



MEDIA CLIPS –May 15, 2018

Trio of Rockies HRs lead way at Petco

Cuevas (1st MLB HR), Castro, Parra go deep in victory

Jay Paris / MLB.com | May 14, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- The Rockies turned Petco Park into Muscle Beach by slugging three home runs en route to beating the Padres, 6-4, on Monday night.

Colorado's Daniel Castro, Noel Cuevas and Gerardo Parra all went yard as the Rockies kicked off a three-city, nine-game road trip with a win. For Cuevas, it was his first long fly in the Majors.

"That was great," manager Bud Black said. "When you get contributions from guys up from Triple-A, it really makes the club have a good vibe to it. And obviously the big swing from Parra."

Lefty Tyler Anderson (3-1) allowed four runs (three earned), seven hits and a walk, with a strikeout, over 5 2/3 innings. It was the first time he won in three career starts at Petco Park and it was his second victory in his last three decisions.

"In general, it was OK," Anderson said. "Probably too many good pitches to hit, I would say. But for the most part it was all right, at least it gave us a chance to win, battle, stay in there."

Wade Davis, the Rockies' third reliever, pitched the ninth for his 15th save, which paces the Majors.

Bryan Shaw replaced Anderson in the sixth and surrendered an RBI single to A.J. Ellis, cutting the Padres deficit to 6-4.

Rookie Joey Lucchesi, another southpaw, received a no-decision in his third start against the Rockies. He was charged with six hits and three runs, with a walk and two strikeouts, across five innings.

The Rockies feasted on soft-tosser Kazuhisa Makita and his submarine delivery in the sixth. Ian Desmond and Chris Iannetta produced one-out singles, before Parra unloaded with a three-run shot to give Colorado a 6-3 edge.

"More importantly than the homer, it was a team win tonight," Parra said. "But I wasn't even sure if it was a fastball or a changeup the way that guy throws."

The Rockies constructed an earlier cushion, but it didn't last long as pinch-hitter Matt Szczur and Eric Hosmer produced doubles in the fifth, which drew the Padres even, 3-3.

Two Rockies hit key home runs in top of that frame. Castro smacked his first with the Rockies and Cuevas' was not only his initial one in the Majors, but it pushed Colorado ahead 3-2.

"I was happy that we got the lead back, that was the first thing in my mind," he said. "It was a good homer because the momentum went back our way. We knew that we had the arms in the bullpen to keep us close and we got the 'W.'"

The ball that found the seats will find a place on Cuevas' mantle.

"It will go next to my first hit at my home in my room," he said.

Cuevas caught a break when a Padres fan threw back the home run ball. The Rockies didn't have to negotiate to retrieve Cuevas' momento.

"I didn't know that," he said. "I just saw it come back and I was hoping that the outfielder threw it in. Then one of the coaches said he had it so we're excited about it.

"I hit it good, and I was just trying to see if it was high enough, and when I saw him turn around and it hit the stands, it was a pretty electric feeling."

Black was upbeat about the Rockies' approach at the plate. One day after striking out 15 times in a loss to the Brewers, Colorado had nearly as many strikeouts (five) as home runs.

"I want to say that was an outlier yesterday as far as the punch outs," Black said. "I do think our strikeouts are a little high, and we talked about that and we're going to make some adjustments."

San Diego took its first lead in the fourth. Trevor Story sailed his throw over Desmond's head on Franmil Reyes' ground ball, with Franchy Cordero coming around the score.

The Padres tied the game at 1 in the third on Manuel Margot's run-scoring single. The inning might have been more costly, save for a great throw from Iannetta to Anderson as Lucchesi tried to score on a pitch that ricocheted off Iannetta's glove to the backstop. Iannetta pounced on the erratic pitch and fed a strike to Anderson to easily retire Lucchesi.

The Rockies broke through in the third when Lucchesi supplied a one-out walk to Anderson. Three batters later Nolan Arenado, who had three hits, drove him in for his 23rd RBI and a 1-0 advantage.

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

The Rockies have had at least three home runs in seven different games this year. What's surprising is that just one was accomplished in the thin air at Coors Field. Three times, the opponent has been the Padres, including the lone occasion Colorado did it in Denver.

HE SAID IT

"I asked [Carlos Gonzalez] how many times did you feel like I felt today? He said, '220 times.' I got a ways to go. I just have to do it one at a time." -- *Cuevas, on chatting with his veteran teammate after hitting his first homer in the Majors*

UP NEXT

Right-hander German Marquez will close out the two-game set on Tuesday afternoon, looking to rebound from a rough outing on Thursday against the Brewers. He allowed five runs and a career-high-tying 12 hits in 4 2/3 innings. Marquez pitched three scoreless innings against the Padres on April 11 before being ejected. He will oppose right-hander Jordan Lyles with first pitch at 1:40 CT.

LeMahieu headed to DL with thumb injury

Jay Paris / MLB.com | May 14, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- The Rockies placed second baseman DJ LeMahieu on the disabled list with a sprained left thumb prior to Monday's series opener against the Padres. Infielder Pat Valaika was recalled from Triple-A Albuquerque.

"We're concerned about it," manager Bud Black said before the roster move. "We're trying to be optimistic on this one, but we will have to wait and see."

LeMahieu, a two-time All-Star, lands on the disabled list for the second time this season. He was activated on May 8 after being waylaid by a strained hamstring. LeMahieu is hitting .279 with five home runs and 13 RBIs. His season-long seven-game hitting streak was snapped on Saturday.

"Without DJ, it made sense to move Noel [Cuevas] up [in the order]," Black said. "It's a good spot for him and he's playing with a lot of confidence."

Valaika made the Opening Day roster and hit .103 (6-for-58) in 28 games before being optioned to Albuquerque on May 8.

