



MEDIA CLIPS – Dec. 13, 2018

Santana, Encarnacion on Rox radar at first Could Colorado take plunge on big bopper to bolster lineup? Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 12th, 2018

LAS VEGAS -- The Rockies' desire to improve their offense for a 2019 playoff push, while simultaneously maintaining a focus on a farm system-fueled future, has led to trade ideas that are surfacing at this week's Winter Meetings. The Rockies are looking to deal primarily with the Mariners for Carlos Santana or with the Indians for Edwin Encarnacion.

Both are first basemen, although the switch-hitting Santana has been trusted to play far more first base than Encarnacion. Before Santana signed with the Phillies last year, he and Encarnacion were Cleveland teammates and Encarnacion received most of his time as the designated hitter. The Rockies made the postseason the last two years with some offensive flaws, and Santana's high-power, high-walk m.o. or Encarnacion's consistent power could help them attempt to break the Dodgers' six-year stranglehold on the National League West.

Either would be costly in the short-term -- Santana with a two-year, \$41.7 million guarantee, Encarnacion for one year and \$26.7 million guaranteed. But the Rockies are the Rockies, and they'll always look to turn the roster over to players they've developed.

General manager Jeff Bridich didn't address specific trade ideas in his Wednesday afternoon meeting with the media, and said only, "We're inching closer to understanding what can be done here."

Certainly, there will be a player cost and a financial impact of any trade made. But obtaining either Santana or Encarnacion would not affect the players who saw time last year, since left-handed-hitting Ryan McMahon's skill set easily allows him to move from first base to second base.

If one of the deals can be completed, it means that the Rockies wouldn't be involved in a potentially longer free agent contract. Three of the Rockies' Top 30 prospects according to MLB Pipeline could be at Double-A or Triple-A this season - - No. 17 Josh Fuentes, last season's Pacific Coast League Most Valuable Player; No. 25 Brian Mundell, who dipped from 15 home runs in 2017 primarily at Class A Advanced Lancaster to seven at Double-A last year; and fast-rising No. 11 Tyler Nevin, who played at Lancaster last year and turned heads in the Arizona Fall League.

Ideally, acquiring a first baseman that is an established player could help the Rockies strike now -- while the starting pitching is hot -- and allow potentially a young power bat coming in later to keep the competition going.

"The cons of bringing anybody in from the outside is how it affects the roster," Bridich said. "When we talk about the balance of the decision making process, that's what we are referring to. So we're conscious of the type talent that we have in the young players. There are certain young players that we do expect to emerge and become counted-on, relied-on, consistent and productive big leaguers in the next step in our evolution. That's not lost on us, but we're trying to weigh that out versus who's out there."

Santana, Encarnacion and the possibilities

The switch-hitting Santana, who turns 33 during the first month of the season, struggled early in his career as a catcher, but has developed into a trusted first baseman with 421 regular-season appearances at the position over the last three years. That's important because infield defense is dear to the Rockies' hearts. It's a factor they can control, since the occasional cheap home run or soft ball that falls in outfield gaps is a fact of life at Coors Field.

The right-handed-hitting Encarnacion, who turns 36 in January, will have to familiarize himself with a fielding glove. Not since playing 80 games at first for the Blue Jays in 2014 has he appeared at any position more than designated hitter, which the National League doesn't regularly offer. But the short contract and seven straight years of 30-plus homers (including two with 42) could be enough for the Rockies to work with him.

Moving man

The acquisition of either would mean that Ian Desmond, with a -0.6 WAR, but 22 homers and 88 RBIs in 2018, becomes part of the outfield mix in the third-year of a five-year, \$70 million contract. Desmond and Charlie Blackmon, in the second year of a six-year, \$108 million deal, seem slated for position changes.

Blackmon could move out of center field to a corner to decrease wear and tear. Desmond, a center fielder with the Rangers in 2016 after spending seven seasons at shortstop with the Nationals, signed with the thought that he would be open to change. Bridich said the club is communicating with both, and they are on board.

**Will Rockies move Blackmon out of center?
Blackmon's superb running grab
Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 12th, 2018**

LAS VEGAS -- It's not clear if shifting center fielder Charlie Blackmon is an idea whose time has come, but it's been bandied about for the better part of a year.

Blackmon will turn 33 on July 1, about halfway through 2019 -- the second year of a six-year, \$108 million contract. Blackmon led the National League in batting at .331 and total bases at 387 while hitting 37 home runs in 2017. The performance dropped in 2018, but .291 with 29 homers and 314 total bases still put him among the more dangerous leadoff hitters.

But would a move to a corner reduce wear and tear, and leave center field to be filled by a versatile roster?

- Magadan brings fresh eye as Rockies' hitting coach

While it was a hot topic during press availabilities for manager Bud Black and general manager Jeff Bridich on Tuesday at the Winter Meetings, it isn't breaking news as far as those involved are concerned.

"The topic overall and in general was breached and discussed up front during the contract negotiations," Bridich said.

"There was no timeframe put on it. But we felt like this was probably as his career progressed with us where it was going to head at some point. We wanted to have cooler minds and rational heads to discuss it as adults when the time was right."

Black said, "We've talked about that with our group and amongst ourselves, and with Charlie I think he knows that at some point there might be a move to the corner."

Blackmon, as he established himself in center, has often said center is "the essence of outfield play." But should a move, either temporarily or full time, become reality, Bridich doesn't get the feeling there would be pushback in a modern game where multi-position players are becoming the norm.

"Charlie's an intense competitor, he's confident in his abilities, but Charlie understands that he's a Colorado Rockie," Bridich said. "He's all in, and he's in for the rest of his career. He knows we all want what's best for this organization to win games, have fun and all the stuff that comes along with that."

The thought is based on preserving Blackmon and possibly improving the defense with fresher or speedier legs.

"We have a few options for sure," Black said. "David Dahl could play center. Charlie could play center. Don't forget Ian Desmond made the All-Star team in 2016 with the Texas Rangers as a center fielder. Ian grew up as a center of the diamond player. He's very comfortable being in the middle of the diamond. That's a possibility as well."

Additionally, Raimel Tapia, one of the Majors' fastest players, is a natural center fielder, and infielder Garrett Hampson, also possessing above-average speed, has played center in the Minors and a little while debuting in the Majors last season.

The search for a run-producer: Former Indians and Phillies switch-hitting corner man Carlos Santana, recently acquired by a Mariners team that's looking to move high salaries, remains high on the list of possible trade targets. Bridich said nothing was imminent, but he detailed what he wants as the team attempts to boost the offense.

"Generally, it's run production -- consistent run production, and I think as we saw in the latest parts of our season the ability to score in the toughest of situations and the most challenging situations in this game, in those playoff games that we have designs on participating in for years to come," Bridich said.

While rumors that the Rockies were considering trading with the Padres for Wil Myers were shot down, another candidate emerged, according to former MLB GM Jim Bowden of the Athletic -- the Indians' Edwin Encarnacion, who in the last seven seasons has hit 42 homers twice and eclipsed 30 homers five times.

Young bench? Old bench? Who knows? The Rockies spent much of last season with Pat Valaika, Mike Tauchman, Ryan McMahon, Tapia and Noel Cuevas, all early in their careers, as the main bench bats. Cuevas and McMahon grew into productive players, but vets Gerardo Parra and Matt Holliday (now free agents) solidified the reserve group. How will Bridich handle those roles this time?

"I don't really know right now; it's still early in the year," Bridich said. "I believe in those [younger] guys ... but I'm not sure in terms of what the team is going to look like."

Magadan brings fresh eye as Rox's hitting coach
Magadan on joining Rockies staff
Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 12th, 2018

LAS VEGAS -- Dave Magadan, hired Tuesday night as the Rockies' new hitting coach, brings a long career with notable success. Just as importantly, he represents new blood.

Magadan, 56, who served as the D-backs' hitting coach the last three seasons and has held the job with the Padres, Red Sox and Rangers, will replace Duane Espy, who was not retained after holding the job the last two years. But after the Rockies set 26-season franchise lows by batting .256 overall and .225 on the road, yet made the postseason for the second consecutive year, change came.

