



MEDIA CLIPS – April 7, 2018

Blackmon deal could spark trend for future FAs

Mark Feinsand / MLB.com | Apr. 6th, 2018

Charlie Blackmon's contract extension with the Rockies secured his place in Colorado for at least the next four seasons, leaving him in control of his own future through 2023.

So while next winter's free-agent market is down one premier player, a larger question presents itself: Was Blackmon's extension an anomaly or the beginning of a new trend?

Following a winter that saw the free-agent market move as slowly as any in recent history, it has been widely assumed that next offseason's collection of available players will spark bidding wars across baseball.

Among those slated to become free agents are **Bryce Harper**, **Manny Machado**, **Josh Donaldson** and **Dallas Keuchel**. That's just the cream of a very impressive crop, and we haven't even mentioned **Clayton Kershaw**, who can opt out of the final two years of his deal with the Dodgers to join the free-agent frenzy.

Blackmon's deal, which guarantees him \$108 million through 2023 and could be worth up to \$116 million, was generally viewed as a good one given his age (he'll turn 32 in July), the Coors Field factor, and the pair of player options that allow him to become a free agent again after '21 or '22 if he so chooses.

Blackmon's numbers in Colorado dwarf his stats away from home, and by signing an extension, the outfielder won't have to worry about looking for a new contract with Draft-pick compensation attached to him. Had he gone to free agency, Blackmon almost certainly would have been extended a **qualifying offer** by the Rockies, which may have muddled his appeal to other teams. This past offseason we saw a few players with qualifying offers attached to them have a hard time finding suitors, notably **Mike Moustakas** and **Lance Lynn**, both of whom ended up signing one-year deals.

"It was a solid deal for Blackmon," one American League general manager said. "I would guess a lot of players would strongly consider [an extension] if it's presented."

One agent who liked the deal believes similar extensions will become a fixture in the game.

"After the past few markets, there's no question this is going to become a trend," the agent said. "You will see clubs look to sign players very young."

Another agent wasn't as keen on Blackmon's deal, noting that he would have been the No. 2 outfielder on next year's market behind Harper, who is expected to land a deal worth far more than the one Blackmon signed.

"There was no reason for him to do that deal right now," the second agent said. "He should have waited for Harper to get done and he would have benefited from that deal. A lot more teams would have been on Blackmon than Harper because of the price tags."

Blackmon's agents, Seth and Sam Levinson, have a history of getting their clients nine-figure extensions, so Blackmon's deal fell in line with that pattern.

David Wright signed a six-year, \$55 million extension with the Mets after just two years in the Majors, then inked another extension worth \$138 million over eight years in December 2012 as he approached the final year of that contract.

Earlier in 2012, **Brandon Phillips** signed a six-year, \$72.5 million extension with the Reds only months before he was slated to become a free agent.

In December 2008, **Dustin Pedroia** signed a six-year, \$40.5 million extension with the Red Sox after winning the AL MVP Award during his second full season in the Majors. He then signed a second extension for eight years and \$110 million in July 2013, though he still had another full year plus a club option remaining on the first deal.

Neither Pedroia nor Wright had played their age-30 seasons when they signed their big extensions, though Phillips was 31 when he was extended.

Since the end of the 2014 season, only two other players have signed extensions worth \$100 million or more before being eligible for free agency: **Kyle Seager's** seven-year, \$100 million pact with the Mariners in December 2014 and **Jose Altuve's** five-year, \$151 million deal, which he signed this spring, two full seasons before he could have become a free agent. In both cases, the team locked up a player in his late 20s.

There have been 35 players in history to sign extensions worth \$100 million or more, but Blackmon is the oldest ever to do so. He's only the second to do so at age 31 or older, joining **CC Sabathia**, who agreed to a five-year, \$122 million extension with the Yankees after the 2011 season at the age of 31. **Ryan Howard** signed his five-year, \$125 million extension with the Phillies in '10 at the age of 30, though the deal didn't kick in until his age-32 season.

So while we've seen teams get more aggressive when it comes to buying out arbitration years (and in some cases, free-agent years, as well), the Blackmon deal is another type altogether. Could soon-to-be free agents in their early 30s be

more willing to sign extensions rather than test a market that saw only one player age 31 or older land a nine-figure deal in each of the past two offseasons (**Yoenis Cespedes**' four-year, \$110 million contract in 2016-17 and **Yu Darvish**'s five-year, \$126 million pact this past winter)?

"It's way too early for anyone to read too much into this past offseason or a couple extensions," one National League general manager cautioned.

CarGo rakes in Coors opener, but Rockies fall

Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Apr. 6th, 2018

DENVER -- Carlos Gonzalez appreciated the intrepid fans who stuck through Coors Field home opener ceremonies and for a game with an announced 27-degree temperature at first pitch. He didn't blame them for leaving when the 8-3 loss to the Braves slipped out of reach, but he was able to thank his faithful before they left.

Gonzalez missiled a first-inning RBI triple and his first home run of the season, which led off the fourth inning. The triple into the right-center gap and the homer -- estimated at 445 feet -- were measured by Statcast™ at 113.7 mph.

For a guy who didn't expect to be back -- Gonzalez took a one-year, \$8 million offer during Spring Training when the bidding he expected didn't materialize -- it was his way of saying hello, again, to fans he appreciates.

"I don't blame 'em," Gonzalez said when asked about the fact that not every ticketholder occupied a seat early and few stuck around when the Rox fell behind. "We have such great fans. They hang in there. They waited until first pitch. The house was packed. If I was a fan, I promise I would stay for the first pitch only under this circumstance.

"What was it, 24 degrees? Anything below 30 is stupid."

Of the hard-hit balls, Gonzalez said he'd love to reach 120 mph, but given the trap of overswinging, said: "I don't want to try. I've got to be easy. When I try to crush the ball, it goes soft. When I try to make easy contact, it takes off."

Gonzalez's homer, followed three batters later by Trevor Story's first homer of the season, reduced the Rockies' deficit to 4-3 against Braves starter Brandon McCarthy (2-0) -- who settled in from there and held Colorado to three runs and five hits in six innings. But ultimately, the Rockies couldn't keep pace because of the struggles of their starter, righty German Marquez (0-1).

Bravely pitching without long sleeves beneath his Purple Pinstripes -- "I don't like to use them," he said -- Marquez gave up four runs in a first inning that featured Ozzie Albies' second homer of the season, three walks and a Dansby Swanson two-run triple. Marquez held the Braves scoreless for three innings before his day ended two outs into the fifth.

Swanson, who finished a homer shy of a cycle, doubled on a hanging 0-2 breaking ball for one run in the fifth, and McCarthy had his first career extra-base hit and just his seventh knock overall in 121 at-bats, a two-run double. Marquez yielded seven runs on seven hits and six walks (two intentional) in 4 2/3 innings.

"I didn't really think [the cold] affected me that much -- I pitched in those conditions in the Minor Leagues and it's just one of those things, bad outings," said Marquez, who held the D-backs to one unearned run in five innings in his first 2018 start. "We've got to overcome those obstacles that come with the game of baseball."

Pressed further, Marquez acknowledged, "It was a little tough. I didn't have my grip at all."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

No lifeline for you! Things really got cold for Marquez after he followed Albies' one-out homer by issuing two walks. Marquez needed a little luck. Instead, Kurt Suzuki's popup landed just in front of sliding center fielder Charlie Blackmon to load the bases. Swanson's triple followed two batters later.

Hitting in the mountain air: It was a nice pitching performance for McCarthy, but the two-run double was a rare event. Maybe it had something to do with being home. McCarthy graduated from Cheyenne Mountain High School in Colorado Springs and was drafted (White Sox, 17th round, 2002) out of Lamar (Colo.) Community College.

QUOTABLE

"Ender [Inciarte, the Braves' center fielder] was like, 'What is this?' I'm like, 'I told you, like, two months ago to be ready for this.'" -- Gonzalez, speaking to Inciarte, his longtime friend and offseason workout partner, about the cold at Coors Field

"That sounds great. I mean, anything's better than 24." -- Rockies third baseman Nolan Arenado, who is playing through left knee soreness, on a forecast that suggested Saturday's temperature could be around 60 degrees

HOFFMAN HEADED IN RIGHT DIRECTION

Righty Jeff Hoffman threw a two-inning simulated game with one walk in Scottsdale, Ariz., on Friday and feels in good shape for joining Class A Advanced Lancaster on an injury rehab assignment for shoulder soreness that reared just after Spring Training games began.