Three homers, solid bullpen carry Rockies to win over Padres to open nine-game road trip

Castro had his first homer with Colorado, Cuevas hit his first major league dinger and Parra blasted a three-run shot

Kyle Newman / The Denver Post | May 15, 2018

SAN DIEGO — The Rockies leveraged the longball to victory once again Monday night as a pair of milestone homers by recent call-ups, combined with a timely three-run jack by a veteran, paced Colorado to a 6-4 win over the Padres.

The game marked Colorado's seventh time hitting at least three home runs this year, with six of those performances coming on the road, as the Rockies put Sunday's season-high 15 strikeout showing in the rear view.

After the teams traded one run each in the first frame, a throwing error by shortstop Trevor Story with two outs in the fourth gave the Padres an unearned run and 2-1 advantage.

But Daniel Castro, starting at second base in place of the injured DJ LeMahieu, proceeded to even the game in the fifth when he golfed a sinker to left for his first home run with the Rockies and third of his young career.

Then, right fielder Noel Cuevas stepped to the dish three batters later and hit his own solo homer to left, the first of his career, to give Colorado a 3-2 lead.

"When you get contributions from guys up from Triple-A, it really makes the club have a good vibe to it," manager Bud Black said. "The contributions from (Castro and Cuevas) were great... It gave us a bit of momentum when those two guys went deep."

San Diego came right back with an Eric Hosmer RBI double the next inning to even the game 3-3, but left fielder Gerardo Parra's three-run dinger in the sixth tilted the scales back in favor of the Rockies for good.

Right-handed starter Tyler Anderson turned in a decent enough outing, yielding three earned runs on seven hits through 5 ²/₃ innings while battling an array of traffic.

"I probably gave them too many good pitches to hit, I would say, but for the most part it was alright," assessed Anderson.

"I gave us a chance to win, and I battled and stayed in there."

From there, Bryan Shaw, Adam Ottavino and Wade Davis did the rest, with Ottavino striking out the side for the fifth time this season and Davis recording his major league-leading 15th save.

Looking ahead

Rockies RHP German Marquez (2-4, 5.35 ERA) at **Padres RHP Jordan Lyles** (0-1, 3.28), 1:40 p.m., ATTRM

Marquez was roughed up in his last outing for five runs on 12 hits in a loss to Milwaukee last week, and the righty will need steadier fastball command from the get-go in order to bounce back Tuesday. The previous time Marquez faced the

Padres this year was April 11 in Denver, when he looked strong through three scoreless innings before being ejected for throwing a towel during the teams' brawl. Colorado faces a familiar face on the hill in Jordan Lyles, whose struggles during his time with the Rockies from 2014-17 — including a disastrous 6.94 ERA out of the bullpen last year — are well documented. The Rockies have traditionally teed off on Lyles, too, hitting a collective .300 in 90 at-bats. Carlos Gonzalez has been particularly effective against the righty, hitting .538 (7-for-13) with a pair of homers. — *Kyle Newman, The Denver Post*

Wednesday: Off

Thursday: Rockies RHP Chad Bettis (4-1, 3.12) at Giants RHP Jeff Samardzija (1-2, 6.62), 8:15 p.m. ATTRM

Friday: Rockies LHP Kyle Freeland (3-4, 3.42) at Giants LHP Derek Holland (1-4, 4.95), 8:15 p.m., ATTRM

Saturday: Rockies RHP Jon Gray (4-5, 4.85) at Giants RHP Chris Stratton (3-3, 4.60), 2:05 p.m. ATTRM

With the Rockies continuing to strikeout out at an unsustainable clip, Colorado's collective approach must improve

After whiffing a season-high 15 times on Sunday, the Rockies have the fourth-most strikeouts in the National League with 379

Kyle Newman / The Denver Post | May 15, 2018

The Rockies know they're striking out at an unsustainable clip — a season-high 15 times Sunday, 60 times overall on the recent six-game homestand and 379 times on the season heading into Monday night's game at San Diego, fourth most in the National League.

The question now is what to do about it, and outfielder David Dahl believes the Rockies' collective ability to start putting the ball in play more starts with their mentality walking into the batter's box.

"For me, especially early on this year, I struck out a few times and then it kind of got in my head where I was striking out a lot," Dahl explained. "I started thinking about going up there and not striking out, instead of just going up there and hitting." It's an ethos that's easier spoken than applied in the major leagues, especially this year, when strikeouts are piling up at a record rate throughout the league and power pitchers are "hunting for the strikeout," as shortstop Trevor Story noted.

Story, whose 53 K's were tied for the NL lead with the Diamondbacks' Paul Goldschmidt, has emphasized throughout the season that cutting down on his 31.4 percent strikeout rate is a main priority.

But he also noted the ability to mentally turn the page from at-bat to at-bat is what has enabled the Rockies to stay afloat with a 22-19 mark through the first six weeks of the season despite their strikeout problem being compounded by the team's struggles to hit with runners in scoring position (.222, second-to-last in the NL).

"That's the tough part about baseball: You've got to do something within the next 15 minutes to get over it, and you have to have a short memory," Story said. "And there's always room for critical analysis and film study, but sometimes you just have talk about the good stuff (about at-bats) and not the bad. That creates positivity that can go a long way."

When it gets down to that critical analysis, though, third baseman Nolan Arenado was to the point.

"There's no doubt we need to find a way to shorten up to put the ball in play, or try to get ready to hit early in the count," Arenado said. "We've got to be a little bit better about that."

Meanwhile manager Bud Black, who noted after Sunday's loss to Milwaukee that the team's overall strikeout totals are "not something we are going to stand for as we move forward," said the team is putting an emphasis on a two-strike approach during hitting meetings, but he declined to say exactly what those points of emphasis were.

“With the 12 position players, there’s certain mechanical things with each guy that they need to do that are different from the next guy. There isn’t one, common approach,” Black said. “There’s specific messages within each player’s swing that we talk about.”

