*</i>	+37
T9	2018	Edgar Martinez	+37
11	2017	<i>Jeff Bagwell</i>	+33
12	2016	Jeff Bagwell	+32
T13	2018	Mike Mussina	+31
T13	2016	Tim Raines	+31
T13	2016	Curt Schilling	+31
T16	2017	Barry Bonds	+27
T16	2017	Roger Clemens	+27
T18	2017	Mike Mussina	+26
T18	2017	Trevor Hoffman	+26
20	<b>2019</b>	Edgar Martinez*	+25
*Final Chance on Ballot			
<i>Elected by BBWAA</i>			



Ryan Thibodaux | ✓ @NotMrTibbs

*If we're done with ballots for the day, let's have one more look at the Tracker Era Net Gained Vote Leaderboard. The Tracker Team welcomes Edgar to it for the fourth and final time.*

*Do I get to italicize his name tomorrow?*

**10:06 PM - Jan 21, 2019**

Out of the public ballots revealed on Tuesday, Walker gained two more ballots, his gain this year became the third largest gain in the tracker era.

For Todd Helton, he garnered 16.5 percent of the vote. However, this was only his first ballot so he be eligible on nine more ballots to earn induction to Cooperstown. Considering that Helton has never been tied to steroids, he has a good chance of receiving gains in the next few years to warrant induction.

## **Hope remains for former Rockies after not being elected to Hall of Fame**

**Luke Zahlmann | Mile High Sports | Jan. 22, 2019**

The National Baseball Hall of Fame will go another year without representing the 'Blake Street Bombers' as no Colorado Rockies were included with the 2019 inductions. Both Todd Helton and Larry Walker will have to wait another year to potentially be bestowed with baseball's highest honor and be forever enshrined in Cooperstown.

Per the league's announcement, this year class features pitchers Mariano Rivera, Roy Halladay and Mike Mussina, with designated hitter Edgar Martinez rounding out the quartet. Both Rivera and Halladay were both in their first years on the ballot, the former elected by the league's first unanimous vote.

Halladay, a former Arvada West High School standout, became just the second Coloradoan to be elected into the Hall with his induction coming posthumously after his 2017 death in a plane crash off the Gulf of Mexico.

The class was the third four-man class in the last five years and only the fifth instance in the history of Cooperstown.

With the nod for Martinez, much of the Rockies' faithful are wondering where Larry Walker stacks up heading into his final year after garnering 54.6 percent of votes this year.

The answer: It's complicated.

Last year, the aforementioned Martinez accrued 70.4 percent of the votes, a jump from his previous mark of 58.6 percent in 2017.

The two-year elevation of Martinez' stock, though encouraging, also brings to light the hurdles that Walker faces. With only a year remaining on the ballot, the former member of the Blake Street Bombers does not have a pair of years for escalation left.

Last year, Walker only accumulated the support of 34.1 percent of voters, seeing his prospects take a momentous leap this year. A portion of the support comes from the mindset of eliminating the Coors Field bias.

As Jayson Stark of the Athletic put it, "It may be true that Larry Walker missed a lot of games. But he was so massively mega-talented that a few years ago, our esteemed Athletic teammate, Joe Posnanski, broke down the all-time top 100 in

batting runs, baserunning runs and Defensive Runs Saved. Amazingly, only three players ranked in that top 100 in all three categories: Willie Mays, Barry Bonds and ... Larry Walker!"

In other words, Walker, though not a perfect candidate, is worthy of an election in the eyes of many, with his stats standing up against the game's legends despite the Coors adjustment.

His career slash line of .313/.400/.565 and seven Gold Gloves stand up well against his opponents.

His 72.7 career wins above replacement were also the 5th-highest mark on the ballot this year and are set to stand as the 4th-highest of 2020's possible class.

Walker will be the only candidate on the ballot next year in his final year, aiding his last-ditch efforts further.

Derek Jeter will likely join his former teammate Rivera with a first-ballot induction next year, a sign that only a couple spots will remain.

As far as Helton goes, his waiting game has merely just begun. In only his first year on the ballot, the former Rockies' cornerstone received 16.5 percent of the votes.

Among the four first-year members that garnered enough support to stay on the ballot, Helton's mark was third, falling short of both Halladay and Rivera but beating out Andy Pettitte (9.9).

When viewing the rest of the ballot, Helton was given more support than many and appears to be on track for a late-eligibility induction if he maintains his pace.

Among first basemen that currently reside in the Hall, Helton would rank fifth in on-base percentage (.414) and sixth in slugging (.539).

Stark also pointed out that without the impact of Coors, Helton's blend of slash line, hits and homers is only rivaled by five other first basemen in league history. The list includes Lou Gehrig and current sluggers Miguel Cabrera and Albert Pujols.

Solid company. The pair of former Rockies may not have made it, but their future in terms of Hall of Fame induction gained steam once again.

## Larry Walker will wait for baseball's Hall of Fame call, but his heart might not

Nick Groke | The Athletic | Jan. 22, 2019

Until Tuesday evening, Larry Walker might have answered to “Canadian Mooselips,” but after the MVP outfielder and five-time All-Star suddenly shot into the neighborhood of genuine consideration for baseball’s Hall of Fame, he introduced himself with a new nickname.

“Hi, it’s ‘54.6 percent’ here,” Walker said by phone after the Hall announced the results of voting for a new class of inductees. That class includes relief pitcher Mariano Rivera, who became the first unanimous selection with all 425 votes cast; former Arvada West High star pitcher and Denver native Roy Halladay; designated hitter Edgar Martínez; and pitcher Mike Mussina.

