



MEDIA CLIPS – Feb. 1, 2019

Arenado, Rox agree to record 1-year, \$26M deal

Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 31, 2019

DENVER -- The Rockies and third baseman **Nolan Arenado** avoided arbitration Thursday with a one-year deal, the team announced. A Major League source said the contract is worth \$26 million, a new record for an arbitration-eligible player. The contract, worth \$3 million more than the deal the Blue Jays and third baseman **Josh Donaldson** reached last year, is seen as the possible building block toward the Rockies' stated goal -- a multiyear deal with Arenado, who is eligible for free agency at the end of the 2019 season.

Arenado, who turns 28 on April 16, requested \$30 million and the Rockies offered \$24 million when filings were made earlier this month. The process assured Arenado of the Major League record. Here are the previous five record-setting deals for arbitration-eligible players:

- Donaldson, \$23 million (January 2018)
- **Bryce Harper**, Nationals, \$21.63 million (May 2017, for 2018)
- **David Price**, Tigers, \$19.75 million (January 2015)
- **Max Scherzer**, Tigers, \$15.53 million (January 2014)
- Prince Fielder, Brewers, \$15.5 million (January 2011)

But the Rockies' sights go beyond a record. During the Winter Meetings in December, general manager Jeff Bridich said that if the Rockies go over \$200 million in a contract for Arenado, it was possible that such a deal could fit in a payroll that the club plans to "continue to grow responsibly."

Arenado has won National League Gold Glove Awards in each of his six seasons in the Majors, and in 2018 led the NL with 38 home runs. It was the third time he finished at the top of the league. In '15, he and Harper tied for the league lead with 42, and in '16 Arenado and **Chris Carter** tied for the NL lead with 41 homers.

Former Rockies player and current AT&T SportsNet broadcaster Ryan Spilborghs witnessed Arenado not celebrating, but practicing his craft Thursday at Cicerone Field at the University of California, Irvine -- where he normally practices fielding during the offseason.

The pattern of the Rockies' offseason strategy has demonstrated how seriously staying in position to sign Arenado to a longer deal is a key part of their strategy going forward.

Believing they could fill holes from within, the Rockies watched two important free agents sign multiyear contracts with the Yankees -- right-handed relief pitcher **Adam Ottavino** for three years and \$27 million, and second baseman **DJ LeMahieu** for two years and \$24 million.

Even before LeMahieu left, the Rockies knew they needed to improve an offense that lagged at times, even though Colorado made a second straight postseason appearance. But to control payroll, its only big-ticket signing was **Daniel Murphy** to play first base under a two-year, \$24 million deal that deferred \$3 million (half) of his 2021 option.

But the Rockies believe some of their improvement can come from within.

While longtime right fielder **Carlos Gonzalez** is testing free agency, the team is increasing the role of **David Dahl**, who has had a difficult injury history but has a .293/.341/.518 slash line and 23 homers over 140 games in 2016 and 2018. They're trusting highly touted organizational products such as **Ryan McMahon**, **Garrett Hampson** (the Rockies' **No. 4 prospect** per MLB Pipeline), Brendan Rodgers (No. 1 Rockies, No. 10 overall prospect) and **Pat Valaika**.

This offseason, the Rockies have put their money into the left side of the infield. Alongside Arenado is shortstop **Trevor Story**, who avoided arbitration with a one-year, \$5 million contract and is under club control for two more years.

The Rockies have one-year deals with all of their 2019 arbitration-eligible players -- Arenado, Story, right-handed starting pitchers **Chad Bettis** (\$3.3 million) and **Jon Gray** (\$2.93 million), left-handed starter **Tyler Anderson** (\$2.63 million), lefty reliever **Chris Rusin** (\$1.69 million), righty reliever **Scott Oberg** (\$1.3 million) and catcher **Tony Wolters** (\$960,000).

The Rockies' Opening Day payroll is expected to top \$143 million once contracts for low service-time players or higher-salaried players who earn spots are figured. Spotrac placed last season's total adjusted salaries at \$143,968,544.

Included in that figure was a long-ago settled \$4 million payment to shortstop **Jose Reyes**, who was released in 2016.

Rodgers set to compete for starting 2B role

No. 10 prospect in MLB sees similarities with Story in 2016

Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 31, 2019

DENVER -- Rockies top prospect Brendan Rodgers aims to relive **Trevor Story's** story this Spring Training.

Rodgers was barely out of high school and in Minor League camp in 2016, the year Story grabbed the starting shortstop job by batting .340 with six home runs in Cactus League play. Like Story in '16, Rodgers -- the No. 1 prospect in the Rockies' system and No. 10 in baseball per MLB Pipeline -- is a recent top Draft pick whose highest level of experience is limited time at Triple-A Albuquerque.