And even though the Rockies aren’t alone in their division with their contact problems — the Padres, Diamondbacks and Giants also all rank at the bottom of the NL in strikeouts — Black said that, nor the league trend overall, is not an excuse for the Rockies’ strikeout issues.

“We worry about the Rockies. That’s our concern is, what we do,” Black said. “Our concern is how we play, and what we do as a group to beat the other team and make us the best team we can be. We know as a group, we have to cut down on our strikeouts.”

National League strikeout leaders*

Team (total)

1. San Diego, 416
2. San Francisco, 392
3. Arizona, 390
4. Colorado, 379
5. Philadelphia, 378

Team (per game)

1. San Diego, 9.90
2. Arizona, 9.75
3. Philadelphia, 9.69
4. San Francisco, 9.56
5. Colorado, 9.24

Player (total)

1. Trevor Story, Colorado, 53
2. Paul Goldschmidt, Arizona, 53
3. Michael Taylor, Washington, 51
4. Yoenis Céspedes, New York, 50
5. Lewis Brinson, Miami, 49
6. Ian Happ, Chicago, 49

**going into Monday*

Rockies manager Bud Black on sports betting: “Why should it only be in Vegas?”

Rockies manager Bud Black and first baseman Ian Desmond weigh in on Monday’s decision

Kyle Newman / The Denver Post | May 15, 2018

SAN DIEGO — Count Rockies manager Bud Black among those who weren’t surprised by the Supreme Court’s decision to strike down a federal law that prohibited gambling on football, basketball, baseball and other sports in most states.

“I think it was just a matter of time before this was going to happen,” Black said. “I’m not an avid follower of sports betting, but it seemed to me, why should it only be in Vegas?”

Monday’s 6-3 ruling negated the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act, a 1992 law that made Nevada the only state where someone could wager on a game. According to the Center for Gambling Research, Colorado is one of 16 states expected to offer sports betting within the next two years.

What expanded gambling means for a sport with its own sticky past with the subject — such as the Black Sox scandal where players were accused of intentionally throwing the 1919 World Series, and the lifetime banishment of Pete Rose — remains to be seen.

“There’s always that threat (of gambling affecting the game’s integrity) — we’ve had that in our game in the past when it’s not been legal,” Rockies first baseman Ian Desmond said. “And there’s always speculation about whether college football or the NFL or NBA (are influenced) — there’s a lot of money there, obviously, and a lot of people in dark circles, dark streets and dark alleys that have a lot at stake.”

Major League Baseball, along with all the other three major American professional sports leagues, had urged the court to uphold the law based off the argument that gambling expansion would hurt the integrity of the game.

“Today’s decision by the United States Supreme Court will have profound effects on Major League Baseball,” the league said in a statement.

“As each state considers whether to allow sports betting, we will continue to seek the proper protections for our sport, in partnership with other professional sports. Our most important priority is protecting the integrity of our games. We will continue to support legislation that creates air-tight coordination and partnerships between the state, the casino operators and the governing bodies in sports toward that goal.”

Rockies place DJ LeMahieu on 10-day disabled list with left thumb sprain, recall Pat Valaika from Triple-A
The sprain came during LeMahieu's third at-bat against Milwaukee's Freddy Peralta on Sunday in Denver

Kyle Newman / The Denver Post | May 15, 2018

The Rockies placed second baseman DJ LeMahieu on the 10-day disabled list on Monday with a left thumb sprain suffered in Colorado's loss to the Brewers on Sunday.

The sprain came during LeMahieu's third at-bat against Freddy Peralta, and with the injury, the all-star is headed to the D.L. for the second time this season. He was also shelved for 10 days with a strained right hamstring on April 30.

With the move, Colorado recalled infielder Pat Valaika from Triple-A Albuquerque.

Valaika, sent down on May 8 when LeMahieu came back from his hamstring injury, has hit .103 in 58 major league at-bats in 2018.

Kyle Freeland is Succeeding with Elevation

Craig Edwards / FanGraphs | May 14, 2018

If one were to assemble a list of the major-league pitchers whose strengths are most well suited to surviving in Colorado, Kyle Freeland would appear among that collection of names — in particular, because he possesses both a good sinker and strong command. The sinker is important for inducing ground balls, which cause much less damage than balls in the air at Coors, due both to the altitude at which the park rests and the spacious outfield it contains. Command is important not only because mistake pitches are punished more swiftly at Coors, but also because walks tend to amplify the consequences of those mistakes.

Kyle Freeland had a modestly successful rookie season a year ago, getting a lot of ground balls and putting together a 4.57 FIP, perfectly average when factoring in his ballpark. He struggled a little to start the season, but over his last four starts, he's defied the Coors Field stereotype by abandoning his sinking fastball and pitching up in the zone. So far, it is working.

For comparison, here are Freeland's stats last season, as well as his starts this season split in half.

Kyle Freeland During Three Periods

Period	IP	K%	BB%	HR/9	ERA	FIP
2017	156.0	15.6%	9.2%	1.0	4.10	4.57
First Four Starts, 2018	20.0	19.1%	10.1%	2.3	5.85	6.05
Last Four Starts, 2018	27.1	25.5%	7.6%	0.0	1.65	2.05

Comparing Freeland's 2018 numbers to his 2017 line, one finds similar walk and home-run rates, a decreased ground-ball rate, and an increase in strikeouts. On the whole, Freeland seems to have improved as a pitcher since last season. By breaking down 2018 into two four-start clips, however, we find that those improvements are almost entirely a product of his last four starts.

To determine whether Freeland's recent performance is the result of luck or random variation, we need to go a bit deeper. Freeland hasn't allowed any homers in his last four starts, which is good but unsustainable. However, even with a more typical home-run rate, the strikeout and walk rates tell us he's been pitching differently.