"He's going to bring fresh perspective and that outsider look at our team," Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich said. "I don't think that necessarily means that there's sort of an at odds in terms of philosophy. One of the benefits is he'll come in with new eyes and fresh eyes, similar to how [pitching coach] Steve Foster and [bullpen coach] Darren Holmes a few years ago were able to help us see things or unlock things in different ways. That's what his huge experience at the big league level brings."

From 1997, when Clint Hurdle was promoted to the job from the Minor League system, six of the seven hitting coaches -- Hurdle, Alan Cockrell, Espy on two occasions, Don Baylor (the original manager who returned), Carney Lansford and Dante Bichette -- had histories as a Rox player, manager or coach in the Minors or Majors. Only Blake Doyle, who worked under Walt Weiss from 2014-16, came from outside.

But Magadan, 56, approaches this opportunity with an old baseball and life philosophy: Two eyes, two ears, but one mouth ... use them accordingly.

"I just got the job today, and to be able to sit here and tell you every strength and weakness is a little bit disingenuous," Magadan said. "I'm going to sit down, talk to the staff, talk to my assistant hitting coach [Jeff Salazar], talk to the players, talk to everybody involved. Certainly I've got my window into what I saw as a guy on the other side of the field in the 18 games that we played against the Rockies every year."

Magadan, who played 16 seasons in the Majors primarily at the infield corners, actually saw the Rockies from the other dugout back in 2007, his first year with the Red Sox -- who just happened to win the World Series over the Rockies.

Like most hitting coaches, Magadan has seen offensive ups and downs over his career. For example, his 2017 D-backs, who made the postseason, hit a club record 220 home runs. Last year's D-backs posted a .193/.264/.316 slash line in May and had a subpar .661 OPS in September.

Magadan's career has been marked by an aggressive overall approach that is tailored to individual hitters, but he noted that hitting is more than an individual sport. It could be the right message for a Rockies team that at times ended up with empty at-bats, especially in key situations. In winning the NL Wild Card Game over the Cubs, then being swept in three games by the Brewers in the NL Division Series, the Rockies scored just four total runs.

"Really, all you have to do is see what happened in the postseason this past year," Magadan said. "The team that ended up winning it all was the team in Boston. You could tell with their at-bats that they were just trying to do what the game was asking them to do on every at-bat -- whether that meant grinding out an at-bat, going up there being stubborn for a good pitch to hit, moving a runner with an out, hitting behind runners, putting balls in play to get guys in from third.

"You're always going to have those games where you get 18 or 20 hits, hit four or five homers and blow out a team, but how are you smoothing out the rough spots?"

Gideon shifts to first

The Rockies also made official the move of veteran coach Ron Gideon, who had responsibilities all over the diamond the last two seasons, to first-base coach. Gideon, 54, is heading into his 28th year as a professional coach and had served in the Rockies' system as a coach, manager and development supervisor since 1996.

Also locked in on manager Bud Black's coaching staff for 2019 will be: Foster (pitching coach), Holmes (bullpen coach), Salazar (assistant hitting coach), third-base coach Stu Cole and bench coach Mike Redmond.

VIP Experience part of Rockies' WM auction
Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 10th, 2018

LAS VEGAS -- The Rockies are offering Spring Training and Coors Field experiences up for bid in the seventh annual Winter Meetings charity auction.

This year's auction will support the Jackie Robinson Foundation and the Negro Leagues Museum, two important institutions that educate future generations of young people through honoring significant moments and individuals of baseball's past.

The auction is live on MLB.com/wintermeetingsauction through Thursday, when it will conclude at 8 p.m. MT. Items include special baseball experiences, including meetings with some of the game's biggest stars, along with unique items donated by MLB and the 30 clubs.

The following items are up for bid:

- Spring Training VIP Experience: The winner and three guests receive an opportunity to tour the Rockies' Scottsdale, Ariz., training center, Salt River Fields at Talking Stick; meet manager Bud Black; watch batting practice from the field; have lunch in the complex dining room and watch a game from great seats. The date would be mutually agreed upon. Travel to Arizona and lodging are not included.
- Coors Field VIP Experience: The winner and three guests will have the opportunity to tour Coors Field broadcast booths, watch batting practice from the field and meet all of the Rockies' broadcasters before enjoying the game from great seats.

Scouts of the Year honored at Winter Meetings
Quartet recognized by peers for impact on baseball
Jonathan Mayo | MLB.com | Dec. 12th, 2018

LAS VEGAS -- Each year at the Winter Meetings, the scouting industry gathers to celebrate some of their own at the Scout of the Year reception. The fact the recipients are chosen by their peers, scouts singling out other scouts, makes the honor even more special.

This year's quartet of honorees for the 35th edition of the event have made an unmistakable impact on the game, and they continue to do so. Awarded regionally, Damon Oppenheimer of the Yankees (West Coast Scout of the Year), Brad Sloan of the Red Sox (Midwest Scout of the Year), Danny Montgomery of the Rockies (East Coast Scout of the Year) and Sal Agostinelli of the Phillies (International Scout of the Year) have more than 120 years of combined scouting experience, have signed dozens of big leaguers across multiple decades and have helped their organizations reach the postseason many times.

West Coast: Damon Oppenheimer, Yankees

Oppenheimer didn't have to go far to start his scouting career after his playing career was cut short by injury, with his first chance coming with his hometown team, the San Diego Padres, a team his mother worked for and for whom he had sold concessions as a high schooler.

"I always wanted to be a player, and I really thought that was going to be the path," Oppenheimer said. "If I wasn't playing, I was watching. Working for the hometown team, that was really exciting for me. I thought that might be where I worked forever. But things change, better opportunities happen. It's been a great career."

That career took Oppenheimer from the Padres to the Yankees to the Rangers and back to the Yankees, where he's been since 1996. Oppenheimer initially helped on the amateur and pro side, helping Gene Michael in his early stint as an advanced scout. When Oppenheimer came back from his year with the Rangers, he served as a national crosschecker and has overseen the Yankees' Draft in a number of vice president titles since 2004.

"You get into being the director and the contribution you can make by leading a group of scouts has been special, putting players into a system that's now year in and year out contending, or in 2009, winning the whole thing," Oppenheimer said.

"I've never been part of the Yankees where we weren't at least .500. All those years, when people said we were on a down swing, we were still good. We've never been really bad."

As a result, Oppenheimer has become an expert at picking in the lower half of the first round. Even picking late, he's helped add talent to the Yankees' organization, or players who have been used in trades, perhaps none more notable than outfielder Aaron Judge, taken No. 32 overall in the 2013 Draft. One to quickly deflect credit, Oppenheimer offered some perspective.

"I love the kid, but we took Eric Jagielo ahead of him," Oppenheimer said about the Yankees' selection at No. 26 that June. "It wasn't like we nailed the whole thing, though we obviously did like [Judge] quite a bit."

Midwest: Brad Sloan, Red Sox

Sloan began his career in baseball in 1980 as an area scout, and outside of one year with the Mets as a crosschecker in 1993, he worked as part of the Padres' scouting staff from 1980-2003. Nearly all of it was on the amateur side, and he served as the team's scouting director from 1996-2000, helping to bring a ton of talent into the system, with Jake Peavy really standing out as a fantastic get in the 15th round of the 1999 Draft.

"I'm still a dirt scout; I'm still an area scout," Sloan said. "I'm on the pro side now, but I enjoyed the free-agent scouting the best. Travel gets hard when you get older, but that's what I like. I like scouting the kids."

Sloan sees his craft as an heirloom to be handed down from one generation to the next. He looks around at his contemporaries being honored on Wednesday, and at those who preceded them, and he is awed to be in their company.

"There's a lot of experience here, signed a lot of players," Sloan said. "Just to be compared with some of the guys who have gone in before us? There are some legendary guys. That's why this is such a great honor."

"I started with San Diego in 1980, and one of the scouts there was Ken Bracey, and he's had this honor. He just passed away just about a year ago. We became very close. He really helped me with my development as a scout."