"I don't remember a time when my shoulder felt quite this free," said Hoffman, who went 6-5 with a 5.89 ERA in 23 games (16 starts) last season and hopes to push into the rotation when healthy. "It's nice to feel, and I'm glad we caught it when we did."

Hoffman was considered the key piece of the trade with the Blue Jays that sent away star shortstop Troy Tulowitzki.

WHAT'S NEXT

Rockies: The idea of righty Chad Bettis (1-0, 3.60 ERA) starting for the Rockies against the Braves at Coors Field on Saturday at 6:10 p.m. MT sparks fond memories. After missing much of last season battling testicular cancer, Bettis held the Braves scoreless on six hits, with two strikeouts, on Aug. 14.

Arenado's sore left knee 'nothing to worry about'

Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Apr. 6th, 2018

DENVER -- Rockies star third baseman Nolan Arenado's slight limp began when he felt pain in his left knee during a pregame stretch during the Opening Series in Arizona, and it became more noticeable during the four-game series at San Diego. But two factors lead him to believe it won't cost him action:

- He has been cleared medically: "I've already seen doctors," Arenado said. "It's just a little soreness. It's going to go away here soon. It's nothing to worry about."
- During Friday's 8-3 loss to the Braves in Colorado's home opener at Coors Field, Arenado went 2-for-4 with a rare stolen base -- he swiped second base ahead of Carlos Gonzalez's triple in the first inning for only his 12th career steal -- and he finished the game on a day when the official game-time temperature was 27.

"If I could play through today, I can play through anything," quipped Arenado, who before the game received his fifth straight Gold Glove Award, plus a Platinum Glove Award, a Defensive Player of the Year Award and a Louisville Silver Slugger Award.

Through eight games, Arenado is hitting .276 with a home run, five RBIs, three doubles and an .854 OPS. He also has made several signature defensive plays.

"Just pushing off sometimes, and if anything just stopping sometimes I feel it, but other than that I'm good and I'll be good again," he said.

Blackmon stops to smell the roses at opener

Fans get chance to congratulate center fielder on new contract

Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Apr. 6th, 2018

DENVER -- Rockies center fielder Charlie Blackmon embraces preparation and loves consistency. Pomp and circumstance don't really fit a pregame routine. But Blackmon vowed to try to enjoy basking in the applause and shivering in the cold on Friday.

The Rockies' home opener vs. the Braves -- an 8-3 loss that was delayed after snow flurries and extreme cold hit the Denver area just before midday -- was a time for ceremony, especially considering 2018 marks the Rockies' 25th anniversary season. Part of the pregame festivities involved handing out awards. Third baseman Nolan Arenado received Gold Glove and Platinum Glove Awards, a Defensive Player of the Year Award and the National League Silver Slugger Award for third base. Second baseman DJ LeMahieu took home a Gold Glove Award and a Defensive Player of the Year Award.

But for Blackmon, who received the Tony Gwynn Award and a Louisville Silver Bat Award as the 2017 NL batting champion, as well as an NL Silver Slugger Award for outfielders, there was even more reason for fans to show love. The Rockies were on the road when the low-key announcement came of Blackmon's six-year contract, which guarantees \$108 million and with incentives could reach \$116 million.

So Friday was a chance for fans not only to celebrate past accomplishments, but thank him for committing to a future in Purple Pinstripes. Blackmon smiled good-naturedly. Hey, he can put aside his meticulous preparation for that.

"It's a big deal in Denver," Blackmon said. "It's like a holiday. I enjoy being a part of it. I'll just try not to take things for granted. Try to sit back and enjoy the moment.

"Mostly, I just want to play a game. But I do need to take a moment and appreciate where I'm at, and how great the city is."

Indeed, the Coors Field faithful settling into their seats during the weather delay gave Blackmon a rousing ovation when he jogged out to center field for his stretching routine.

The awards were only part of a pregame ceremony that is familiar, yet special. As has become tradition, there was a military march with service members from the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard and a Color Guard with music from U.S. Air Force Stellar Brass. Stellar Brass also backed Airman First Class Danielle Diaz in the singing of the national anthem.

Top takeaways from first week in NL West

Steve Gilbert / MLB.com | April 6, 2018

The late Kevin Towers spent all 18 years of his career as a general manager in the National League West and he was fond of calling it "The Wild West" for its unpredictable nature.

The Dodgers have dominated in recent years, but last season the division was wild in another way, with both the D-backs and Rockies grabbing the league's Wild Card spots.

This year, NL West teams wasted no time in getting down to business with season-opening matchups between the Dodgers and Giants and the D-backs and Rockies. The Padres opened against the Brewers, but followed that with a four-game set with the Rockies.

An added wrinkle to all the early matchups is the fact that the Dodgers (Justin Turner), D-backs (Steven Souza Jr. and Jake Lamb) and the Giants (Madison Bumgarner and Jeff Samardzija) are all missing key pieces.

How it will play out remains to be seen, but since it's the NL West, it figures to be wild.

D-backs

What we know now: Even with J.D. Martinez now playing for Boston, outfielder Souza on the disabled list and Paul Goldschmidt off to a slow start, the D-backs' lineup is still a force to be reckoned with and scoring runs does not seem to be an issue. The players' familiarity with each other, which has been built over the past few years, allows them to share information on opposing pitchers easily during games. Scouts raved all spring about Zack Godley's curveball and he seems as if he's ready to build off last year. Concerns about Zack Greinke's velocity during the spring have been put at ease by the way he was able to command his pitches in his first start. It appears the back end of the bullpen, with closer Brad Boxberger and setup man Archie Bradley, is going to be a strength.

What we still don't know: While Souza seems on track to be back quicker than the club expected, it remains to be seen how long third baseman Lamb's sprained left AC joint will keep him out of the lineup and how much his absence will hurt. Robbie Ray was dominant last year in leading the NL in strikeouts per nine (12.11), but his uneven spring was followed by struggles with his command in his first start, which is a little concerning given his importance to the staff. The D-backs opened at home, where they played extremely well last year (52-29), but have yet to be tested on the road.

The bottom line: Outside of the Lamb injury, it would be hard for the first week to have gone any better for the D-backs. They won five of six against the Rockies and Dodgers, and last season a 6-1 opening homestand against the Giants and

Indians seemed to give them some confidence and momentum. Now they'll find out if they can carry it over on a nine-game trip to St. Louis, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Rockies

What we know now: A high-scoring lineup led by leadoff man Charlie Blackmon is even better with a healthy Ian Desmond in it. The Rockies invested heavily in the bullpen during the offseason, and though their early relief was a little shaky in the Opening Series, if they can get a lead to Adam Ottavino, Jake McGee, Bryan Shaw and closer Wade Davis, the Rockies will be tough to beat. Ottavino has flashed some dominance at times this year, while Davis looks as if whatever hiccups he might have had in the second half of last season have not carried over to 2018.

What we still don't know: Opening Day starter Jon Gray struggled in his first start against the D-backs and lasted just four innings. Next time out, he dominated the Padres over seven shutout innings. Meanwhile, No. 2 starter Tyler Anderson also struggled in his first start before bouncing back in his second. Can the pair find consistency and be able to pitch like top-end-of-the-rotation pitchers? Shortstop Trevor Story struck out 191 times last year and worked to improve on that. Early returns were mixed as he punched out seven times in the first two games, but just once in the four after that.

The bottom line: Especially at Coors Field, the Rockies will be fine offensively, and the bullpen should be able to hold the leads they are given. The biggest key will be the starting rotation going deep enough into games to not overtax the bullpen. Recovery is difficult on the body at the high Denver altitude so they'll have to be careful with the relievers' workloads.

Dodgers

What we know now: The offense looks a lot less potent without injured third baseman Turner in the No. 3 hole. Logan Forsythe has committed four errors while filling in for Turner and No. 2 hitter Corey Seager has yet to get going without Turner behind him. Yasiel Puig was hitting .179 while batting third over the first seven games and the Dodgers were shut out three times in their first seven games. Last year, it took 55 games for that to happen.

What we still don't know: What's going on with closer Kenley Jansen? The right-hander took a loss and blew a save in his first two outings after a half-speed Spring Training designed to preserve his arm after a grueling 2017. He says he's healthy, but his velocity has been down. The Astros were able to exploit Cody Bellinger's long swing in last year's World Series and he'll need to make an adjustment this year.