Below is Freeland's pitch mix from three different periods: the 2017 season, his first four starts this year, and his most recent four starts.

Kyle Freeland Pitch Mix

Pitch	2017	First Four Starts, 2018	Last Four Starts, 2018
Four-Seam	31.5%	21.5%	46.1%
Sinker	33.0%	32.1%	8.0%
Cutter	24.9%	29.1%	29.1%
Change	6.4%	11.1%	11.1%
Slider	4.2%	6.3%	5.7%

SOURCE: Brooks Baseball

We can see that Freeland is using his cutter a little bit more this season, consistent across all eight starts. There's also increased use of the change, a pitch he discussed with David Laurila before the season. Both of those usage rates, while having increased since 2017, have remained the same throughout this year. The big difference comes in the form of increased usage of the four-seam fastball at the expense of the sinker.

While the sinker-throwing pitcher inducing ground balls might seem like the good fit for Colorado, that's not actually the reality of the situation: the Rockies' best pitcher, for example, is Jon Gray and he throws a four-seam fastball most of the time. Chad Bettis and German Marquez also feature four-seam fastballs. What's interesting about those pitchers — as well as Freeland — is that the spin rate on those four-seam fastballs is below average in every case and all those pitchers do a solid job of inducing ground-balls. Only Tyler Anderson has given up a lot of fly balls, and he deploys a sinker a decent amount of the time. Perhaps a low-spin four-seam fastball that has some of the swing-and-miss features of a typical four-seamer and *also* some ground-ball tendencies of a two-seamer is an ideal fit for Coors. It seems to be working for Freeland, at least.

As a lefty starter, one of Freeland's main concerns is how to contend with righties. Here's his strikeout and walk rates by handedness.

Kyle Freeland Platoon Changes

Split	K%	BB%
First Four Starts v LHH	31.8%	18.2%
Last Four Starts v LHH	56.0%	4.0%
First Four Starts v RHH	14.9%	7.5%
Last Four Starts v RHH	16.1%	8.6%

Perhaps surprisingly, Freeland's outcomes against righties actually don't seem to have changed all that much during his recent run. We'll get back to that. Where the big swing has occurred is to lefties. We are dealing with a pretty small sample here, so it is tough to be concrete about the changes. The pitch mix hasn't actually changed all that much, as the table below indicates.

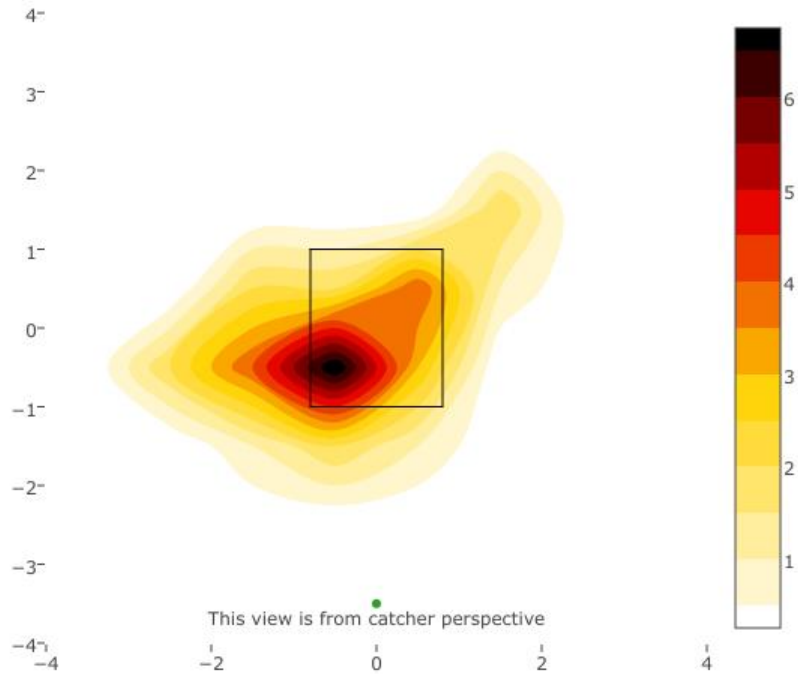
Kyle Freeland Pitching v Lefties

Pitch	First Four v LHH	Last Four v LHH
Four-Seam	32.2%	32.7%
Sinker	13.8%	8.2%
Cutter	50.6%	55.1%
Change	0.0%	0.0%
Slider	3.5%	4.1%

SOURCE: Brooks Baseball

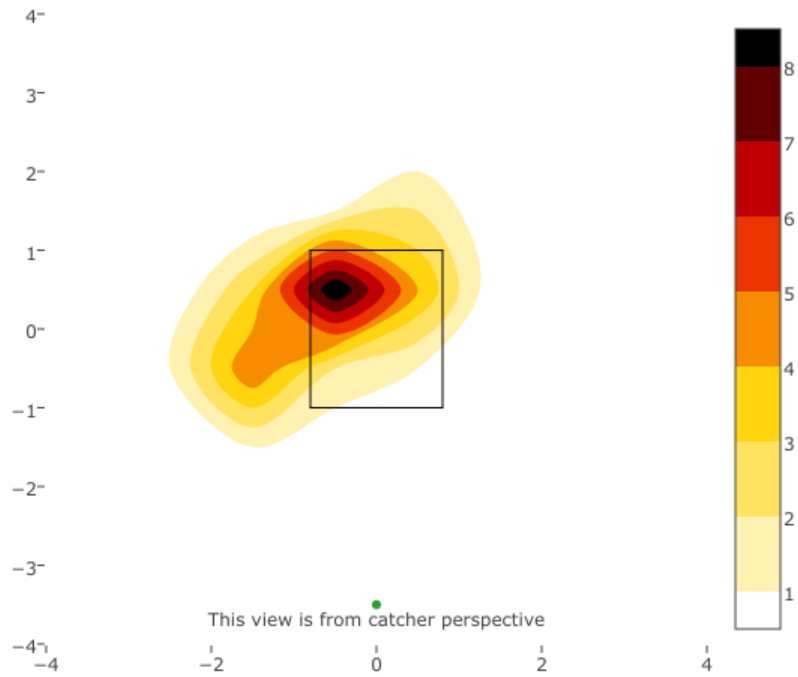
Rather, it's the location of the pitches that has changed. Consider: this is where his four-seam fastballs went against lefties in the first four starts.