One thing Sloan didn't have after close to 40 years in scouting was a World Series ring, until this past season. He joined the Red Sox in 2016 as a special assignment scout, working on the pro side, and checked winning a title off of his checklist, something he wasn't sure would ever happen.

"You wonder about that," Sloan said. "When I was in San Diego, we got there twice, but we got beat both times. That was a big deal to me. Winning the World Series and winning this award, I've had a great year."

East Coast: Danny Montgomery, Rockies

Montgomery's scouting career started with the Dodgers in 1990. After two seasons as an area scout, he was hired by the Rockies, and he's been with them ever since, filling a variety of roles up to his current gig as the special assistant to the general manager. As he's moved up the ladder, he hasn't forgotten about his start.

"I did 10 years as an area guy," said Montgomery, who signed players like Quinton McCracken as an area scout and helped bring Charlie Blackmon to the organization as a crosschecker. "You have to understand, back in the '90s, it was a little different than it is now. We competed, we lied to each other, we did a whole lot of different things. ...

"We really competed against each other. I felt if I couldn't play, then I'm going to compete with you as a scout. That's what we did."

At the core of everything he's done in baseball has been Montgomery's desire to help young people, both as players and beyond their playing days. His work as the vice president of the Buck O'Neil Professional Scouts & Coaches Association has helped create a place for networking, mentoring and professional development.

"To take that organization, along with Steve Williams of the Pirates and Fred Wright, who is one of my mentors, to take that and give back to the up-and-coming guys who are coming out of the game, giving them a chance to have a mentor like I had, helping one and teaching one is one of our mottos, it's a pleasure," Montgomery said. "Even though I work for the organization, they've been so committed to letting me do other things outside, because they know my heart has always been with trying to help other people get where they're going. It's been a blessing to be able to give back. A lot of guys have been hired through that organization, and that makes us feel good. It makes me feel like we're doing something right."

International: Sal Agostinelli, Phillies

After playing parts of 10 years in the Minor Leagues, the last four with the Phillies, Agostinelli stayed in the Phils' organization as an area scout. He started his post-playing career in 1993, and has been with the Phillies since, though how he got to his current job as international scouting director was almost accidental.

Agostinelli was on the field during Spring Training and assistant general manager Mike Arbuckle overheard him speaking with Latino players comfortably. Agostinelli had minored in Spanish in college and that, combined with his Italian roots, had made it easy for him to learn enough to converse with players. Arbuckle asked him if he'd ever thought about giving international scouting a try, and Agostinelli hasn't looked back.

"That was in 1997, and I'm glad I made that move," Agostinelli said. "International scouting is the essence of scouting, in my opinion. You have a budget and you can use the budget and you can sign players accordingly. It's different than the Draft. The Draft is very controlled. I love it. You're almost like a GM of your own department, that's why it's great."

With all of those years, Agostinelli has tremendous stories, including signing Carlos Ruiz for \$8,000 and eventually seeing him catch the last out for a World Series-winning team. Or how he almost ended up with more than he bargained for when going to scout Carlos Carrasco.

"We were coming down the highway and first the bulls were running, and we had to stop for an hour to clear the bulls off the road," Agostinelli said. "A guy comes running over to the car, he has a monkey on his back and these parrots on a stick. He sticks the parrots in the car and the monkey jumps off his back and starts running around inside the car. I say, 'What am I going to do with a monkey, put him in my suitcase?' We ended up going down there, seeing Carrasco, and a week later we signed him."

**Rockies' Jeff Hoffman has raw talent to make rotation; can he harness it?
Indians' Edwin Encarnacion is a Colorado trade target
Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Dec. 13, 2018**

LAS VEGAS — The 2019 season presents a huge challenge — and opportunity — for a number of Colorado's young players. It's major exam time for one in particular: right-hander Jeff Hoffman.

The centerpiece of the 2015 trade that sent star shortstop Troy Tulowitzki to Toronto has yet make a positive impact in the majors. Hoffman's 2018 season was discouraging, and that's being kind.

But general manager Jeff Bridich remains hopeful that Hoffman, who turns 26 next month, can compete for a spot in the Rockies' rotation.

"The flashes of talent that he's shown at the major-league level need to expand," Bridich said Wednesday on the final full day of baseball's winter meetings.

Bridich said Hoffman needs to harness and develop his talent the way Kyle Freeland, German Marquez and Antonio Senzatela have over the past two seasons.

"He's got that sort of ability, he's got that pitch mix, he's got the (velocity), he's got the durability," Bridich said of Hoffman.

"But it needs to happen. And he has to look no further than the people who've been around him the most."

Hoffman pitched just 8⅓ big-league innings over six appearances and two separate call-ups in 2018. His 9.35 ERA and 2.45 WHIP were, perhaps, misleading because of the small sample size, but his command was off even at Triple-A Albuquerque, where he posted a 4.94 ERA over 105 ⅓ innings. He struck out 8.7 batters and walked four per nine innings as a starter. That's indicative of Hoffman's inconsistency.

Rumor central. The Rockies continue to explore a variety of trade possibilities. According to a major-league source, a legitimate target is Cleveland first baseman/designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion.

At first glance, it seems like an odd fit, given that Encarnacion played just 23 games at first base in 2018, and given the Rockies' emphasis on solid defense. Plus, Encarnacion will be 36 next season and is due \$20 million.

On the other hand, Encarnacion swatted 32 homers, drove in 107 runs and posted a .810 OPS for Cleveland this past season. He would add a dangerous bat to Colorado's lineup and could be the run producer general manager Bridich is seeking.

The Indians, looking to dump some salary, might be willing to give up Encarnacion for prospects, perhaps including a young pitcher.

Switch-hitting first baseman Carlos Santana, recently acquired by a Mariners team that still might be looking to dump high salaries, also remains on Colorado's radar.

Bridich has made it clear what his top offseason priority is.

"Generally, it's run production — consistent run production," Bridich said. "And I think as we saw in the latest parts of our season the ability to score in the toughest of situations and the most challenging situations in this game, in those playoff games that we have designs on participating in for years to come."

Blackmon's move. Charlie Blackmon has thrived as the Rockies' center fielder, but at some point — maybe sooner, maybe later — he'll probably be moved to a corner spot in an effort to save wear and tear on his body.

He'll turn 33 on July 1, and Coors Field's expansive outfield can be unforgiving. Plus, he'll be in just the second year of a six-year, \$108 million contract, and the team wants to keep him healthy and productive at the plate.

"The topic overall and in general was breached and discussed up front during the contract negotiations," Bridich said. "There was no time frame put on it. But we felt like this was probably as his career progressed with us where it was going to head at some point. We wanted to have cooler minds and rational heads to discuss it as adults when the time was right."

Manager Bud Black added: "We've talked about that with our group and among ourselves, and with Charlie I think he knows that at some point there might be a move to the corner."

Black said David Dahl and Ian Desmond are possibilities to play center field.

**Rockies winter meetings update: Edwin Encarnacion is a trade target
Carlos Santana also remains on Colorado's radar
Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Dec. 12, 2018**

LAS VEGAS — The Rockies continue to explore a variety of trade possibilities as they look to upgrade their offense here at the winter meetings. According to a major-league source, a legitimate target is Cleveland first baseman/designated hitter Edwin Encarnacion.

At first glance, it seems like an odd fit, given that he played just 23 games at first base in 2018, and given the Rockies' emphasis on solid defense. Plus, Encarnacion will be 36 next season and is due \$20 million.

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The Indians, looking to dump some salary, might be willing to give up Encarnacion for prospects, perhaps including a young pitcher.

On Tuesday, Bridich said the Rockies had "made progress" toward making a move to upgrade their offense.

Switch-hitting first baseman Carlos Santana, recently acquired by a Mariners team that still might be looking to dump high salaries, remains on Colorado's radar.

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There has been a lot of speculation about where the Rockies will turn for offense, including this one from Jim Bowden of The Athletic:

Jim Bowden

@JimBowdenGM

#Rockies focusing on 1B trade candidates possibly including: Santana, Encarnacion, Abreu, Myers....etc

Bridich, however, said the Rockies are definitely not in the hunt for San Diego's Wil Myers.