The bottom line: Maybe it's a World Series hangover, maybe it's the result of a very quiet offseason, but this isn't the way the Dodgers scripted Opening Week. Their starting rotation, however, has been solid, with the first four -- Clayton Kershaw, Alex Wood, Kenta Maeda and Rich Hill -- allowing no more than one run in any of their starts. That will have to continue until the offense starts clicking.

Padres

What we know now: The Padres are willing to give their youngsters playing time. No. 9 prospect Joey Lucchesi was the callup when Dinelson Lamet hit the DL with an elbow injury. Christian Villanueva, who hit three home runs in a game, is receiving playing time at third base over Chase Headley. Manuel Margot has been the leadoff man. Expect the club to continue to emphasize youth as the season goes on, particularly in its callup decisions. Even when they come up on the short end of things the Padres find ways to make it difficult on other teams -- a trait they get from their manager, Andy Green.

What we still don't know: There are some very important health questions lingering over two key members of the future. Lamet is out until at least May with a flexor strain in his elbow. The Padres remain optimistic, but they haven't yet disclosed the results of his MRI. Meanwhile, Wil Myers has been placed on the DL with nerve irritation in his right arm. The injury appears less serious than Lamet's, but it's troublesome nonetheless.

The bottom line: The Padres have been building one of baseball's best farm systems over the past few years and they entered the season with one of the Majors' youngest rosters. They are going to embrace that youth. There are significant questions surrounding their rotation, but don't expect them to go outside looking for answers. San Diego is content to build from within this season.

Giants

What we know now: If any group ends up carrying the team, it'll be the bullpen. Hunter Strickland, who may have wrested the closer's role permanently from injured Mark Melancon, is All-Star quality. Setup relievers Tony Watson and Cory Gearrin have been effective, Sam Dyson appears to be regaining his stuff and Josh Osich is the most improved Giant in quite some time.

What we still don't know: Can the offense establish some consistency? The Giants have scored or exceeded four runs, which they consider to be their threshold for success, only twice in their first six games. Newcomers Austin Jackson, Andrew McCutchen and Evan Longoria haven't hit much. However, Joe Panik and Brandon Belt, who constitute the top of the order against right-handed starters, could be headed for career years.

The bottom line: The Giants will be happy to continue hovering around .500 while Bumgarner, Samardzija and lefty reliever Will Smith recover from their respective injuries. Samardzija could return from his strained right pectoral muscle by late April, while Bumgarner is likely to miss another two months with his fractured left hand.

Roundup: O'Neill powers Memphis to win

Cardinals' No. 4 prospect hits his first two homers of season

Mike Rosenbaum / MLB.com | Apr. 6th, 2018

No offense has been hotter than Triple-A Memphis' to begin the 2018 season. Led by Tyler O'Neill and Max Schrock on Friday, the Red Birds used a 12-run seventh inning to defeat Round Rock, 17-4, giving the club 25 runs through its first two games.

O'Neill, MLB Pipeline's No. 94 overall prospect (Cardinals' No. 4), showcased his tremendous power as he hit a pair of two-run home runs and later added a double to finish 3-for-6 with five RBIs and three runs scored. The big performance came one day after O'Neill went 0-for-5 with two strikeouts in Memphis' season opener.

Acquired from the Mariners for left-hander Marco Gonzales last July, O'Neill, 22, hammered 12 home runs in just 37 games after joining the Red Birds. He finished the season with 31 Triple-A home runs between the two organizations, one shy of the career-best total he posted in 2015 with Class A Advanced Bakersfield.

Schrock, meanwhile, paced the Red Birds' offense as he collected four hits, all singles, in six at-bats. The Cardinals' No. 10 prospect also scored three runs, one of three Memphis players to do so in the game.

The Cardinals netted Schrock, a career .325/.373/.442 hitter in 283 games spanning four professional seasons, and Yairo Munoz in the December trade that sent Stephen Piscotty to Oakland.

The rest of the best performances from top prospects Friday

- After going hitless in his Double-A debut Thursday, No. 13 overall prospect Bo Bichette (Blue Jays' No. 2) opened Friday's contest against Hartford with hits in his first two at-bats. He finished the game 2-for-5, also tallying a run and a stolen base for a second straight night, as New Hampshire edged the Yard Goats, 4-3, in 11 innings.
- No. 14 overall prospect Brendan Rodgers (Rockies' No. 1) hit a solo home run, his first of the season, and a double before finishing 3-for-5 with two RBIs. Outfielder Sam Hilliard (Rockies' No. 12) also had a big game, going 2-for-4 with his first 2018 homer, a fourth-inning solo shot, two walks and three stolen bases. To add further context to Hilliard's performance, only nine times in MLB history has a player posted at least two hits, one homer, two walks and three steals in a game. In 2017, Hilliard slugged 21 homers with 37 steals over 133 games in the Class A Advanced California League.
- No. 16 overall prospect Kyle Tucker (Astros' No. 2) connected on his first Triple-A home run as Fresno fell to Reno, 8-4. The Grizzlies' three-hole hitter on Friday, the 21-year-old outfielder launched a two-run homer in the sixth inning to finish

2-for-4 for a second straight game. Tucker's hot start comes on the heels of a strong big league camp in which he batted .409 with five home runs and 21 RBIs in 20 games.

- No. 22 overall prospect Willy Adames (Rays' No. 2) and Jake Bauers (No. 64 overall, Rays' No. 5) paced Triple-A Durham's offense on Friday, as they each tallied multiple hits, including a double, an RBI and at least one run scored. Bauers' double was already his third this season, while Adames was one of three Durham hitters to score two runs in its 11-1 win over Charlotte. Leading the Bulls on the mound was offseason trade acquisition Anthony Banda (Rays' No. 16), who scattered four hits while striking out eight in five scoreless innings to record the win.
- No. 31 overall prospect Mike Soroka (Braves' No. 3) pitched brilliantly in his Triple-A Gwinnett debut, yielding just three hits and one walk while striking out five in five scoreless innings. It was a continuation of what's been an impressive career to date for the 20-year-old right-hander, who now boasts a 2.87 ERA, 1.11 WHIP and 292-to-72 strikeout-to-walk ratio in 335 2/3 career innings after Friday's performance.
- No. 59 overall prospect Alex Faedo (Tigers' No. 3) retired the final 13 batters he faced en route to completing five innings of two-run ball in his professional debut for Class A Advanced Lakeland. Detroit's first-round Draft pick in 2017 (No. 18 overall), Faedo struck out four and allowed just two hits, a pair of first-inning solo home runs, while throwing 52 of his 73 pitches for strikes in a no-decision against Tampa.
- No. 86 overall prospect Adonis Medina (Phillies' No. 4) fired on all cylinders in his Class A Advanced Clearwater debut, tossing 5 1/3 scoreless innings with five strikeouts and six ground-ball outs to lead the Threshers in a shutout of Dunedin. The 21-year-old right-hander scattered five hits and walked one in the outing, throwing 55 of his 85 pitches for strikes.
- Braves No. 29 prospect Jasseel De La Cruz struck out eight on just 59 pitches (37 strikes) over five hitless innings as Class A Rome carried a combined no-hit bid into the eighth inning in its 3-1 win over Hagerstown. Making his full-season debut, the 20-year-old righty issued one walk and faced two batters over the minimum in the performance.
- Marlins No. 14 prospect Zac Gallen worked six scoreless innings in his organizational debut with Triple-A New Orleans. Throwing 58 of his 83 pitches for strikes, Gallen, acquired from the Cardinals in the offseason Marcell Ozuna trade, breezed through a dangerous Nashville offense, allowing just four hits and striking out four. The 22-year-old right-hander broke out in his first full season, posting a 2.93 ERA with 121 strikeouts and 35 walks in 147 2/3 innings across three levels in the Cardinals' system.
- A trio of Pirates prospects put on a pitching clinic, as Nick Kingham (Pirates' No. 13 prospect), Travis MacGregor (No. 25) and Dario Agrazal (No. 30) combined for 24 strikeouts while allowing one earned run over 16 1/3 innings. MacGregor, 20, set a career high with 12 strikeouts for Class A West Virginia while Kingham, starting Triple-A Indianapolis' season opener, matched his personal best with 10. Agrazal, meanwhile, tossed six hitless frames in his debut for Double-A Altoona.