Kyle Freeland Heatmap

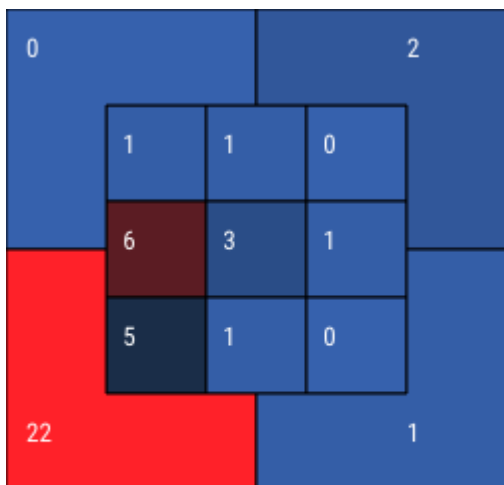


Low and away isn't a bad place to pitch against lefties, but it does look like he might have left a few in the middle of the plate. Here's where the location has been the last four games.

Kyle Freeland Heatmap



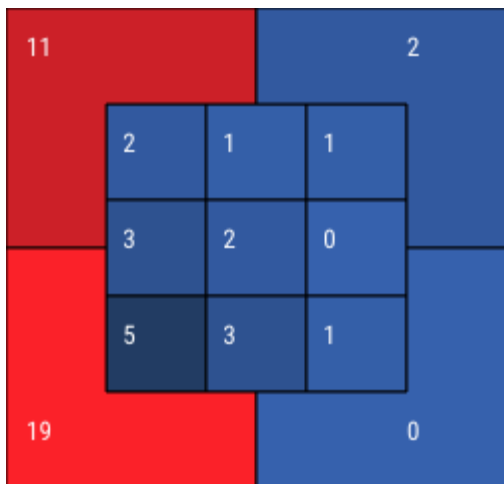
Freeland is going higher in the zone and further away from the batter on the fastball. These changes are admittedly slight, and might not hold up, but the bigger change has occurred on the cutter. The story here is perhaps better told through a zone map, from Baseball Savant. Here's where Freeland was throwing his cutter the first four games of the season.



Kyle Freeland
Pitch Breakdown
[Catcher Perspective]

That's pretty typical for a cutter/hard slider: down and away from same-handed batters. Notice the zero in the top left.

Now, here's what he's done in his last four starts.

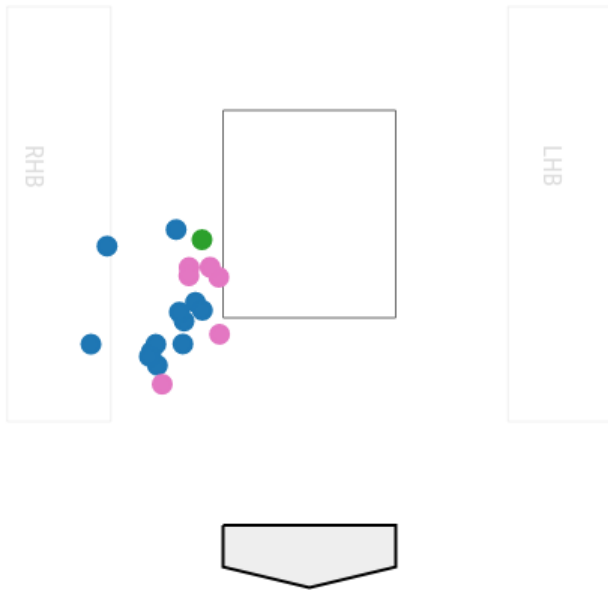


Kyle Freeland
Pitch Breakdown
[Catcher Perspective]

Getting the pitch up induces more swings. Of the 11 pitches in the top-left quadrant, Freeland got six strikes on five swings: two ground balls, one foul, two whiffs, and a called strike. Even in the lower-left quadrant, Freeland got better results when the ball was higher. Here are those cutters.

Kyle Freeland

BALL
BLOCKED BALL
FOUL
SWINGING STRIKE



There were just two swings and misses in the bottom half of that quadrant with 10 balls. That pitch is more likely to be wasted. With slight elevation, though, we see five of seven swings with one foul and four whiffs. Freeland is experiencing more success by moving up in the zone. It is not as if these pitches aren't still low, but they are more likely to generate swings if they aren't near the dirt, like this cutter to Brandon Nimmo.