Blackmon moving? Charlie Blackmon has thrived as the Rockies' center fielder, but at some point — maybe sooner, maybe later — he will likely be moved to a corner spot in an effort to save wear and tear on his body.

No Rockies player works out harder than "Chuck Nazy," but he'll turn 33 on July 1 and Coors Field's expansive outfield can be unforgiving. Plus, he'll be in just the second year of a six-year, \$108 million contract, and the team wants to keep him healthy and productive at the plate.

Blackmon likes being a center fielder, but he's been made aware that a change could be in the works.

"The topic overall and in general was breached and discussed up front during the contract negotiations," Bridich said.

"There was no time frame put on it. But we felt like this was probably as his career progressed with us where it was going to head at some point. We wanted to have cooler minds and rational heads to discuss it as adults when the time was right."

Manager Bud Black added: "We've talked about that with our group and among ourselves, and with Charlie I think he knows that at some point there might be a move to the corner."

So what are the options should the Rockies decide to make a move in 2019?

"We have a few options for sure," Black said. "David Dahl could play center. Charlie could play center. Don't forget Ian Desmond made the All-Star team in 2016 with the Texas Rangers as a center fielder. Ian grew up as a center of the diamond player. He's very comfortable being in the middle of the diamond. That's a possibility as well."

**Rockies hire Dave Magadan as hitting coach to help spark sluggish offense
Colorado making progress on adding outfielder or first baseman
Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Dec. 11, 2018**

LAS VEGAS — In an effort to spice up their tepid offense, the Rockies are shaking things up.

The club on Tuesday officially named Dave Magadan, 56, as their new hitting coach, replacing the departed Duane Espy. The Rockies also made longtime coach Ron Gideon their new first base coach. He replaces Tony Diaz, who left to become Minnesota's third base coach.

Meanwhile, the Rockies continue their to attempt to land, via a trade or free agency, an accomplished hitter to play outfield or first base. Bridich said Tuesday night that the club is "moving closer" to bringing in that player.

Added manager Bud Black: "Our roster is going to look a little different, and it's going to partially look a little different because I think there's going to be an addition. Who? I don't know."

It could be veteran, switch-hitting first baseman Carlos Santana, the former Indians star who signed with Philadelphia last season and was recently traded to Seattle. The Rockies have reached out to the Mariners about a possible deal, but Bridich said nothing is imminent. There were some national media reports that the Rockies were interested in San Diego's Wil Myers, but Bridich said that is not the case.

The Rockies are seeking "consistent run production," Bridich said.

Little wonder. Colorado nearly won their first National League West title, and qualified as a wild-card team for the second consecutive year, despite an overall .256 batting average that was the worst in franchise history, and a .225 road average that also ranked last.

Magadan's way. Colorado's new hitting coach, who spent the last three seasons at Arizona, believes the Rockies have talent at the plate, but he's willing to instill some changes in approach and do some tinkering. Moreover, he said he'll embrace some of baseball's new analytic approach to hitting.

That said, there is an old-school mentality to Madagan's approach. That makes sense, he played 16 years in the majors and has been a hitting coach for San Diego (2003–2006), Boston, (2007–2012), Texas (2013–2015) and Arizona for the last three seasons.

"I like to have a simple message," he said Tuesday night. "I think you can get paralysis by analysis. ... I will need some help to able to disseminate some information to our players.

"We want our players ... laser focused. Everybody has to buy into the approach."

He added that he wants the Rockies to avoid the "peaks and valleys" that plagued them in 2018.

Magadan said "everybody loves home runs," but added, "Over the course of 162 games we have to find (different) ways to score runs."

In 2017, the Diamondbacks set a franchise record with 220 home runs, but the club struggled this past season, hitting just .235 and fading down the stretch and missing the postseason. Arizona had a .661 OPS during its September fade and finished nine games out in the NL West.

In 2007, Magadan was the hitting coach for the Red Sox team that beat the Rockies in the World Series.

"I think his reputation speaks for itself," Bridich said. "He's put together a lot of successful offenses. Without having lived with him yet, it seems that he was the ability to connect with players and be a teammate with (his) coaches. He's a greater worker and hopefully a calming presence on the bench."

Black's future. Black is entering the final year of his three-year contract. All indications are that the Rockies will, at some point, offer him a contract extension. Last month, Bridich said: "There's a great appreciation for who Buddy is and what he's done with us here ... There are a lot of positive vibes all the way around."

Tuesday, Black dodged a question about his contract.

“I’m concerned about what’s going on at the present, right?” he said. “I think that where we are as a team takes precedent over anything that might be happening with me. So that’s where my focus is. But I’m happy to hear that Jeff thinks there’s a good vibe. That’s a good thing.”

Manager's Perspective: Analytics-Driven Non-traditional Coaching Staff Hires

David Laurila | FanGraphs.com | December 13, 2018

One great thing about the baseball Winter Meetings is that you have access to all 30 managers (this year that number is 29, as the Baltimore Orioles are currently sans a manager). A formal media session is held for each, and with 30 minutes of allotted time, a multitude of questions are asked by the collection of writers on hand.

I asked the following question, using roughly the same words, to a dozen of the managers: "We've seen some non-traditional coaching staff hires as of late, with pitching and hitting analytics being the driver. What are your thoughts on that?"

Here is what they had to say (answers edited slightly for concision and clarity):

David Bell, Cincinnati Reds: "I love having different perspectives in everything we do in this game. Having different opinions and perspectives, from people with different backgrounds and expertise, helps the decision-making process. You're creating an advantage for yourself. I think it's an exciting time in the game because of that. And it's a great time to be a player, because you have all these different resources to pull from to make adjustments a lot faster. You can maximize who you are as a player.

"I do see it as a balance. There are certain parts of this game we all love that aren't going away. The competition. The hard work. The teamwork. We just have more resource to make all of that work better. It's important to communicate, and to work together with all departments, and really have no ego, and be able to work really well together."

Bud Black, Colorado Rockies: "I like the creativeness of thinking from the people who were making hires. I think it shows that it's not a closed box; it's opened for whoever might have a skill set that a certain team is looking for, to give it a shot. I think that's great.

"From a coaching perspective, there's a teaching component that is real. The coaches that I have, I want them to be regarded as teachers — I want them to teach our players. I think there's a leadership component that comes with being a

good coach. The ability to individually lead men. And I think there's an aspect of coaching that is motivational, to be able to inspire players. There are those three aspects: teacher, leader, motivator.

"I look at the qualities of that person as a coach. To have those ... that's sort of the baseline of where I go from. There's also the knowledge, the credibility that where they've been, to be able to get through to players."

Kevin Cash, Tampa Bay Rays: "We just hired a process and analytics coach in Jonathan Erlichman. I think all teams are looking for an edge right now. The traditional way of thought is a great way, but if you can bring that thought with maybe those innovative, out-of-the-box thoughts, you're getting the best of both worlds.

"I think that mindset ... some of those guys that don't have the playing experience, they get shunned out of the game. I think if you're really doing it right you want that perspective. They have no experience of playing the game on a nightly basis, but they've sat ... for us to have hired a guy that has sat and watched a lot of our games from the suite, or done a lot of games on the computer and projection-wise, to bring that in house to have those conversations on a daily basis, is only going to make us better."

Craig Counsell, Milwaukee Brewers: "What every organization is hoping for is that coaches are communicators. They share information. It's about communicating information — information in one sense analytical, or information from past experience, or information they've gotten from their eyes. Major league coaches should be the people that can best communicate information to players.

"That's a pretty big umbrella. In the past it's been largely coaches from different levels, or former players. But I do think it's right that it should be people that can best communicate the information. That's opened it up a little bit. I think that's the way it should be."

AJ Hinch, Houston Astros: "I remember the days where I was not necessarily the traditional hire. That's changed a little bit. I guess it all depends on your definition of traditional. I think teams are more and more interested in various backgrounds and different paths to get to different jobs in our game.

“There’s a freshness to it, but there’s also a lot of importance to maintaining the experience that other people in the game have been able to accomplish. I still see the hiring process as being a blend of trying to find the perfect match and the perfect partner for whatever job you’re seeking for as a team.