"I'm sure [Story] had the same goal and same mindset that I'm telling you right now," said Rodgers, 22, who arrived at the Rockies' complex in Scottsdale, Ariz., nearly three weeks ago to prepare to compete for starts and playing time at second base.

The difference is that Story had a fairly clear path to start at shortstop in 2016, with **Jose Reyes** facing an eventual suspension under MLB's Joint Domestic Violence Policy. Rodgers is competing at second with **Ryan McMahon**, who appeared in 91 regular-season games last year as a rookie; and **Garrett Hampson**, who saw action in 24 Major League games. Both also made postseason appearances. Add to them **Pat Valaika**, who struggled last year but was the Rockies' top pinch-hitter in '17.

But after Rodgers responded well while riding an accelerated learning curve in 2018, the Rockies have no qualms about identifying him as a candidate to start at second base.

Selected third overall in the 2015 Draft, Rodgers has batted .291 with an .837 OPS in his four Minor League seasons while playing shortstop, second base and third base. Last season he hit for a .275 batting average, .342 on-base percentage and .493 slugging percentage at Double-A Hartford, with 17 homers in 95 games. At Triple-A Albuquerque, Rodgers slashed .232/.264/.290 with no homers in 19 games, but dramatically increased his knowledge base.

Rodgers needed it. Hampson earned the late-season Major League nod over him at the end of 2018 because of a more advanced approach. Drafted in the third round in '16, Hampson is two years older than Rodgers, and had a three-year collegiate career at Long Beach State.

"I watched a lot more video this year and knew what I was going up against before it happened," said Rodgers, who signed a \$5.5 million bonus after being drafted out of Lake Mary (Fla.) High School. "And in Triple-A, pretty much every time I had an at-bat, someone has already faced this guy. They would tell me little tips in how they attack, like what they do 0-2, 2-0. I just really listened and learned a lot."

Rodgers also appreciated the continuing mentorship of **Matt Holliday**, who was at Albuquerque preparing for a late-season comeback with the Rockies this past year.

"He's definitely a guy I want to keep in contact with over the years," Rodgers said. "He helped me mentally at the plate. That guy has been in a lot of tough situations."

Rodgers missed nine days in August with a strain at the bottom of his right hamstring. A right shoulder injury he suffered when he slipped at the end of a swing during one of the last Triple-A games knocked him out of the Arizona Fall League. But Rodgers' health is now clean. So is his mind, after an initial flurry of interest came his way when longtime Rockies second baseman **DJ LeMahieu** signed with the Yankees, officially opening Colorado's second-base race.

"A lot of people were texting me about it," Rodgers said. "But I'm a laid-back kind of guy. I don't really think too deep into it. I just gotta go out and show people that I can play."

Reynolds returning to Rox on Minors deal

Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Jan. 30, 2019

DENVER -- Veteran **Mark Reynolds** said Wednesday that he has agreed to a Minor League contract with the Rockies, for whom he hit 44 home runs and drove in 150 runs between 2016-17. Reynolds will be invited to Major League camp. The club has not confirmed the deal.

Last year, Reynolds, 35, didn't land a deal until April 17, when he signed with the Nationals. He appeared in 86 Major League games, including a memorable 10-RBI performance against the Marlins on July 7, and batted .248 with 13 homers and 40 RBIs.

The Rockies watched Reynolds bat .274 with a .354 on-base percentage (his highest numbers in those categories with the eight teams he has played for in 12 seasons). In 2017, he tied for the longest average distance of any hitter with at least 20 round-trippers, per Statcast™. Colorado alerted Reynolds' agent during the Winter Meetings that it was interested. Reynolds said he had interest from other clubs, but he spoke with general manager Jeff Bridich and manager Bud Black, and through his representatives had an agreement in about 90 minutes.

"I just told them, 'Look, I want to help a contender win games,'" said Reynolds, who has 294 career homers. "I don't know what my role is going to be. It could be spot-starting or coming off the bench and trying to hit a homer off a closer, which is always fun."

Colorado also hopes Reynolds' resurgence against left-handed pitchers continues. In 2017, he hit just .231 in 143 at-bats against lefties. Last season with the Nats, however, he surged to .309 in 68 at-bats.

Reynolds could fill a right-handed pinch-hit role, a la **Matt Holliday** last September. Or he could push for starts. Both years with Colorado, Reynolds came to camp on such a make-good deal, and wound up the Rockies' primary first baseman. Six-time National League Gold Glove Award-winning third baseman **Nolan Arenado** credited Reynolds' ability to handle throws in the dirt for part of his success.

This winter, Colorado reached a two-year contract with left-handed-hitting **Daniel Murphy**, a teammate of Reynolds in Washington, to play first base. Reynolds offers insurance there, but he has extensive experience at third base and has made seven appearances at second base and 13 in the outfield, spread among the positions.