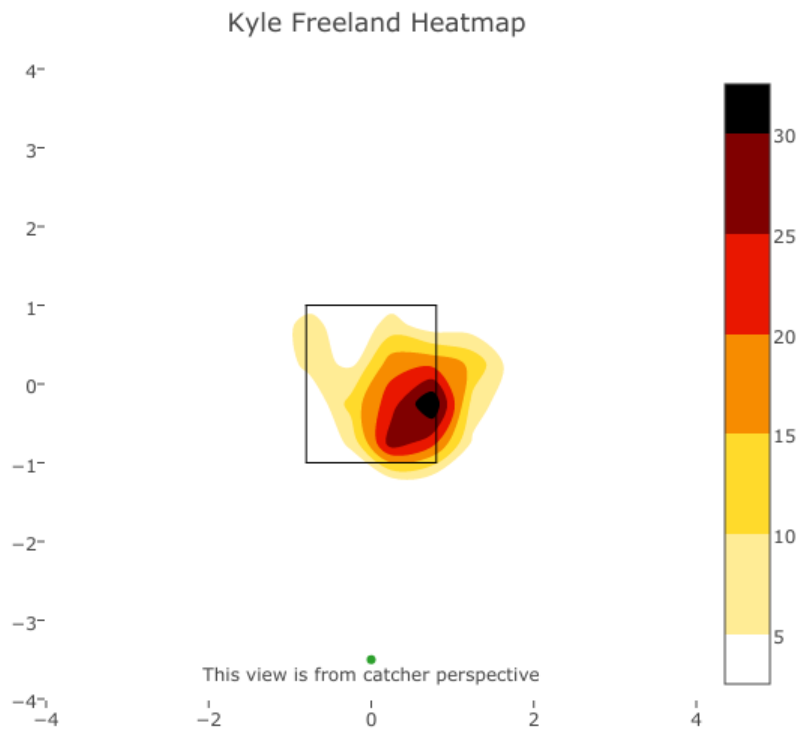
Freeland isn't likely to keep striking out 14 lefties for every free pass he gives them, but he appears to be over some of the control issues he endured during the first part of the season. His strikeout rate against lefties last season was 27% against just a 5% walk rate. That will work just fine, but there does seem to be some potential for improvement. Against righties, switching to the four-seam fastball might not get as many ground balls as it used to, but it might reduce the number of extra-base hits. Last season, Freeland gave up 17 extra-base hits on the sinker, more than three times as many as the four-seamer despite fairly similar usage. The change in pitch mix the last four games has been huge.

Kyle Freeland Pitching v Righties

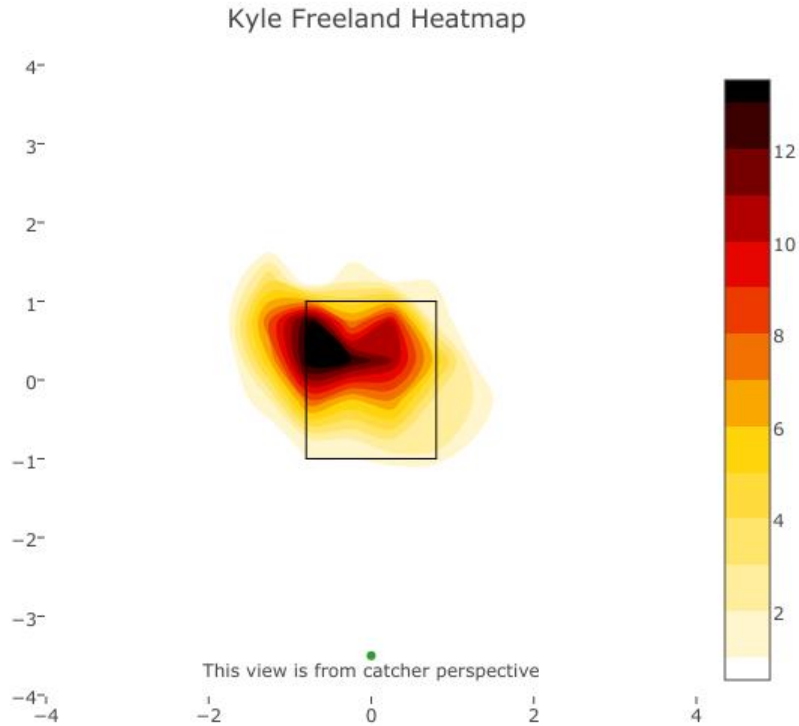
Pitch	First Four v RHH	Last Four v RHH
Four-Seam	18.20%	50.70%
Sinker	37.70%	7.90%
Cutter	22.20%	20.30%
Change	14.60%	14.80%
Slider	7.10%	6.20%

SOURCE: Brooks Baseball

The sinker is a nibbling pitch, as seen below to righties in Freeland's career, per Baseball Savant.



Freeland recently indicated he wants to be [more aggressive](#) inside. This is where his four-seamer goes to righties.



Freeland is coming after batters, whether they are right-handed or left-handed. He's making more aggressive pitches above the knees, even if they aren't all in the strike zone. He's got the command to be effective, and it's been working of late. If he can keep dominating lefties while pitching more competently against righties, he might move from fifth starter to No. 2 pretty quickly.

Rockies 6, Padres 4: Gerardo Parra's 3-run homer is the difference

Rockies continue their odd trend, hit three more road homers

Ryan Schoppe / Purple Row | May 14, 2018

Earl Weaver would have been proud. With the game tied at three in the sixth inning, the Rockies got back to back singles from Ian Desmond and Chris Iannetta. Gerardo Parra strode to the plate and hit a three run home run that was the difference maker for the Rockies. Tyler Anderson pitched a strong $5\frac{2}{3}$ innings for the Rockies, and outside of Bryan Shaw allowing the inherited runner to score, the bullpen was able to shut down the Padres for the rest of the game.

Notable home runs

While Parra's three-run homer was the deciding factor, a couple of home runs that tied and then gave the Rockies the lead in the fifth inning are worth noting. Daniel Castro hit his first home run with the Rockies and also his first since 2015. Three batters later, Noel Cuevas hit the first home run of his young career. Since finally earning a MLB promotion after over eight years in the minors, Cuevas has hit .308/.357/.385 and has been even better against left-handed pitching, which has made him the perfect platoon partner for a Rockies outfield full of lefties.

The Rockies incredible start to the season when playing at anywhere besides Coors Field continued. They are now an impressive 16-8 on the road. Considering that they are a disappointing 7-11 at the usually friendly confines of Coors Field and it's a bit off for a team that has historically struggled to compete on the road.