“It depends on the person. I think that’s more popular nowadays because of the boldness of front offices to try and find their match, and ultimately the belief that you can be successful, depending on how that hire balances out, what you’ve got going on in your own organization.

“I think the days of players being spooked by where the information is coming from is probably over. We’re in the era of information. Players are more and more open to whoever delivers the message, whoever is the expert in the information. If it can help them get better, if it can help them get paid, if it can help them perform better, players are more accepting of that.”

Torey Lovullo, Arizona Diamondbacks: “You’re trying to put the best people in the best positions no matter what their backgrounds are. If they’re going to have the ability to teach and get in front of people, whether they played the game or not, it’s not going to matter.

“I think it’s a special place where baseball is heading. You could have landed on Mars and lived there for 25 years, but if you’re going to help us score runs or prevent us from scoring runs, we’re going to consider hiring you if you’re going to fit the position that we need.

“I might be kind of a traditional guy — I played a long time ago where there was more of the cowboy mentality — but I’ve transitioned into today’s game. I know that if you get as much information as possible to make the best decision moving forward, or give yourself the best teaching tool possible to relay to a player, it’s going to give you a distinct advantage.”

Dave Martinez, Washington Nationals: “I think you see where the game is headed. There are a lot of smart people that obviously think certain people can do their job. It all depends what you’re looking for, and on the people up top who are running everything. I think it’s good for the game. It’s the way the game is going.

“If you look back three or four years, the players have been accepting. Analytics is here. There is a lot of information, and they’re using it. I know our players use it. Other teams have used it. Everybody has their own philosophies and theories.”

Bob Melvin, Oakland A’s: “It’s how you present what you want to present to the players — as far as analytically — whether it’s launch angles or whatever. You have to have the right personality to be able to do that. You have to understand which players you can give a lot of information to, and which players you give a little to.

“We feel like our staff is pretty good at it. Darren Bush and Scott Emerson do a good job with the pitchers and position players. I think at this point in time we’re happy with what we have right now, but the more you see it, it’s kind of a trend that you’ll see more of. Some of the other organizations do it already, and I think they’ve had some success. If you get buy-in from some of the premier players — certainly in the case with Houston, when you get a Justin Verlander who buys into that — it’s going to be easy to sell it to some of the other guys. I think it’s the personality of the person that you’re bringing in, but also the guys that you hook.”

Rick Renteria, Chicago White Sox: “I think that any ownership has the right to pursue the hiring of any candidate to any position that they wish. I do think — I’m assuming, and I could be wrong — that they’re not doing it without a thoughtful process as to how they’re going to move their organization in a particular direction. Good for them. They get hired. They’re asked to do a job. That’s on them.

“As far as where we’re at, you know, I think we do a really nice job of trying to combine both elements of old school and new school thought processes and try to manage the understanding of all that to give us the best possible output. But in terms of the hirings that are being done, everybody has the right, every ownership has the right to pursue and go in the direction they like if they believe it will move them forward.

“The reality is, the game of baseball is really as simple as you want it to be. And we want to take advantage of all those skills, including the long ball, but also try to make sure that these guys understand that you’re managing situations.”

Dave Roberts, Los Angeles Dodgers: “To get coaches that are in tuned with analytics and information ... it’s there, so as an organization we need to find coaches that can be open to it, understand it, and disseminate it to the player. We have a lot of young players now, and as a result we’re getting a lot of young coaches and a lot of turnover.

“Some of them are non-traditional coaches, but at the same time, there still needs to be that coaching/teaching tool. It’s something where analytics is such a driver on the pitching side, the defensive side, the hitting side. I think it’s going to be a trend that’s going to continue. I think it might kind of correct itself, but in the next few years it’s what we’re going to see.”

Chris Woodward, Texas Rangers: “I’ve talked to a lot of people about this over the last little while. I wouldn’t say I’m a heavy proponent of all analytics, of all data, but I guess my best analogy would be to say, ‘When you have information available, why not use it?’ If I was going to gamble, if I was going to put millions of dollars at stake, why wouldn’t I use every bit of information that allows me to have an advantage?”

“The thing that I want to kind of dispel with our players is the idea that our front office and players are separate. I’ve played for, and coached for, organizations where a lot of players had that belief, that everything was kind of designed to go against them as opposed to help them. I want our players to know that everything we do is designed to help them. Every number we crunch, we’re going to use to our advantage and they’re going to use it to their advantage, whether it’s from analytical data, biomechanical data — everything to make them more efficient and better players. They’re going to adopt that.

“I would love it if I was a player right now. I would be all in to understanding it. Not only understanding your weaknesses, but also your strengths. What do I do that’s better than everybody else in the league? And why am I having so much success? That way we can have sustained success and not just in the short-term.”

Rockies hire hitting coach Dave Magadan after bad year at plate
Associated Press | ESPN.com | Dec. 13, 2018

LAS VEGAS -- The Colorado Rockies have hired Dave Magadan as their hitting coach after finishing last season with the lowest batting average in team history.

The Rockies made the move Wednesday at the winter meetings. They also said Ron Gideon, who had been on manager Bud Black's staff, will become the first base coach.

Bench coach Mike Redmond, pitching coach Steve Foster, third base coach Stu Cole, bullpen coach Darren Holmes and assistant hitting coach Jeff Salazar will remain in their roles.

Magadan has been a big league hitting coach for the past 16 seasons, including the past three with Arizona. The Rockies batted .256 last season with hitting coach Duane Espy.

Gideon had been a Rockies coach for the past two years. Tony Diaz left his spot as Colorado's first base coach to become Minnesota's third base coach.

Moving Blackmon, while acquiring additional help could aid Rockies' woes
Luke Zahlmann | MileHighSports.com | December 13, 2018

As the rumor mill churns out every variation of a team through trade or free agency, Colorado Rockies' manager Bud Black is beginning to look at shuffling his roster.

According to the Rockies' Jeff Bridich, Black has gone to both Ian Desmond and Charlie Blackmon and discussed changing their positions. Desmond would move from first base to a utility outfielder, with Blackmon taking the reigns of a vacated corner outfield spot, away from his primary spot in centerfield.

Nick Groke

@nickgroke

Bud Black has talked with Ian Desmond about a change of positions, again, about making him more of a utility defender with the Rockies. He also broached the subject with Charlie Blackmon away from center field to the corners, Jeff Bridich said.

The more interesting of the two is Blackmon.

Recently re-signed to a multi-year extension, Blackmon is set to man the outfield for the Rockies for years to come. While he has held down centerfield for every game he has played in for the past three seasons, a move to a corner makes sense.

Last season, Blackmon registered a -28 mark in defensive runs saved. Not only was the mark the worst of his career, but the worst in Major League Baseball among qualified fielders. The man directly behind him was the acclaimed prize of the offseason, Bryce Harper (-26).

Heading into the offseason, the Rockies' roster is set to change. With the declined option of Gerardo Parra and expired contract of franchise mainstay, Carlos Gonzalez, the team has a pair of open spots.

In the organization, the Rockies have several outfield options for next year including the aforementioned Blackmon, David Dahl and Raimel Tapia among others. With Tapia manning center field, the Rockies seem to have their outfield figured out already.

But the Rockies are no longer in the business of development, rather, they are now a contender in the National League, making their second-straight postseason appearance last year.

Dahl, an unsung hero of the Rockies' run last year, has proven his ability. After suffering from a back injury for much of the last two years, the former first round pick accrued 271 plate appearances last year.

At the plate, Dahl slashed .273/.325/.534, with the slugging coming in the form of a career-high mark. With 12 home runs between August and the conclusion of the postseason, the power appears to be back, signaling the back injury is in the past.

The other youngster, Tapia, does not have the same track record. Despite multiple hot streaks for AAA-Albuquerque, Tapia has only played sparingly in the majors. Last year, in his 25 games, he was only able to reach the Mendoza line, failing to eclipse it.

With further development needed, Tapia would be better served as a fourth outfielder, entering the lineup in quality matchups and when injuries occur.