Walker received the eighth-most votes in this round of voting, 232 in total, or 54.6 percent of the ballots cast. He was 19 votes shy of Barry Bonds and 21 short of Roger Clemens and only Curt Schilling received more votes without reaching the 75 percent threshold for induction. Todd Helton, on his first ballot this year, received 16.5 percent of the vote.

And for the first time, on his ninth try at induction, Walker found himself in range of Cooperstown.

“It’s kind of surreal,” he said. “It was never in my mind as a kid growing up. It was only playing in the Stanley Cup Finals, not talking about a Hall of Fame ballot. Believe when I say it, as long as I can say it, this is all great for me.”

Walker’s jump into contention, though, was a significant story in itself. In 2014, in his fourth try, Walker received just 58 votes, barely crossing the minimum 10 percent needed to remain on the ballot. Just five years later, he received nearly 58 percent of the vote.

And less than a year from now, when ballots are sent to voters, they will be asked to judge Walker’s candidacy for the final time. If he does not see enough votes in 2020, he will be removed from the ballot. He is already tempering his own expectations.

“The jump was very gratifying and rewarding. I was quite pleased,” Walker said. “But I don’t know if it’s enough to make that final leap next year. Probably not, in all honesty. But to see the needle move was pretty incredible.”

Mussina five years ago saw just 20.3 percent of the vote and jumped more than 55 percent since then. Walker in that same time frame increased his share of the vote nearly the same amount. Walker jumped more than 30 percent in the past two years alone.

And in roundabout way, Mussina's induction could pave the way for Walker. With four players now off the ballot, and only Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter joining the ballot next year for the first time, the cast is open for a more expansive debate of Walker's candidacy.

For example, *The Athletic's* Jayson Stark, a Hall of Fame voter who cast a ballot that included Walker, on Tuesday wrote that "given Walker's almost unprecedented momentum — and that next year is his final go-round on the ballot — he's an excellent bet" for induction.

"I saw on TV where it would take another monumental jump, provided nobody drops me from their votes," Walker said. "I don't know if that's feasible or not."

The swing is on his side, both in momentum and at bat. Voters have noticed, perhaps, that Walker's 72.7 career WAR, according to FanGraphs, ranks 11th all-time among right fielders and is the highest among any right fielder not already in the Hall. And his career .865 road OPS was five points higher than Ken Griffey Jr.'s.

"Just a gifted, all-around everything," former Cardinals manager Tony La Russa once said.

And an advancement in the discussion of park factors and a more accurate accounting of their benefits and perils might be helping Walker get past the Coors Field effect, his version of the burden of steroids that affects other players, as he once put it.

"I don't think it will ever go away," Walker said. "But there are ballparks everywhere that benefit a player. I took advantage of Coors Field as much as I could. And I'm not sad about it."

Walker once dreamed of immortality, but his childhood reveries never included Cooperstown. He only wished to play in the Stanley Cup Final, the product of a Canadian upbringing in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, playing goaltender at neighborhood ponds.

He turned to baseball only after the Montreal Expos offered him a \$1,500 deal. "Which was two grand Canadian," Walker said. "And I couldn't wait to sign that contract and off I went. And I really learned to play the game in the minor leagues."

And now Walker will wait, for the final time, for possible induction among baseball's greats. In the meantime, he will avoid fretting too much, trying to steer away from biting his nails and worrying himself into distress.

“I don’t put myself too deep into it,” he said. “I don’t assume anything is going to happen. Anybody who knows me knows I’m pretty levelheaded. I don’t get too up or too down. I don’t set myself up for heartache if something doesn’t happen. But to see the numbers, I’m thankful.

“My heart rate is going up and down,” he said. “And part of me doesn’t want to make it, because doing that speech in Cooperstown, oh, my Lord, I’d probably have a heart attack.”

## Report: Rockies not serious about trading Nolan Arenado

Steve DelVecchio | Larry Brown Sports | Jan. 23, 2019

Nolan Arenado has one year of team control remaining with the Colorado Rockies before he heads for a massive contract in free agency, and there has been some talk that the team could trade him before then. If that does happen, it is unlikely it will be this winter.

Andy Martino of SNY.tv reported last week that the New York Yankees have internally discussed the possibility of trading for Arenado at some point between now and during the upcoming season. One source told Martino that the Yankees have likely already spoken with the Rockies about a potential deal.

However, Matthew Cerrone of SNY's MetsBlog.com has heard that the Rockies are not serious about trading Arenado and are merely trying to get a feel for what his value will be when he becomes a free agent.

**Matthew Cerrone**@matthewcerrone

*#RivalSource: #Rockies aren't serious about trading Nolan Arenado. They're mostly feeling out offers to set a value set for long-term contract talks, while also laying ground work for a possible summer trade.*

*Sorry, #Yankees. Colorado thinks they can win the NL West in 2019.*

6:52 AM - Jan 23, 2019

Arenado will turn 28 in April, so he is still very much in his prime. The four-time All-Star has averaged 39.5 home runs, 126 RBI and an OPS of .931 over the past four seasons. One line of thinking is that some teams who are passing on Manny Machado might prefer to sign Arenado next offseason, and that could be why the Yankees are seemingly not showing much urgency to sign Machado.

If the Rockies decide they can't keep Arenado and won't be able to afford to re-sign him, a trade with the Yankees makes sense. New York has an up-and-coming third baseman that would be a much cheaper option, and there is a belief that they are looking to trade him.