On one hand, the Rockies dominance on the road makes sense. The team is built to win games away from Coors Field where their young pitching staff can get deep enough into games and hand things off to the good part of the Rockies pen. The team doesn't have enough offensive firepower currently to win the slug fests that inevitably happen at Coors and bail out the pitchers when they struggle. However there's an oddity with the Rockies offense that's worth noting. They've been better at hitting home runs on the road than at Coors.

In their 18 road games, the Rockies have hit 20 homers, a rate of 1.11 HR/game. On the road, they've now hit 36 home runs in 24 games, a rate of 1.5 HR/game. It's still early enough for this to simply be a small-sample-size oddity, but it's been a big part of their ability to pull out the close games on the road.

What's next

The Rockies conclude their two-game series tomorrow afternoon at 1:40 pm. Germán Márquez will take the mound for the Rockies. Former Rockies pitcher Jordan Lyles will start for the Padres. This will be Lyles second start for the Padres this season after working mainly out of the bullpen with good results. In his first start on May 10, Lyles went 5 innings and struck out six against only one walk and allowed one run. The game will be available on all of the usual media channels.

Colorado Rockies: Looking at the roller coaster 2018 season

Aaron Hurt / Roxpile | May 14, 2018

I don't know which is causing me more gray hairs. My 2- and 4-year old sons or the 2018 Colorado Rockies. The roller coaster ride that has been the first month and a half of the season has been driving me absolutely crazy.

If you want a clear picture of the Rockies' roller coaster season, take a look the Rockies' results since mid-April. The Rockies are 18-16 since April 8, including Monday's 6-4 win in San Diego. In those 34 games, the Rockies have a six-game winning streak, three three-game winning streaks, and three three-game losing streaks.

What is even more maddening, here is a tweet by Rockies' field reporter Taylor McGregor before Sunday's 7-3 loss to the Brewers.

"Since the Coors Field opened in 1995, today will be the 8th time an opposing team throws an MLB debut at Colorado. Combined ERA for previous 7 times: 8.37 ERA (27 ER in 29 IP)"

The debut for pitcher Freddy Peralta was just a bit better than an 8.37 ERA. How about 5.2 innings, one hit, two walks and 13 strikeouts? This is after the Rockies had scored 14 runs in the previous two games. Unbelievable!

One of the reasons for the inconsistent play of this team is the inconsistency of the Rockies' everyday lineup. In the first 40 games this year, Bud Black rolled out 31 different defensive lineups. Yes, matchups, injuries, suspensions and horrible play by some players have factored into this amount ... but that is still not an excuse for this number being as high as it is. The 31 different lineups also leads to the biggest question of them all. If the Rockies' are willing to shake up the lineup daily, why are they willing to put up with inconsistent play? Why are they so afraid to shake up the roster? There are multiple players in Triple-A Albuquerque that need to be up with the big league club.

Why are Tom Murphy, Jordan Patterson, and Raimel Tapia not in a Rockies' uniform right now? With the lack of offensive production from the catcher's spot, Murphy, who is currently hitting .297 with nine home runs in the minors, would be an offensive upgrade behind the plate. We all know of Ian Desmond's struggles, so why are the Rockies' keeping the streaking Patterson, a career .286 minor leaguer who hit 26 homers in Triple-A last year, in Albuquerque? Tapia should also be up, but the crowded outfield is blocking his way.

Of course, calling up a bunch of players from the minors would probably lead to more inconsistent play and growing pains ... but at least they would trying something different than rolling out the same underperforming players day in and day out.

Colorado Rockies: Looking at the roller coaster 2018 season

The Colorado Rockies just announced before their series opening game with the San Diego Padres on Monday that they made some roster moves

Noah Yingling / Roxpile | May 14, 2018

The Colorado Rockies just announced that they placed second baseman DJ LeMahieu on the 10-day disabled list with a left thumb sprain. In a corresponding move, the Rockies recalled infielder Pat Valaika from Triple-A Albuquerque.

This is the second time that LeMahieu has been on the disabled list for the Rockies this season. His first stint on the disabled list was due to a right hamstring strain that he suffered in Miami. He had just returned from his DL stint on last Tuesday.

In his return, he was 5-for-22 (.227 batting average), with only one RBI and no extra base hits.

In 2018, LeMahieu has an offensive slash line of .279/.350/.457 with an OPS+ of 106, eight doubles, five home runs, and 13 RBI.

Pat Valaika

Valaika was just recently optioned to Triple-A after an awful start to 2018. He had an offensive slash line of .103/.175/.155 and an atrocious OPS+ of -14. The last game he appeared in at the major league level was on May 5 against the New York Mets. In that game, he went 1-for-3 with a single and strikeout.

At Triple-A Albuquerque, he only appeared in five games with the Isotopes and he struggled in five games there. He went 3-for-17 (.176 batting average), with a .211 on-base percentage, and a meager slugging percentage of .176. All three hits that he had were singles.

Final Thoughts

It's unfortunate for the Rockies that LeMahieu has to hit the DL twice in such a short period of time. Considering that LeMahieu has been one of the few bright spots, it is not good for the team. Also too, even though Pat Valaika gives the team more depth at first base behind Ian Desmond's awful start to the season, obviously, he hasn't done much better.

Colorado Rockies: Ian Desmond is on pace to have the worst season ever

Jake Shapiro / Roxpile | May 14, 2018

There have been 19,248 players in Major League Baseball history. Many of those players wish to have careers like Ian Desmond has had. He's twice been an All-Star, thrice been awarded a Silver Slugger and has been on a playoff team four times.

This season, Ian Desmond is doing something else, something that if he did it, he would find himself at the bottom of spreadsheets and stat books for decades.

Through 39 games played for the Colorado Rockies this season, Desmond has slashed .170/.213/.355 with 6 home runs and 17 RBI. There are some dumbfounding peripherals too, like the one flyball he's put into the air in play to his pull-side since early September of 2017, his 65.3% groundball rate, 0.15 walk to strikeout ratio and a first-pitch swing rate of nearly 38 percent.