With Dahl in his traditional left field slot and Blackmon shifting to the vacated right field spot, the team has a hole in center, one that cannot be filled by anyone currently on the roster. Luckily for the Rockies, the offseason is in full swing.

On the free agency market, the Rockies should be looking towards A.J. Pollock, formerly of the divisional rival Arizona Diamondbacks.

Last year, in 113 games, Pollock batted to a .257/.316/..484 line with 13 stolen bases to boot. On the defensive end, he registered six defensive runs saved, a stark contrast from the -28 mark of Blackmon.

While Pollock represents a slight downgrade in the hitting department per his recent numbers, the change could pay dividends if he stays healthy.

In his last fully healthy season, Pollock finished 14th in NL Most Valuable Player voting. Perched atop the Diamondbacks lineup, the centerfielder got on base at a .367 clip and stole 39 bases, while playing Gold Glove defense as well.

If the Rockies were able to lure Pollock to Denver, they could not only have a new Gold-Glove caliber defender in center field but a lineup adjustment as well.

With Pollock being brought in, the Rockies could move Blackmon to the second spot in their lineup, formerly belonging to second basemen D.J. LeMahieu. Though it doesn't completely solve their hitting woes, a trio of Pollock, Blackmon and Nolan Arenado atop the lineup would serve as a strength.

The franchise wouldn't stop there though.

As reported from the league's winter meetings as well, the Rockies have been engrained in talks for first base options. With the move of Desmond, the team is looking to upgrade multiple spots.

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#Rockies' 1B target list is deeper than trade possibilities Carlos Santana (#Mariners) & Edwin Encarnacion (#Indians). Switch-hitting Justin Smoak (#BlueJays) is a trade possibility. Free agents Daniel Murphy, Neil Walker and Logan Morrison also have been discussed internally.

With the addition of Pollock in centerfield and one of the various first base options available, the Rockies could overcome the woes that plagued them last year, drastically improving their lower-tier NL offense.

Upgrading a league-worst defensive center fielder wouldn't hurt either.

The Waiting Game: Does Arenado Stay or Go? Rockies Weigh Options
Tracy Ringolsby | InsidetheSeams.com | Dec. 11, 2018

LAS VEGAS – The Rockies feel the foundation for success is in place.

That doesn't mean they will resist making some tweaks to the roster.

It does mean they aren't in a hurry to start a dismantling.

They are not the Diamondbacks. Facing a financial crunch because of the \$104.5 million they owe 35-year-old Zack Greinke over the next three seasons, the D-Backs are shedding payroll in the wake of an 8-20 finish to 2018 that saw them fade from first to third in the NL West. They recently traded the clubhouse pillar, Paul Goldschmidt to the Cardinals, and let left-hander Patrick Corbin depart as a free agent to pare payroll. Free agent outfielder A.J. Pollock is expected to be the next to go.

The Rockies, meanwhile, are looking at a club-record Opening Day payroll for the sixth year in a row. They are looking to add to their roster, not tear it down. And most of all, they are looking to sign potential free agent Nolan Arenado to a long-term deal, not shop him.

At least not yet.

“The nice thing is we don't feel we have to make a slew of changes to the team,” said general manager Jeff Bridich. “We are very comfortable and very happy in so much of what we have on this team.”

Here's the key for the Arenado situation.

He is one of the game's elite impact players.

The Rockies feel they have a chance to build off the back-to-back post-season appearances, which include last season when after 162 games they were tied with the Dodgers for the NL West lead, only to lose a Game 163 at Los Angeles.

That kept them from winning the first division title in their 26-year history, but they still had a wild-card berth, allowing them to make post-season appearances in back-to-back seasons for the first time.

And they know Arenado, who doesn't even turn 28 until April 16, is a cornerstone for success.

That's why amid the hubbub of the Winter Meetings, where rumors take on a life of their own, Bridich and the Rockies remain calm, looking to sign Arenado to a multi-year deal that would keep him from becoming a free agent next fall.

It's not out of the question to think Arenado could get \$30 million a year or more, and given his age it is likely he could wind up with a seven-year deal. He is headed into his final year of arbitration eligibility and if an agreement isn't reached, it is a slam dunk that Arenado will break the record \$23 million deal Josh Donaldson signed a year ago to avoid arbitration with the Blue Jays.

Bridich doesn't blink in discussing the matter, although, as usual, he avoids specifics.

"Our payroll has grown a lot over the past half decade, and we're continuing to plan on, as I've said in the past, responsible growth," Bridich said. "We're not in a holding pattern. We're not where we're drawing back on our payroll. We believe that we can continue to grow responsibly."

They aren't going to go crazy. That isn't Bridich. He is the strong silent type, not the stereotypical young general manager, who is craving attention.

"It's not going to grow by huge, huge, huge jumps every single year, but we've made some commitments that we believe in, guys we believe in," he said. "We signed Charlie Blackmon this past year to a long-term deal."

Here's the kicker in the six-year, \$108 million package Blackmon accepted – he has the right to opt out in any of the final three years.

That could easily become a path the Rockies could follow with Arenado, although the toll for that route on Arenado could be close to double what was guaranteed Blackmon.

The Rockies, however, don't need to panic. They don't need to scurry around this off-season feeling they have to sign or deal Arenado as soon as possible.

Yes, there are plenty of teams that would love to have Arenado, but if he stays healthy his value is going to remain high. Unless the Rockies can get a deal that meets all their expectations this off-season, patience will be their virtue.

The Rockies could readily open the season with Arenado a pending free agent. They could wait until the July 31 trading deadline to decide whether Arenado should stay or go.

It would let them have more time to try and work out a deal.

It would let them have more time to see if they meet expectations and retain their role as a key factor in the NL West race that considering the D-backs housecleaning, and the ongoing breakdown-rebuild of the Padres and Giants is becoming a two-team showdown between the Rockies and the Dodgers. With a chance to win a division, the Rockies know it would be worth the gamble that they could lose Arenado at season end.

It would still leave them with the opportunity for a high return if they decided to move him prior to the trading deadline. Arenado's value could be higher in late July than it is in December because of what he could mean to a team focused on a stretch run, not long-term roster stability.

It would give the Rockies more time to work out details on a deal if Arenado wants to stay.

And that would give the Rockies and their fans something to celebrate.

Rockies' Ekins Earns Traveling Secretary of the Year Award
Tracy Ringolsby | InsidetheSeams.com | Dec. 11, 2018

LAS VEGAS — Paul Ekins, one of the Rockies original hires and the current director of Major League Operations, was honored as the recipient of the Donald Davidson Major League Baseball Traveling Secretary of the Year during the annual Winter Meetings this week.

Ekins joined the Rockies on Sept. 30, 1991, slightly more than 18 months before the expansion franchise played its first game. He served as an assistant director of player development until 1997 when he was promoted to the director of player development, and then, following the 1999 season moved into his current role, where his responsibilities include arranging travel for members of the organization.

Ekins came to the Rockies from the Atlanta Braves, where he became a mentee of Hank Aaron. Initially the trainer at Low-A Burlington for two years, he moved into the Braves front office as a special assistant to Aaron for the 1990 and 1991 seasons before joining the Rockies.

In the years before the Rockies played their first game, he was involved in amateur scouting, and the first player he turned in as a draft candidate was Craig Counsell, a shortstop from Notre Dame, whom the Rockies selected and signed out of the 11th round in 1992.

The history of the Rockies and the Rule 5 Draft
Patrick Lyons | BSNDenver.com | Dec. 13, 2018

LAS VEGAS – On Thursday, MLB teams with room on their 40-man roster will have an opportunity to pluck a player from another organization in the annual Rule 5 Draft with the hopes of finding a true diamond in the rough.

Though a much different version of the Rule 5 Draft has existed as far back as 1892, the 2018 variety no longer allows teams to uncover lesser known minor leaguers to immediately become valuable assets to the major league roster.

Not all minor league players are eligible for selection. Teams retain control over players for five years when signed at age 18 or younger and four years when signed at 19 or older.

So, while each organization may have multiple prospects with enticing upside, most are safe from being selected in the Rule 5 Draft.