- Padres No. 15 prospect Tirso Ornelas, the second-youngest Midwest League regular on Opening Day, hit a two-run homer, and fellow 18-year-old Gabriel Arias (No. 11) went 2-for-2 with a double as Class A Fort Wayne scored six runs in the first two innings before snow led to a suspended game after three frames.
- A pair of 19-year-old hitters powered Class A Lexington to its second win in as many days, as Royals No. 2 prospect Nick Pratto and Seuly Matias (No. 3) combined for five hits and three runs. Fresh off of a two-homer performance on Opening Day, Matias connected on a three-run shot in the fifth inning Friday that proved the difference in the Legends' 5-2 victory over Charleston. Pratto, the Royals' first-round pick last June, finished 3-for-5 with two runs scored out of the three-hole for Lexington.

German Marquez ripped by Braves as Rockies drop homer opener at frigid Coors Field

Colorado starters have a 5.29 ERA in the early going

Patrick Saunders / TheDenverPost.com | April 6, 2018

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night ... matters much if you don't get decent starting pitching.

The Rockies were reminded of that, again, in an 8-3, home-opening loss to Atlanta on a frigid Friday afternoon at Coors Field.

The first-pitch temperature, coming after an hour-long weather delay, was 27 degrees, making it the coldest home opener in franchise history. It was the second-coldest day, ever, for the Rockies at Coors, topped only by the 23-degree first pitch on April 23, 2013.

Right-hander German Marquez, a native of Venezuela, bravely took the mound in shirt sleeves, and promptly gave up four runs in the first inning. Included in the Braves' onslaught was a one-out, solo home run by Ozzie Albies, a two-run triple by Dansby Swanson and three walks by Marquez (one intentional).

"A starting pitcher has to locate the fastball, and German will learn this," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "There is a school of hard knocks going on with some of our young pitchers. They will learn. There are some growing pains going on for a 23-year old, and he'll learn them. They are painful at times, but he'll learn them."

Marquez settled in a bit after the first before he got roughed up again in Atlanta's three-run fifth. The killer blows this time were an RBI double by Swanson and a two-run double by Braves starter Brandon McCarthy, the product of Colorado Springs' Cheyenne Mountain High School, who rapped the first extra-base hit of his 13-year career. Marquez intentionally walked Ryan Flaherty to get to McCarthy, who lit into a fat fastball.

"Of course that one stings a little bit more," Marquez said. "As a pitcher, you try to get him out, but he's still an enemy and he's trying to hurt you. You have to make pitches."

Swanson, the first overall pick in the draft in 2015, finished a home run short of the cycle, tying a career high with three hits and three RBIs.

Colorado's offense warmed up early, but then went cold against Atlanta's bullpen. Carlos Gonzalez drove in Nolan Arenado with a triple in the first. Gonzalez led off the fourth with a 445-foot homer to right, and Trevor Story blasted a 442-foot homer to left two batters later, but that was the extent of the Rockies' offense.

The Rockies have high hopes that Marquez will develop into a front-of-the-rotation pitcher, but he's clearly not there yet. Giving up seven runs on seven hits with six walks (two intentional), and needing 93 pitches to get through 4 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings is testament to that. The seven runs allowed were the most by a Rockies pitcher in a home opener since Kevin Ritz allowed nine runs on April 8, 1996 vs. the Cubs. Marquez's six walks were a career high and the most ever issued in a Colorado home opener.

Marquez said the cold weather didn't affect him much, adding that he'd pitched in poor conditions during his minor-league days. He did say that the baseball was a little harder to grip because of the freezing temperatures.

But that wasn't the main problem. Poor location with his fastball and curve were.

"The back-breaker was the fifth inning," Black said. "We had come back to get it down to 4-3, and German got two outs, but then he walked (Preston) Tucker — not recommended. And then that hanging breaking ball on an 0-2 (pitch) to (Swanson) made it 5-3. German would like to have that pitch back, I'm sure. That was the pitch that was most critical that inning."

Colorado, 4-4, has received three terrible starts in its first eight games; one each by Jon Gray and Tyler Anderson to open the season last week at Arizona, and Friday's dud by Marquez. Gray gave up three runs in the first inning, Anderson five and Marquez four.

It's early, but a 5.29 ERA for the Colorado starters is ominous.

"Our guys have to realize that fastball command is imperative," Black said. "Some of those pitches today were up over the plate ... they were supposed to be down."

McCarthy, meanwhile, gave the Braves a workmanlike six innings, giving up three runs on five hits.

If the home-opener of a baseball season is all about hope, the Rockies are no-hopers

Mark Kiszla / TheDenverPost.com | April 6, 2018

On a spring day not fit for man, beast or World Series dreams, the Rockies got snow spit in their eyes and trounced 8-3 by Atlanta.

It reminded me of something my mom used to say: If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

So I won't mention that Colorado's young starting pitchers are less reliable than a 1971 Ford Pinto, or that the 27-degree reading on the thermometer when Rockies starter German Marquez threw the first pitch made the weather more suitable for a polar-bear plunge than baseball.

"What was it, 24 degrees? Anything below 30 is stupid. You can't feel anything," Rockies outfielder Carlos Gonzalez said.

Yeah, everything about Friday stunk at Coors field.

But they don't call me Mr. Sunshine for nothing. So I doubled down on trying to keep it positive, and told CarGo to look on the bright side. This is the coldest home game Colorado is likely to play until the middle of October, when the team is deep in the National League playoffs. The Rockies were just practicing for the ardors of postseason weather.

"Yeah, we're getting used to it," said Gonzalez, chuckling.

But they won't get to the postseason this way, with the young starting pitchers on the Colorado staff currently burdened with a 5.29 earned run average, despite having played only one of eight games this season in the thin air of Denver.

"There's a school of hard knocks going on with some of our young pitchers," said Rockies manager Bud Black.

And that's about as pointed criticism as you'll ever hear Black utter in public about any of his players, because like my mother, he works at keeping it positive.

The 48,216 spectators that bought tickets to Coors Field at least had a good excuse for playing hooky from work or school.

Snow day.

Shortly after noon, a snow plow began scraping the last angry vestiges of winter from the outfield grass. Let's be honest. This game should have never been played. But all the tickets were sold and Atlanta only makes one visit a year to Coors Field, so the show went on.

As Trevor Story bounded up the Colorado dugout steps after a 61-minute weather delay, he was so bundled up it looked as if his mother had dressed him for sledding instead of playing shortstop. And as hardy fans stood to sing the national anthem, the chills down their spines served as a reminder that this ballpark is truly the home of the brave.

Marquez, a native of Venezuela, took the mound with his right arm exposed to the cold. Then he promptly got torched by the Braves, who scored four runs in the top of the first inning.

The Rockies cut their deficit to 4-3 in the fourth, on the strength of home runs by Gonzalez and Story. But that's about all the positive there was to say about the details of this discouraging loss. So, out of respect for my mother, I will leave it at that.

For the past 25 years, baseball in Colorado has been all about sitting in the sun. Well, this weather and this loss were not for lightweights. By the time Pat Valaika struck out on a foul tip to end the bottom of the ninth inning, only a handful of diehards remained in the stands.

If the home-opener of a season is all about hope, then the Rockies are no-hoppers.

"I think when we get to September, we will forget about this day," Gonzalez said, "and it will feel like two years ago."

Let's hope so.

Carlos Gonzalez returned to Coors Field for a chilly reception and he loved it. Everything is back in place for the Rockies' slugger.

CarGo is earning back more than the loyalty of his teammates

Nick Groke / TheDenverPost.com | April 6, 2018

One month ago, Carlos Gonzalez stood inside a batting shell at a public park north of Miami belting rockets to the palm trees over the outfield fence. The bleachers were empty but the wind was warm and even with the Rockies well into spring training two time zones away, Gonzalez was about to blow back to the team he never really left.

On Friday, one of the best players to ever don purple pinstripes returned to Coors Field with a chilly reception.

"What was it, 24 degrees?" Gonzalez asked after Atlanta ruined the Rockies' home-opener with an 8-3 victory. "Anything below 30 is stupid. You can't feel anything."

But Gonzalez was feeling it. The sweet-swinging slugger with the fourth-most home runs in club history added to his total. His full-count blast off Brandon McCarthy to lead off the fourth inning sprinted out of the yard, going 445 feet to the right field seats in a hurry. After Trevor Story added another solo shot three at-bats later, the Rockies had trimmed a deficit to 4-3.

"That homer was a missile," Colorado manager Bud Black said.

It seemed, for good reason and many weeks, that Gonzalez might never play again in Denver. His seven-year, \$80 million contract ended after the Rockies' loss to Arizona in a wild-card playoff game in October and after one of his worst professional seasons. He hit just 14 homers, his fewest since 2009, and a slim .231 batting average and .528 OPS.