There are also some dumbfounding comparisons like the fact that Desmond's OPS (.568) is around the two different everyday Rockies players' slugging percentage (Nolan Arenado's is .588 and Charlie Blackmon's is .558). Or that Desmond's .170 batting average isn't even the lowest batting average of a Rockies regular at the moment.

Due to a combination of how much he's played—39 times in 41 team games—, the positions he plays being power positions—first and left field—, and just how bad he has been—33 wRC+—Desmond is on pace to have the worst season ever...of anybody.

At least by total WAR accumulated.

The Rockies have played a quarter of the MLB slate and Desmond has a -1.0 fWAR. The lowest fWAR in the history of baseball for a single season is -4.0 by Jim Levey in 1933 for the St. Louis Browns, who later became the Baltimore Orioles. That came on the heels of his 1931 season, which is fourth worst of all-time at -3.3. In sum, Levey finished his four-year career with a -8.2 fWAR.

Another note about Levey: he became a running back for the NFL's Pittsburgh Pirates (later to be named the Steelers). He played in 13 games while playing baseball. He rushed the ball 55 times and gained 133 yards while also scoring two touchdowns.

Of course, Levey's versatile career came in an era where there were only 154 games played so his 140ish games per season actually saw him do worse per game than Desmond is now. Either way, a quarter of four is one, meaning Desmond is on pace to tie Levey for the worst fWAR season ever.

Still, anything worse than -2.5 fWAR in a given year lands you on the last page of Fangraphs which Desmond is steaming toward. In fact, nobody has bottomed below negative three since Cristian Guzman did it in 1999.

Ian Desmond's start has been so bad that if you include every qualified season in MLB history Desmond's 33 wRC+ is 22nd worst of all-time. That includes 18 players below him who played under rules where five, six, seven, eight or nine balls meant you got a free pass, depending on the year. It's in 1889 that four balls became a walk, since then Desmond's 33 wRC+ is fourth worst of all-time.

Ironically, the only player that's been as bad as Desmond in the past 75 years is Kole Calhoun who has a wRC+ of 6 in 2018. The other two names behind him, include our old friend Jim Levey and Billy Hunter's 1953 where he pieced together a wRC+ of 29. Both Levey and Hunter played for the Browns.

Players have accumulated 89,136 different hitting seasons in Major League Baseball history where they registered at least one at-bat, Ian Desmond is on pace to have the worst one ever. Like Desmond, many would wish to have athletic careers such as Levey's.

Parra's 3-run homer lifts Rockies to 6-4 win over Padres

Gerardo Parra hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the sixth inning as the Colorado Rockies beat the San Diego Padres 6-4 Monday night

The Associated Press | May 15, 2018

SAN DIEGO - Gerardo Parra hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the sixth inning and rookie Noel Cuevas went deep for the first time as the Colorado Rockies beat the San Diego Padres 6-4 Monday night.

Daniel Castro also homered for the Rockies, who won for the second time in six games.

Franmil Reyes made his big league debut for the Padres after leading all of professional baseball in homers with 14 while at Triple-A El Paso. He started in right field and went 0 for 4. He reached on a throwing error by shortstop Trevor Story that allowed Franchy Cordero to score for a 2-1 lead in the fourth.

Freddy Galvis of the Padres finished a homer short of the cycle. Colorado's Nolan Arenado had three hits and an RBI. Tyler Anderson (3-1) allowed four runs, three earned, on seven hits in 5 2/3 innings and reached base twice against rookie lefty Joey Lucchesi. Anderson walked with one out in the third and scored on Arenado's single. He singled in the fifth before being forced out.

Wade Davis pitched the ninth for his 15th save.

Parra gave the Rockies a 6-3 lead when he connected with one out in the sixth off Kazuhisa Makita (0-1), who was making his first appearance since being recalled from Triple-A on Sunday. Parra's second homer of the season came with Ian Desmond and Chris Iannetta aboard on singles.

Castro homered leading off the fifth, his first, and Cuevas connected with two outs for a 3-2 lead. Cuevas made his major league debut on April 22.

Lucchesi struggled through five innings, allowing three runs and six hits while striking out two and walking one. He also was thrown out trying to score on a passed ball to end the third. The big pitcher lumbered down the line and an awkward slide left him short of the plate.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Rockies: Placed All-Star second baseman DJ LeMahieu on the 10-day disabled list with a sprained left thumb and recalled infielder Pat Valaika from Triple-A Albuquerque. LeMahieu was hurt Sunday while taking a swing during a loss to Milwaukee. He was batting .279 with five home runs and 13 RBIs.

UP NEXT

Rockies: RHP German Marquez (2-4, 5.35 ERA) is scheduled to pitch the finale of the two-game series. He tossed three innings against San Diego on April 11 in Denver before being ejected for his part in a brawl that started when San Diego's Luis Perdomo threw behind Arenado.

Padres: RHP Jordan Lyles (0-1, 3.28) will start against his former team.

Rockies put 2B DJ LeMahieu on DL, recall Pat Valaika from Triple-A

The Associated Press | May 14, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- The Colorado Rockies have placed All-Star second baseman DJ LeMahieu on the 10-day disabled list with a sprained left thumb and recalled infielder Pat Valaika from Triple-A Albuquerque.

The moves were made before Monday night's game against the San Diego Padres.

LeMahieu was hurt Sunday while taking a swing during a loss to Milwaukee. He was batting .279 with five home runs and 13 RBIs. The two-time All-Star and Gold Glove winner also was on the DL from April 30 to May 8 with a strained right hamstring. He had never been on the disabled list prior to this season.

Valaika, who played at UCLA, made his first career opening-day roster before being optioned to Albuquerque on May 8.

He hit .103 with one RBI during his first stint with the Rockies.