Players selected in this draft must be active on the 25-man roster for 90 days; if the player doesn't meet his new team's expectation, he can be offered back to his original team or re-acquired through a trade.

Some notable players have been taken in the Rule 5 Draft, such as Hall of Famers Hack Wilson and Roberto Clemente under previous and much different rules, along with All-Stars Johan Santana, Dan Uggla and current Philadelphia Phillies outfielder Odubel Herrera.

Though the Rockies have made nine selections in the Rule 5 Draft in their twenty-six seasons, five of those picks were either sent back to their original team and in one instance, they were allowed to keep Kevin Logsdon from the Cleveland Indians in 1994 and he played with Colorado's AAA affiliate during the 1995 season.

Two of their nine selections were traded to another club: in 2015, right-handed pitcher Luis Perdomo was taken from the St. Louis Cardinal and traded to the San Diego Padres for cash; and in 2014, outfielder and first baseman Mark Canha was taken from the Florida Marlins and traded to the Oakland Athletics.

Only once have the Rockies selected a player in the Rule 5 Draft and kept that player for the duration of the season: left-handed reliever Tommy Kahnle in 2013.

Kahnle had finished his Double-A season with the New York Yankees affiliate Trenton Thunder and put up solid numbers, but his command was far from ideal, walking 45 batters in just 60 innings.

Colorado selected Kahnle fourth in the Rule 5 Draft that year and the three players taken before him would never come close to contributing to a major league team.

The first overall selection, Patrick Schuster, was sent back to his original club, but would eventually pitch 8.2 innings in 2016; next came Adrian Nieto, who played in just forty-eight games in 2014 for the Chicago White Sox and has yet to return to the majors; and Kevin Munson, selected just one pick ahead of Kahnle, has yet to play in the major leagues.

Kahnle would have a serviceable two season with the Rockies before being dealt to the White Sox. The significance of the 2013 Rule 5 Draft is still being felt by the organization today, as the player acquired from Chicago is current 24-year-old pitcher Yency Almonte.

When it comes to losing players from their organization in the Rule 5 Draft, Colorado hasn't been nearly as fortunate.

The first player ever taken from the Rockies was former infielder and current AT&T Sportsnet broadcaster Jeff Huson.

Huson signed a minor league with Colorado and was drafted by the Seattle Mariners to compete for a spot on their bench, which he would earn, playing in 31 games for the M's in 1998.

In the years that followed, nine more Rockies players were taken by other teams in the Rule 5 Draft, most notably shortstop Everth Cabrera in 2008, who was an All-Star for the San Diego Padres in 2013, and right-handed reliever Dan Winkler in 2014, who just completed his first full-season with the Atlanta Braves after rehabbing through his a second elbow surgery.

Last year, 22-year-old Asheville Tourists right-hander Julian Fernandez was selected by the San Francisco Giants before succumbing to ulner collateral ligament surgery in Spring Training. He was selected off waivers by the Miami Marlins in November where he remains on their 40-man roster.

Upwards of fifty current Rockies minor leaguers are available for all teams with an open 40-man roster spot to select, but those with the greatest likelihood of being selected are pitchers Logan Cozart, Breiling Eusebio, Jordan Foley, Alexander Guillen, Mitch Horacek, Matt Pierpoint, catcher Dom Nunez, first basemen Brian Mundell and Roberto Ramos, and outfielder Wes Rogers.

If the Rockies are going to use their open roster spot – the 40-man currently has 39 players – it might be with an eye on a young left-handed pitcher that has favorable statistics against left-handed hitters, much like Kahnle in 2013.

One interesting wrinkle in the Rule 5 Draft is the minor league portion. This phase of the draft is for players not even on a 38-man Triple-A reserve roster, so talent is even harder to find.

Current major leaguers such as free agent and first baseman Justin Bour and the Mariners catcher Omar Narvaez were taken in minor league Rule 5 Draft.

Two Rockies minor leaguers selected by other clubs in this phase that went on to have respectable careers at the highest level of their sport: outfielder-turned-pitcher Jorge Sosa and outfielder-turned-quarterback Russell Wilson.

HEADLINES Much maligned Rockies relievers primed to rebound in 2019
Drew Creasman | BSNDenver.com | Dec. 13, 2018

Las Vegas – The big news heading into the 2018 Colorado Rockies season was the eye-popping amount of money they spent (over \$100 million in contracts) in their bullpen that was expected by many, myself absolutely included, to be one of the best collections of relievers in the game.

Wade Davis and Bryan Shaw brought with them exemplary resumes and Jake McGee was coming off a season in Colorado where he was one of the best set-up men in baseball, rebounding after a tough, injury-plagued first year with the Rox.

None of those pitchers lived up to expectations, though Davis did manage to temper his poor ERA with an exceptional save/blown save ratio. But it was still the case that for the first three-to-four months of the season, the Rockies had one of the worst bullpens in baseball after spending so much time, energy, and money trying to have one of the best.

By the end of the year, the acquisition of Seunghwan Oh and the emergence of Scott Oberg, plus the insane rebound of Adam Ottavino, meant that the Rockies entered the postseason with far more confidence in their relievers than they had in April, May, and June.

But with Otto almost certainly on the way out, the question arises about whether Colorado must replace him with someone from outside the organization or if they can absorb that loss with the right combination of in-house options righting themselves.

I asked GM Jeff Bridich that exact question, and while he didn't rule out the possibility of adding a veteran at just the right price, he made it clear that they had played their big cards for this part of the team.

"I don't see us doing anything to the degree that I chose to do last year at this time," he said. "We need last year's decisions to pitch better. It's not a lack of talent or an inability to perform. They need to do a better job, flat out. "The bottom line with the bullpen is that if Bryan and Jake and Chris pitch to their abilities, we are most likely a very different sort of a bullpen. Adam did a wonderful job in helping to keep our pen together and getting us into the playoffs. In a lot of ways, he helped to carry us through some significant struggles of some of his teammates."

That naturally begged a follow-up question that I proposed to Bridich: What is the team doing to make sure that their relievers can address their problems and come back in 2019 with renewed vigor?

“There were conversations had and plans set forth even before the season was done with some of those guys,” he replied. “This is what it is for 2018, but let’s honestly self-evaluate. Let’s put our guard down and figure out together how does this get better for the future? We certainly still believe in those guys but they have a job to do and, ultimately, it’s on them, right?”

It unequivocally is.

Bud Black agrees. “We have a number of guys that we think can bounce back from off years, Shaw, McGee, to name those guys right up front. I think their performance will be key. They’ve done it before. Oberg pitched very well. Seunghwan Oh pitched very well when we got him and a couple of others guys, Estevez, D.J. Johnson who we saw. So we have some guys that we think, if we do not have Otto, that these guys can step in and perform.”

And, his years in the game of baseball, a little bit of personal experience throwing off the mound as a member of a bullpen, have led Black to an understanding that this is a part of the game.

“You look at a lot of relief pitchers in general,” he said. “Their career path, you’ve seen some variability. That was sort of the surprising thing with Shaw was the consistency that he had in Cleveland for five years. So to have an off year, you know, lends me to believe that he’ll bounce back. But that’s not uncommon for a lot of relief pitchers. And that’s been documented by a lot of front offices.”

Getting into the specifics of his own players, he remarked, “That’s what we’re hoping for from those two guys. But we feel pretty good obviously about Wade, where he is. I think Oberg made great strides, but whether we stand pat with those guys that we have, you know, we feel pretty good about it. Dunn has a chance to come back after his surgery, to make an impact. Chris Rusin pitched probably not to the level of expectation. But I thought found his way a little bit at the end of the year.”

He capped it all off with a reminder that the outgoing star, Ottavino, is the perfect example of a reliever recovering from an awful season to put up a career year. There's no reason to believe that Shaw, in particular, would be incapable of such a feat.

With so much attention and focus on improving the offense (rightfully so) and little more than praise coming the way of the starting pitching staff whose depth runs 13 players deep at this point, the headline-grabbing bullpen of just a few months ago feels like a bit of an afterthought at this point.