The Rockies — especially his teammates — could not stand the idea of Gonzalez's departure. "Everyone here misses him, really badly," all-star Nolan Arenado said in late February.

Less than two weeks later, Gonzalez was back with the team after he signed a one-year, \$8 million deal.

The player known in the home clubhouse as CarGo is earning back more than the loyalty of his teammates. On Friday, he tripled to center field in the first inning off McCarthy to score Arenado, his first triple since May 24, 2016. And his two hits both left Gonzalez's bat at more than 113 mph. That is Giancarlo Stanton or Aaron Judge territory. Gonzalez, even at 32, is one of baseball's hardest-hitting sluggers.

"Both were rockets," Black said.

Gonzalez said he has returned to an approach at the plate that saved his 2017 season in September, when he suddenly caught fire and hit .377 with six home runs. His goal now is to try less and maximize more.

“The good thing is, I’m not trying to crush the ball,” he said. “I’m not trying to hit a home run. I’m trying to put a good swing to the ball. And when I simplify it, good things happen.”

For his home run against McCarthy, Gonzalez worked a 3-1 count and suddenly saw beach balls. He was in a leveraged count and he knew McCarthy needed to throw a strike.

In a season-opening series at Arizona, Gonzalez hit a ball 117 mph. He was not keeping track of the velocity, but his teammates can tell. They yelled it at him in wonder when he returned to the dugout.

When he returned to Colorado on Friday for the second-coldest game in Coors Field history, Gonzalez fit right back in at the house of home runs.

“I never crossed the line and said I would never go back there,” Gonzalez said. “I knew there was a good chance I would go back to the Rockies. I’m glad I’m still here.”

Braves journeyman pitcher Brandon McCarthy, a Cheyenne Mountain grad, flashes vintage form as Atlanta beats the Rockies

In his second start of 2018, the 6-foot-8 righty yielded three runs on five hits in a historically cold home opener at Coors Field

Kyle Newman / TheDenverPost.com | April 6, 2018

Brandon McCarthy has traveled major league baseball's long-and-dusty road.

The 6-foot-8 journeyman right-hander, traded to Atlanta in the offseason, is now with his seventh team in a career that's featured many ups and plenty of injury-related downs, including a line drive to the head in 2012, Tommy John surgery in 2015 and a weightlifting injury that limited his time with the Dodgers last year.

But on a freezing Friday afternoon at Coors Field, McCarthy improved to 2-0 while flashing the vintage form that made him a star at Cheyenne Mountain long before professional success earned him a four-year, \$48 million contract with Los Angeles in 2014.

"Today felt like high school baseball — I don't mind pitching in cold, because I guess I got used to it growing up," McCarthy said. "It's been a while since I've played in it, but I think it kind of sticks with you. It's much easier for the pitcher than it is for the hitter, so I just kept that in mind when I got loose."

The 34-year-old yielded three runs on five hits in Atlanta's 8-3 win, a second consecutive start indicating the healthy McCarthy might be in the midst of a revival for a franchise which brought him aboard with the hopes he could eat up innings for a youth-infused rotation.

"He got going, and he got better as he went," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "His stuff was sharper — his breaking ball was really good — and that was huge for us."

Carlos Gonzales and Trevor Story hit home runs off McCarthy in the fourth, but besides those dingers, he worked low in the strike zone to induce nine ground ball outs. He was also consistently ahead in the count, throwing a first pitch strike to 19 of 24 batters faced.

"Some of those mistakes are a part of Coors — every sinker I threw cut, every cutter I threw sank, so (catcher Kurt Suzuki) changed gears really quickly and we fell back into patterns we had years ago (in Oakland)," McCarthy said. "I started to throw it where he called it, we got some early outs and we just kept grinding through."

And on top of earning the win, McCarthy also recorded his first career extra-base hit, a two-run double in the fifth that made it 7-3 Braves and sent much of the home crowd heading for the exits.

"I kind of punted the first two at-bats, because I didn't swing before the game and I wasn't ready to hit in (freezing) weather against a guy throwing 95," McCarthy said. "But that last at-bat, I was starting to get frustrated, so I was glad I was able to do something there."

Looking ahead

Braves RHP Anibal Sanchez (0-0, 0.00 ERA) vs. Rockies RHP Chad Bettis (1-0, 3.60), 6:10 p.m. Saturday, ATTRM

Bettis started 2018 strong Monday in San Diego, allowing two runs on five hits through five innings en route to earning the win. The 26-year-old who returned to the Rockies' rotation in August last year following recovery from testicular cancer looks to continue his early-season rhythm against a team he's 2-0 against in three starts at Coors Field. Meanwhile, the veteran Sanchez is making his first start of 2018. He threw three scoreless innings of relief April 2 against the Nationals.

Sunday: Braves RHP Julio Teheran (0-0, 10.13) vs. Rockies Kyle Freeland (0-1, 6.75), 1 p.m., ATTRM

Monday: Padres LHP Clayton Richard (0-1, 4.50) vs. Rockies RHP Jon Gray (1-1, 2.45), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Tuesday: San Diego LHP Joey Lucchesi (0-0, 2.79) vs. Rockies LHP Tyler Anderson (0-0, 7.56), 6:40 PM, ATTRM

Hope springs eternal at Coors Field, despite Rockies loss under bitter cold and snow

The Rockies lost to the Braves 8-3. But no one really seemed to mind.

Jesse Paul / TheDenverPost.com | April 6, 2018

They say hope springs eternal when it comes to baseball.

But on Friday at Coors Field, under bitter cold and, at times, wet, heavy snow, Mother Nature didn't seem to get the part about it being spring.

Fans, though, played their role in remaining hopeful, even as the Rockies lost 8-3 after getting off to a rough start.

"It's our time," Thornton resident Arthur Ramirez said on his way to his seventh — and chilliest — Rockies opening day. He was wearing three layers. And gloves. And ear muffs. "We're going to make a run."

A sea of bundled-up Rockies fans jump-started Lower Downtown in the annual tradition of ringing in the team's home opener, though in weather more appropriate for the ski hill than a baseball field — and after an hour-long snow delay. The chilly, gray day didn't keep people from enjoying the reawakening of the ball field in the heart of the city, even as crowds were far lighter, and more heavily dressed, than in years past.

When the first pitch was finally tossed by Rockies starter German Marquez, bravely wearing short sleeves, at 3:11 p.m., it was 27 degrees — the second coldest start to a game in Coors Field history, and the coldest for a home opener.

"Today's a little chilly," said Aurora resident Josh Pugh, sporting a massive, colorful mohawk haircut that took his wife 11 hours to create. "It doesn't matter. Still got to come."

Josh Pugh of Aurora wins my fan of the day award. He says his wife created this hair style over 11 hours. I asked him how he slept last night. "I rested," he said.

He said he just wishes people would stop coming up and trying to touch it.

People lined up a dozen deep at Coors Field's home-plate entrance at least two hours before the gates opened, pushing to get inside, where hot cocoa and coffee were in high demand, and blankets and sweatshirts were selling fast at the team store. The concourses were filled with fans outfitted in hooded parkas, ski masks, deerskin gloves and beanies, all of them thawing out under the familiar and sweet stadium smells of hot dogs and cheese steaks.

Some even had goggles on to shield their eyes.

Sam Kelley, of Broomfield, and a co-worker were among a smattering of fans who braved the cold to be the first to their seats about two hours before the 2:10 p.m. scheduled first pitch in the matchup against the Atlanta Braves. From their spot just a few rows from first base, the pair snapped photos of the Rockies grounds crew scraping ice and snow off a tarp covering the infield.

“We’ve talked about coming to opening day for years,” Kelley, from beneath a scarf, said of his first Rockies home opener. “I’m never going to be this close again.”

A grinning Kelley, who was wearing four layers to try to keep warm, said he’s retiring soon, so this was one of his last chances to join his colleague for an opening-day outing — something they’ve been talking about doing for years.

These two are basically the only ones in their seats. On the right is Sam Kelley of Broomfield, with a coworker. It’s his first opening day. He’s wearing four layers.

“Just a little chiller than Arizona!” she joked, a reference to her time watching the Rockies at spring training.

Hughes’ friend Chris Fredericks, of Thornton, said the weather wasn’t going to faze anyone at the ballpark.

“Everybody is happy,” she said. “It doesn’t matter what the weather is.”

As for her team?

“We’re gonna go,” she said. “You could see a real chemical aura (at spring training).”

The area around Coors Field — decked out in purple for the occasion — was bustling by noon as a light snow fell, the annual celebration amplified by the fact that it’s the Rockies’ 25th anniversary. Mayor Michael Hancock even proclaimed the day “Colorado Rockies Purple Friday.”

It seemed no one really minded that the Rockies weren’t winning, cheering as loud as ever when outfielder Carlos Gonzales and shortstop Trevor Story each hit home runs in the fourth inning. The crowd was a sellout — at 48,216 — although by the looks of the seats, far fewer actually committed to watching the whole game.

Linda Goodman, of Englewood, and her husband, Reid, were all in — donning down jackets, snow pants and even hand warmers under their gloves. The two have been season-ticket holders since the Rockies inception and have been to six opening days, and said it didn’t matter how cold it was, what the skies unleashed or even whether their team won (although they had hoped the Rockies would have).

"It's a time to be with my wife," Reid Goodman said. "It's just time together."

Braves topple Rockies in coldest home opener at Coors Field

Aniello Piro / MileHighSports.com | April 6, 2018

It was 27 degrees with light snow falling from the sky when starting pitcher German Marquez took the mound for the Colorado Rockies in their home opener against the Atlanta Braves. The frigid afternoon was the coldest home opener in Rockies history and the second-coldest game recorded at Coors Field in its history.

The chilly temperatures made for a wintry ballgame which started with the Braves piling on four runs off of Marquez in the first inning to neutralize the warm welcome the Rockies received prior to first pitch.

Down 4-0 early, the Rockies managed to get a run back in the bottom of the inning when Carlos Gonzalez smacked a triple to the fence to score Nolan Arenado and put the Rockies on the scoreboard early.

From there, Marquez managed to settle into a bit of a groove on the mound as he logged three consecutive scoreless innings, two of which came in 1-2-3 fashion. After the short stalemate, the Rockies managed to dig into the Braves' lead again in the fourth inning as Gonzalez and shortstop Trevor Story each blasted their first home runs of the season to cut the deficit to 4-3.

The Braves followed up with some scoring of their own as they tacked on three runs in the fifth inning. After recording the first two outs in the Marquez allowed Dansby Swanson to tag him for a run on an RBI double. From there, the Rockies intentionally walked Ryan Flaherty in order to pitch to Braves starting pitcher, Brandon McCarthy, who drove in two runs with a double of his own to extend Atlanta's lead to 7-3 and knock Marquez out of the game.

Marquez finished with an underwhelming stat line of 4 2/3 innings pitched, surrendering seven hits, seven earned runs, six walks, and two strikeouts in his home debut.

The Braves added an additional run in the top half of the sixth inning, and Colorado failed to respond after Nolan Arenado led the bottom half of the inning off with a single to right field. McCarthy managed to strike out three consecutive Rockies to preserve the Braves' 8-3 lead and end his outing on a strong note. McCarthy finished with six innings pitched, allowing five hits and three earned runs while punching out four batters.

Colorado failed to muster up anything on offense following McCarthy's departure and the Braves' bullpen managed to seal the deal on the 8-3 victory over the Rockies.

NEXT UP: The Rockies and Braves will play the second game of their three-game set tomorrow at Coors Field. Chad Bettis will square off against Anibal Sanchez, with first pitch set for 6:10 MST.

Charlie Blackmon's age, contract length doesn't concern Bud Black

Aniello Piro / MileHighSports.com | April 6, 2018

The Colorado Rockies and All-Star outfielder Charlie Blackmon agreed to a new contract Wednesday to keep the 31-year-old dynamic leadoff in the Mile High City for the foreseeable future. A free agent-to-be entering the 2018 season, Blackmon signed a contract that could total \$116 million with options and incentives and keep him in a Rockies uniform through the 2023 season.

Blackmon has been a staple for the Rockies since 2013, serving as their leadoff hitter and developing himself into one of the most versatile all-around hitters in the sport. Blackmon is also a key part of the Rockies' core of position players, including fellow All-Stars DJ LeMahieu and Nolan Arenado, who helped push Colorado back to the postseason last year.

Given his production over the last few seasons, locking up Blackmon long-term was a no-brainer from the Rockies' perspective. However, signing a 31-year-old who is coming off a career year has been risky business in baseball. Teams have shifted away from signing All-Star players over the age of 30 to long-term contracts, which has affected the way the free agent market has played out in recent time. So, instead of testing the waters as a free agent, Blackmon opted to re-up with the only professional team he has ever known.

The Rockies will pay Blackmon an average of \$18-million per season, which is a sizeable chunk of their payroll moving forward. With the new deal, the Rockies financial outlook for the future gets a little hazy, especially with LeMahieu set to hit the free agent market following this season and Arenado after 2019. Re-signing Blackmon at 31 was a smart move considering what he's done for the franchise over the past few seasons, but there was some risk involved in signing a player approaching his mid-30s and with the future finances of the team still in limbo.

Still, the Rockies are confident Blackmon will remain productive despite receiving a big payday while at the tail end of his "prime" years.

“From my view, Charlie will be productive,” Manager Bud Black said ahead of the team’s home opener Friday. “I think Charlie has a ton of pride in his play and I think that’s going to hold up over the length of his contract.”

One reason there is a lot of optimism surrounding Blackmon and his ability to live up to the longevity of the contract is due to how he has taken care of himself over the course of his career. Battered by injuries in the early part of his career, Blackmon did not become a staple for the Rockies until the 2013 season when he was 26. Coming up in the Rockies’ farm system, Blackmon tinkered with and adjusted his approach to the game both on and off the field throughout his journey to “the show.” He became creature of habit, a workout machine in top physical form, which in turn has helped make him one of the most consistent players in the sport.

“I think with Charlie, the guys who have been around the club a lot realize the work ethic Charlie has,” Black said. “How he takes care of himself, mentally and physically.”

The inconsistency he experienced throughout the early stages of his career caused Blackmon to make continuous adjustments to his game, which are still ongoing today. He is constantly learning about the game and himself, which has helped him become a player that still has room to blossom even with all he has accomplished already.

In his eight seasons with the Rockies, Blackmon has a batting average of .305 with 490 runs and 361 RBIs. Last season he won the National League batting title with a season batting average of .331. In addition, Blackmon looks to be in midseason form already for the Rockies in 2018 as he has a .345 batting average to pair with four home runs and six RBI.

“I think by the time he reaches his mid 30s, he’s still going to be a productive player,” Black said. “He has gotten better as a major-league player, and you don’t see that a lot. Guys get to the big leagues are good players and sort of stay at a certain level, but Charlie has incrementally grown in performance, which is great to see.”

FYI: Rockies Getting Even with the Braves

Tracy Ringolsby / InsideTheSeams.com | April 6, 2018

The Rockies had their struggles against the Braves in the early years. They went 2-21 against the Braves in their first two years of existence -- 0-13 in 1993 and 2-9 in 1994. Those Braves teams were in the midst of 14 consecutive first-place finishes, a professional sports record.

Lately, however, the tables have turned. The Rockies have won 16 of 21 games since the start of the 2015 season against the Braves, the third-best record among MLB teams against one opponent in that stretch. What's more they have held the Braves to 65 runs in the 21 games, allowing three or fewer runs in 15 of the games.

The Braves lead Major League Baseball with 48 runs scored, their most in the first six games of a season since the 1800s.

Cheyenne Mountain High alum Brandon McCarthy is starting for the Braves in the Rockies home opener. He won his Braves debut last weekend. The Braves are the seventh team for which he has won a game, which is second among active players behind Bartolo Colon. Colon has won a game for 10 different teams.

Rockies starting pitcher German Marquez has responded to challenges. Hitters are hitting 50 points lower against him with runners on base, the biggest differential in the National League this season.

The Rockies are 15-10 all-time in home openers. The .600 winning percentage is second best among NL teams to the Mets, and among the six best in MLB.

Hot-hitting Braves roll over Rockies 8-3 on frigid Friday

Associated Press / ESPN.com | April 6, 2018

DENVER -- While his teammates shivered and the mercury plummeted, Brandon McCarthy embraced Colorado's wintry weather.

"Yeah, it felt like high school baseball. I don't mind pitching in cold. I got used to it growing up," McCarthy said. "It's been a while since I've been back in it. It's much easier for the pitcher than the hitter, so keep that in mind and get loose."