But at the risk of making the exact same mistake two years in a row, I submit that Bridich is absolutely correct in that the talent exists on the current roster for the club to once again see images of a "super 'pen" in their near future. The best-laid plans of Bridich and Black went awry in 2018 but their dream may, in fact, be realized... just a year later than most of us thought it would be.

ROCKIES Rockies hinting that they are after a significant offensive upgrade
Drew Creasman | BSNDenver.com | Dec. 12, 2018

Las Vegas – It can be a tough balance for any professional sports team between having faith in the guys already on your roster versus pursuing every possible addition or change that can make you better.

The Colorado Rockies organization find themselves at a fork in the road in this regard.

They simply will not be the same team in 2018 that they were in 2019.

Key pieces in Adam Ottavino and DJ LeMahieu are almost certainly going to be seen in new dreds next year and valuable veterans Carlos Gonzalez and Gerardo Parra are similarly likely to find a new place to dwell.

On the plus side for Colorado, they have plenty of in-house options to address each of those individual concerns, meaning they don't need to target anything specific.

Ottavino's production would be the hardest to replace if we are simply projecting forward based on the 2018 season. He was by far the Rockies best reliever in a bullpen that underwhelmed for most of the campaign.

It is reasonable to expect that veterans like Jake McGee, Bryan Shaw, Mike Dunn, and Chris Rusin won't have the kind of disastrous years that they did in '18 and the mid-season addition of Seungwhan Oh and late emergence from Scott Oberg have the club feeling like they can absorb the loss of Ottavino.

Though, when I asked GM Jeff Bridich about continuing to tool around with a bullpen – an area I noted he had already spent a great deal of time on – he responded by noting that “time” was an interesting choice of words (implying perhaps that money and energy might have been a bit more accurate) but would not rule out making further additions.

One thing that has been absolutely clear since the opening moments of the Winter Meetings, however, is that Bridich will be most aggressive in going after offensive help.

The questions remains, though, about whether or not any potential moves will be simply to replace what the Rockies are losing, or attempts to alter the identity of the team in some way.

When asked how comfortable he would be starting out the 2019 season with the roster he has at this moment, manager Bud Black responded, "I think very comfortable. We have a lot of guys back from a team that we feel is very competitive." Then he added, without prompting, " But I do think that we will — I do think that will not be the case."

Black appears to be of the belief that Colorado will make a move significant enough that the club cannot be accused of standing pat.

Rumors began swirling right after this conversation that the Rockies have interest in a number of first baseman including Wil Myers, Carlos Santana, Jose Abreu, and Edwin Encarnacion, though sources tell BSN Denver that there is nothing to the Myers talk. But those kinds of names are intriguing and show that the Rockies are willing to be flexible with their lineups and platoons if they need to be.

Bridich later commented that progress has been made, though he declined to go into specifics, on both the free agent and trade markets and that he is feeling good about how things are progressing so far this offseason, even if the fans wish they were progressing a bit quicker.

While simultaneously giving a vote of confidence to the young players Black has already begun to see shine, it is clear that Colorado is ready to take a big step forward, continuing their ascent from afterthought to perennial contenders for the postseason.

Now, they look for the player, or players, who can get them to the World Series. Watch this space.

Bud Black shows growing faith in young position players
Drew Creasman
Drew Creasman | BSNDenver.com | Dec. 12, 2018

Las Vegas – The debate surrounding the Colorado Rockies and their perceived lack of willingness to put faith in their young core has always been an odd one.

The club gave Trevor Story a starting gig at a premium position on the first day of 2016 and haven't looked back since. They have stacked their entire starting rotation with homegrown products and were just carried into the postseason by a crew of second-and-third-year players.

Even this last season, after having missed all of 2017 with injury problems that could easily begin to feel permanent, David Dahl was given multiple opportunities to win a starting job. And he did it twice, entering the final month and postseason as a clear-cut starter.

All that noted, it would be fair to argue that each of those individual cases involved circumstances out of the Rockies control which forced them to try out the younger player. And I would be remiss to not mention that, despite plenty of explanations about why it was handled as such, the biggest argument comes from a crowd that desperately wanted to see Ryan McMahon take playing time away from Ian Desmond.

With this thought still fresh in the minds of many Rockies fans, there is a lingering doubt about whether or not Colorado can hand the proverbial reigns of the team to the next generation.

With DJ LeMahieu, Carlos Gonzalez, and Gerardo Parra all unlikely to return (though at least one still could) now seems the most obvious time to make a transition.

If you are hesitant to believe that the Rockies might actually go in this direction, it's worth hearing what Bud Black had to say on the second day of the Winter Meetings in Las Vegas.

"I think that the roster will look different than how it ended," he said in recognition of the vets on the way out and potential additions during free agency or via trade. "I think that's just how the nature of going from one year to the next is, based on where players are in their careers, where contracts are."

But when it comes to the young guys already on the roster, Black sees a bright near future.

“So definitely I think we have — I wouldn’t call it a wave,” he said. “But we have some new players coming on the horizon that should be a bigger part of our roster construction. And you saw a lot of those guys last year. David Dahl coming back from a couple of years of being a little banged up, hopefully, will be at full strength and give us a full season in the Big Leagues. Ryan McMahon, Garrett Hampson, those two fellows. Position player side comes to the forefront of maybe having an impact. Pat Valaika bouncing back from a year that was a little bit up and down for him. Tapia, I think, will be in the mix.”

Perhaps notably missing from that list is top prospect Brendan Rodgers as Black is less inclined to discuss players who have not yet debuted in MLB. In fact, he sees what experience those players do have as a massive benefit moving forward.

“These guys have been in the Big Leagues. They’ve shown at times a Major League performance that could indicate that better performance is on the way. So that’s what we’re looking at from those fellows.”

The ever insistent passage of time can change anything. Whether or not the Rockies were ever truly a team that philosophically gave veterans every single second chance while making rookies fight and claw for playing time becomes irrelevant for the conversation now.

The far more important question is have they seen enough of Dahl, McMahon, Hampson, Tapia, and soon Rodgers to trust that they can carry a heavy load in 2019? They have another years worth of information on them and have made it clear that next season is going to have a different look and feel.

The writing has been on the wall for some time, and whether or not the youth revolution came soon enough for everyone, it appears it is finally here.

Colorado Rockies rumors: Pursuing trade options at first base?
Kevin Henry | RoxPile.com | Dec. 12, 2018

LAS VEGAS — Shortly after Colorado Rockies manager Bud Black finished his discussion with the media at the Winter Meetings, Jim Bowden of The Athletic tweeted out that the Rockies are looking at options for improving the team at first base.

The tweet mentioned four specific players: Wil Myers of the San Diego Padres, Jose Abreu of the Chicago White Sox, Edwin Encarnacion of the Cleveland Indians and Carlos Santana of the Seattle Mariners. There is also an “etc.” at the end of the quote, meaning there could be others in the mix.

Abreu and the Colorado Rockies have been mentioned many times over the previous two seasons while Santana and the Rockies have been linked at times as well. Additionally, Colorado general manager Jeff Bridich discussed with the media on Monday (including Rox Pile) how the franchise had checked in with the Philadelphia Phillies on Santana’s availability before he was traded to Seattle.

Myers would be an intriguing option for a number of reasons, including it being an in-division trade and the 28-year-old having played one season for Black during his time managing the Padres.

The first base market in free agency isn’t as strong as the outfield position, making the possibility of a Colorado trade stronger than acquiring the answer the Rockies might need at the position through free agency.

For the Rockies to make any kind of trade, however, Colorado will have to likely part with some of its prized prospects. It has been said that the asking price for both Santana and Abreu has been high in the past. Is anyone in the Colorado organization truly untouchable, including top prospect Brendan Rodgers? That could be the test for any trade to actually happen.

First base has been one of the positions many feel the Rockies need to upgrade before next season. Ian Desmond put together a -0.6 WAR last season while playing 138 games at first base. Ryan McMahon was expected to play a bigger role at first base heading into last season, but the late signing of Carlos Gonzalez shifted Desmond from the outfield to first and kept McMahon’s playing time more sporadic.

Will the Rockies make a splash at the Winter Meetings? That remains to be seen, whether that's at first base, catcher or corner outfielder.