McCarthy tossed six solid innings and delivered a two-run double that chased German Marquez in the fifth inning of the Atlanta Braves' 8-3 win over the Colorado Rockies on a frigid Friday that marked the second-coldest game in Coors Field history.

"The cold, it's not something I'm scared of, it's something I almost get excited for," said McCarthy, who attended Cheyenne Mountain High School an hour south of Denver in Colorado Springs. "In the cold, it's just something I know it sucks for hitters. And once I get loose it really isn't that big of a deal for pitchers."

It was 27 degrees when the Rockies' home opener began after an hour-long delay caused by sleet and snow. That was just 4 degrees warmer than when these teams met in Denver on April 23, 2013, in the coldest first-pitch temperature in major league history.

The Braves won that one, 4-3.

McCarthy (2-0) allowed three runs and five hits, more than enough for the hot-hitting Braves, who lead the majors with a whopping 8-run average so far.

"Everybody's doing their part," McCarthy said. "Pinch-hitters are coming in doing it, pitchers have been hitting, the offense has been consistent."

No so the Rockies.

Marquez (0-1) following up a spectacular first start at Arizona by giving up seven runs, seven hits and six walks in just 4 2/3 innings.

"It was a little tough because I didn't have my grip at all," said Marquez, a 23-year-old Venezuelan who, unlike McCarthy, took the mound without long sleeves and never got a good feel for his pitches because of the finger-numbing cold.

Marquez allowed a solo homer to Ozzie Albies in the first and walked two batters before Preston Tucker's sacrifice fly and Dansby Swanson's two-run triple made it 4-0.

"It was my first time seeing snow. I was excited," said Albies, who's from Curacao. "I was acting like a little kid out there. I put the barrel on the ball. That was awesome."

His mound opponent was used to it.

"Maybe growing up in Colorado and playing baseball in this weather all through high school helped? Holy RBI double!! Amazing," tweeted McCarthy's wife, Amanda.

Colorado got a run back in the bottom half when Carlos Gonzalez lined a run-scoring triple to right-center. Gonzalez added a solo homer in the fourth, a 445-foot shot into the right field bleachers, and two batters later Trevor Story also went deep for the first time this season with a 442-footer.

McCarthy, the first Braves pitcher to last six innings so far, followed Swanson's two-out RBI triple in the fifth with a two-run double that made it 7-3 and chased Marquez.

"Any player with a bat in his hand can be dangerous," Rockies manager Bud Black said.

"Of course, that one stings a little bit more," Marquez said. "As a pitcher, you try to get him out. But you know he's still an enemy and he's trying to hurt you, so you've just got to make pitches."

He left his fastball out over the plate and McCarthy drove it into the right-field alley.

"I didn't swing before the game, I wasn't ready to hit in 10 degree weather off a guy throwing 95," said McCarthy, who struck out his first two times up. "That last at-bat I started to get frustrated so I'm glad I was able to do something there."

Peter Moylan, Jose Ramirez and Shane Carle combined to throw three scoreless innings for Atlanta.

SO CLOSE

Swanson, who singled in the third, came close to hitting for the cycle -- he drove a pitch to the track in right field in the seventh. In the ninth, he lined out to shallow right.

HOT HITTERS

The Braves have scored an MLB-most 56 runs through seven games, breaking the franchise mark of 53 set by the 2006 team and the 1900 Boston Beaneaters.

"If I knew why or how, we'd have done it last year," Braves manager Brian Snitker said. "It's just one of those things. Everybody is contributing. We've got a lot of guys swinging the bat with men on base."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Braves: C Kurt Suzuki played for the first time since bruising his right hand when he was plunked by a pitch on March 30. Snitker said Suzuki will also catch Sunday. "Going forward, it will be four out of five. I don't want to wear him out," Snitker said.

UP NEXT

Atlanta sends RHP Anibal Sanchez (0-0) to the mound Saturday night, and Colorado counters with RHP Bettis (1-0).

Newspaper's guide to Coors Field erroneously features Citizens Bank Park photo

Darren Rovell / ESPN.com | April 6, 2018

The Denver Post's guide to Coors Field published Friday had a small issue -- the huge picture on the front of the newspaper's Life section isn't of Coors Field. It's Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia.

Darren Rovell @darrenrovell

Denver Post publishes Rockies fan guide. Stadium shown is Citizens Bank Park in Philly!! (H/T @npenzenstadler)

The photo spread quickly across social media Friday morning. The Post eventually responded by tweeting that it was sorry for the mistake and including a picture of Coors Field.

The Denver Post @denverpost

Due to a production error, an image of Citizens Bank Park ran in place of Coors Field on the cover of today's Life & Culture section. Please enjoy this beautiful image of Coors Field photographed yesterday. The Denver Post sincerely regrets the error.

The Rockies play the Braves in their home opener Friday. The game, scheduled for a 2:10 p.m. MT first pitch, has been delayed by snow and is now set for a 3:10 p.m. MT start.

Last month, the Post announced that roughly a quarter of its staff -- 25 of 100 employees -- would be laid off by April 9.

Atlanta Braves 8, Colorado Rockies 3: Rockies literally and figuratively cold in home opener

With a game time temperature of 27 degrees, the Rockies did little to warm fans' hearts at Coors Field

Jordan Freemyer / PurpleRow.com | April 6, 2018

DENVER — The Colorado Rockies did not get their home season off to the start they wanted in 2018, dropping the home opener to the Atlanta Braves, 8-3. Germán Márquez had a rough start, allowing seven runs on seven hits in 4 ²/₃ innings, walking six (two intentional) and striking out two. Carlos González and Trevor Story provided two of the Rockies' three runs in the fourth inning with solo home runs.

"I'm not trying to crush the ball, not trying to hit a home run, just trying to put a good swing on the ball," González said.

Emotional index

Well, the temperature hovered in the mid-20s throughout the game after an hour long snow delay, Rockies pitchers walked seven Braves in total, and the home team was behind by several runs for most of the game. Safe to say this one was a bummer for Rockies fans.

The hero

If there was a hero in this one, it was Bud Black, Chris Rusin and Scott Oberg who managed to preserve the Rockies' bullpen in a game in which it could easily have been blown up. Mike Dunn faced just one batter in the fifth and Rusin and Oberg pitched two innings each.

"It's a long season," Black said. "We're going to have to obviously work our bullpen in the correct way."

Also, give a shout out to Chris Iannetta, who had a pair of doubles.

Looking ahead

The loss drops the Rockies to 4-4 on the season, but came in just the first of a six-game homestand. The Rockies and Braves play again tomorrow, with Chad Bettis on the mound for the home team against Atlanta's Anibal Sanchez. First pitch is at 6:10 p.m. MT.

Colorado Rockies MiLB notes: Some news and notes for top prospects

Noah Yingling / Roxpile.com | April 7, 2018

The minor league baseball season just started on Thursday for some teams (and Friday for others) and there are already some news and notes on some top prospects of the Colorado Rockies.

Three of the Rockies top prospects have already been in the news, for one reason or another for their respective teams.

Yency Almonte was the Opening Day starter for the Albuquerque Isotopes, the Triple-A team of the Rockies, and, in the team's 9-3 loss to the Salt Lake Bees, affiliate of the Angels, on Thursday, he was not able to make it out of the first inning.

He was removed due to an undisclosed injury and he was placed on the 7-day disabled list (in the minors, they only have the 7-day DL), according to Chris Jackson, a freelance sports writer in Albuquerque who is formerly of Purple Row, on Twitter.

Chris Jackson

@TopesWriter

Got the #Topes game notes. Almonte is on the DL, no specific injury listed. Holman activated to take the roster spot.

MORE FROM MINORS

4/3 - Colorado Rockies: Mike Nikorak Nearing Return From Tommy John Surgery

2/10 - Colorado Rockies Double-A Team Changing Name For One Night

1/30 - Colorado Rockies Slip In Minor League Talent Rankings

12/21 - Colorado Rockies Rumors: Did They Sign Dante Bichette Jr.?

12/14 - Colorado Rockies Rule 5 Draft Results: Gain A Pitcher, Lose A Pitcher

David Dahl and Raimel Tapia

David Dahl was 1-for-4 in the first game of the regular season but yesterday, in the Isotopes 9-5 win over Salt Lake, he had a great day as he went 3-for-5 with two singles, a double, a stolen base, and four RBI.

Raimel Tapia also had a good game as he went 2-for-4 with a single, a double, a walk as well as three runs.

Brendan Rodgers

The Rockies top prospect, Brendan Rodgers, opened the season with Double-A Hartford and he has done very well to start off their season. He went 1-for-4 on Thursday, in the team's opener, but he was much better on Friday.

In a 4-3 loss in 11 innings against the New Hampshire Fisher Cats, affiliate of the Blue Jays, Rodgers went 3-for-5 with a single, a double, and a home run. He also had a run and two RBI.

Even though between the Rockies two top minor league affiliates, they are 1-3 to start the season, Rodgers, Dahl, and Tapia had some good games and all of three of them are looking to continue their success at 4:05 MT for Hartford and 6:35 MT for the Isotopes.

Colorado Rockies morning after: The grade book on home opener

Nick Bunney / Roxpile.com | April 7, 2018

After opening the 2018 season with 7 games on the road, the Colorado Rockies finally returned home Friday afternoon to break in Coors Field and celebrate their 25th Anniversary as a team. If it was anything like breaking in a baseball glove, the weather did not help. Extremely cold air and snow drifted across the Denver area on and off throughout the day. By the time first pitch rolled around, delayed an hour by snow and rain, the temperature was in the high 20s, with the windchill holding even colder than that. Eventually, however, the home nine were able to take the field and take on the Atlanta Braves for game one of 81 at home.

The Braves jumped all over German Marquez early, with Ozzie Albies sending the sixth pitch of the ballgame over the auxiliary scoreboard in right for a home run. They didn't ease up, and after a couple walks, an RBI popup single and a two run triple, the Rockies found themselves down 4-0 before they even grabbed a bat.

They would answer in the bottom half of the inning with a run produced by a blistered, vintage RBI triple from Carlos Gonzalez. The chipping away continued in the fourth with two solo blasts from CarGo and Trevor Story to pull within a run.

All the while, German Marquez put the nightmare of a first inning behind him and navigated the next three innings scoreless before once again getting beat up in the 5th. The nail in Marquez's coffin was a 2 run double by his opposite number, pitcher Brandon McCarthy, that extended the Braves lead back to four at 7-3.

From that point on, the Rockies bullpen surrendered just one run the remainder of the game, on a Freddie Freeman single in the sixth inning. The offense, however, couldn't get anything going offensively after their fourth inning burst, and ultimately fell 8-3 after an uneventful and fast moving final three innings on a cold day in Denver. Brandon McCarthy gets the win and moves to 2-0, while German Marquez takes the L and falls to 0-1 on the season.

Without further ado, let's crack open the grade book to get a better idea of the good, bad and ugly from Friday's frigid Home Opener.

Colorado Rockies: Carlos Gonzalez discusses a significant Opening Day

Brandon Ewing /Roxpile.com | April 7, 2018

Today (Friday, weather permitting) marks the 10th consecutive Colorado Rockies home opener where the same #5 will be manning the outfield grass right in front of the Rockies out of town scoreboard.

When the Rockies signed Carlos Gonzalez on March 8, they knew the type of player they were getting. CarGo has been at the forefront of the Rockies franchise for a decade and has given Rockies fans some of the greatest memories in the franchise's history. The signing of CarGo gives the Rockies more of a veteran presence in the outfield and allows the franchise to continue to groom some of their younger outfielders in Triple-A this season.

CarGo signed a one-year deal at the beginning of March after one of the craziest offseason in MLB history. With all the late signings that came at the end of February and beginning of March, players like CarGo weren't sure if they were going to have teams to play for as the 2018 season began. Luckily for the Rockies, CarGo was still there at a time where the team needed to add another outfield presence and another solid bat to the lineup.

Even as the offseason wore on and Gonzalez was still without a team, he never let the thought of not playing in 2018 creep into his head. Gonzalez discussed what this offseason was like in comparison to the others and even talked about the idea of the Rockies winning a championship in an interview with Rox Pile and other media members inside the Colorado clubhouse.

"Well, I mean that's the worst-case scenario. For me, I stayed positive. I knew things were a little different then in the past. You know there's still a lot of good players out there without jobs so that's really sad, but I'm excited that I'm getting the opportunity to play. Like I said, I put that in the past so I'm moving forward with my teammates. I think we have a special group here and last year was unfinished business ... we obviously want to go deeper this time and we want to win the championship."

CarGo continued to put in the work and ultimately it paid off as he's back in a Rockies uniform and is about to embark on his 10th home opener in Colorado. CarGo's preparation for this season has been a little different then the others just because he didn't have a team before spring training started. Mentally though, CarGo says he feels stronger then ever.

"It's just another year for me. I always try to make it as simple as possible. Being at home in Florida, just working out and preparing myself for another season. I know it was different because when everyone else was playing in spring training, I was still at home. But, I remained focused doing the same things — good diet, working out everyday, imagined myself playing in spring training without playing games ... I was obviously not able to get a lot of at-bats during spring training, but I was able to go to the minor leagues and my body is in great shape. Mentally, I feel strong."

The best part of that quote is the part where CarGo talks about mentally being strong. After the struggles he had at the plate for most of last season, it's good to see his mind is in a right place heading into what looks to be a promising 2018 season for the Rockies.

Even with today being CarGo's 11th home opener, 10th straight in a Rockies uniform, he discussed how the day still holds the same amount of importance to him.

"It's special, man. For me, whenever you're driving around the city and you're getting close to the ballpark, you can see the excitement. Everybody's just outside waiting for the game, so that gives you the extra motivation to play for the people that are excited to see baseball back. Like I said, I think it makes it easier when you have a good group. There's a lot of good, talented players around me, so it makes it easy to go and battle together."

This home opener has the potential to be a special one with how the weather is shaping up. The players aren't blind to the conditions, and CarGo is going to be sure he has his cold gear on today

"I know it's going to be cold. So hopefully we get this win today. And, if not, we'll just keep moving forward like I always say."

CarGo is right. Today will certainly be cold, but on a day where the Colorado weather changes like usual, one thing is sure to stay the same ... and that is the same #5 patrolling the right side of the Rockies outfield for yet another Coors Field home opener.

Rockies lose to Braves, Cheyenne Mountain grad in second-coldest game in Coors Field history

Arnie Stapleton /Gazette / AP Sports Writer | April 6, 2018

DENVER — Cheyenne Mountain High School graduate Brandon McCarthy pitched six solid innings and delivered a two-run double that chased German Marquez in the fifth inning of the Atlanta Braves' 8-3 win over the Colorado Rockies on a frigid Friday that marked the second-coldest game in Coors Field history.

It was 27 degrees when the Rockies' home opener began after an hour-long delay caused by sleet and snow. That was just 4 degrees warmer than when these teams met in Denver on April 23, 2013, in the coldest first-pitch temperature in major league history.

McCarthy (2-0) allowed three runs and five hits, more than enough for the hot-hitting Braves, who lead the majors with a franchise-best 56 runs through seven games.

McCarthy graduated from Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs in 2001 and attended Lamar Community College before starting his pro career.

Marquez (0-1) gave up seven, seven hits and six walks in 4 2/3 innings.

He allowed a solo homer to Ozzie Albies in the first and walked two batters before Preston Tucker's sacrifice fly and Dansby Swanson's two-run triple made it 4-0.

Colorado got a run back in the bottom half when Carlos Gonzalez lined a run-scoring triple to right-center. Gonzalez added a solo homer in the fourth, a 445-foot shot into the right field bleachers, and two batters later Trevor Story also went deep for the first time this season with a 442-footer.

McCarthy, the first Braves pitcher to last six innings so far, followed Swanson's two-out RBI triple in the fifth with a two-run double that made it 7-3 and chased Marquez.

Peter Moylan, Jose Ramirez and Shane Carle combined to throw three scoreless innings for Atlanta.

Swanson, who singled in the third, came close to hitting for the cycle — he drove a pitch to the track in right field in the seventh. In the ninth, he lined out to shallow right.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Braves: C Kurt Suzuki played for the first time since bruising his right hand when he was plunked by a pitch on March 30. Manager Brian Snitker said Suzuki will also catch Sunday. "Going forward, it will be four out of five. I don't want to wear him out," Snitker said. ... Snitker said 3B John Camargo looks "fine defensively but looked a little rusty offensively" while playing for Class A Florida. Snitker said Camargo will DH on Saturday after playing shortstop Friday.

UP NEXT:

Atlanta sends RHP Anibal Sanchez (0-0) to the mound Saturday night, and Colorado counters with RHP Bettis (1-0).