Should Reynolds win a roster spot in a bench role, it would represent a different plan for the Rockies than 2018. The team began the year with younger players such as left-handed-hitting **Ryan McMahon** and **Mike Tauchman**, and right-handed-hitting **Pat Valaika** in reserve roles. Later, they used right-handed-hitting **Noel Cuevas**. All bounced between the Majors

and Minors last year, although McMahon played well enough to earn a postseason roster spot and earn consideration for the starting job at second base this year.

Nolan Arenado, Rockies agree on record one-year, \$26 million deal to avoid arbitration

Patrick Saunders | The Denver Post | Jan. 31, 2019

For Nolan Arenado, “Moneyball” is over, at least for now. With spring training just around the corner, it’s time to concentrate on baseball.

Thursday, the all-star third baseman and the Rockies agreed to a one-year, \$26 million contract, avoiding salary arbitration. The \$26 million is a record for arbitration-eligible players, surpassing the one-year, \$23 million contract Toronto gave third baseman Josh Donaldson prior to last season.

“It’s what I wanted,” Arenado said. “I’m glad it’s done. Now I can focus on baseball, nothing more.”

Arenado originally asked for \$30 million while the Rockies countered with a \$24 million offer.

Arenado, agent Joel Wolf, general manager Jeff Bridich and Rockies owner Dick Monfort sat down for a long session in the Los Angeles area to complete the deal. The length of the meeting, and the fact that the two sides avoided arbitration, could be a positive sign that the Rockies are working toward signing Arenado to a long-term deal.

Arenado is in the final year of his contract and is scheduled to become a free agent at the end of the season. The two sides are expected to discuss Arenado’s long-term future throughout the winter.

During the winter meetings in December, Bridich said the club plans to follow a “responsible growth” plan, but indicated that the Rockies could manage a contract worth \$200 million or more for Arenado.

Wednesday, Arenado told The Denver Post that contract talks were “absolutely not” a distraction.

“My whole goal is to be ready for the season and then let the rest of it take care of itself,” he said. “My agent is taking care of all of that. I just want us to win again because there is nothing better. And I want to do it (in Colorado).”

Last January, the Rockies signed outfielder Charlie Blackmon to a \$14 million contract to avoid arbitration, but on April 4 they reached a six-year contract guaranteeing \$108 million. That replaced the original 2018 agreement and gave Blackmon a \$12 million salary with a \$2 million signing bonus. This season, Blackmon will make \$21.3 million, second-highest on the team to Arenado’s \$26 million.

Arenado, 27, has been a perennial National League MVP candidate and finished third in the voting last season when he led the league with 38 home runs and batted .297. Over his last four seasons he’s slashed .297/.358/.573 with 158 home runs and 503 RBIs. He’s also the only third baseman in big-league history to win a Gold Glove Award in each of his first six seasons in the majors.

If Colorado and Arenado don’t reach a long-term deal, he will likely be the top player in next year’s free-agent market and could command a contract worth more than \$200 million.

For now, however, his thoughts are on the 2019 season.

“My goal is always the same, and that’s being on the field over 155 (games) and help the team win,” he said. “I’m working hard to find ways to be more consistent, and to have drills in place to get back to when I’m struggling or feeling out of whack.

“I can’t wait for this season. I’m more excited to get to spring training this year than I’ve been in a long time. I might even head out two weeks early.”

Rockies Insider: A window into the offseason routines of outfielders Noel Cuevas, Raimel Tapia and David Dahl

All winter, Cuevas' Instagram stories were laded with evidence of his grueling workouts at a bare-bones diamond in Camuy

Kyle Newman | The Denver Post | Jan. 31, 2019

With spring training just weeks away, a few of the most active Rockies on social media made sure the baseball world knows they haven't been resting on their laurels this offseason.

While it's safe to assume social media-less Nolan Arenado was consistently mashing baseballs in southern California or somewhere else, the best window into the team's individual offseason digs was presented to fans by young outfielders Noel Cuevas, Raimel Tapia and David Dahl via their Instagram accounts.

Cuevas headed back to his hometown of Camuy, Puerto Rico, to work out. All winter, his Instagram stories were laden with evidence of his grueling workouts at a bare-bones diamond in Camuy, where he practiced fielding and tee work in addition to bombing batting-practice pitches into the dense green foliage beyond the fence.

Fans also got a glimpse into Cuevas' strength and conditioning via videos from what appears to be his home in Camuy: sled pulls on the grass, sprints on the driveway coming back.

The 27-year-old who hit .233 in 153 at-bats last season after making his big-league debut April 22 is clearly hungry for another chance to somehow crack Colorado's outfield rotation this spring.

Tapia was also not stateside and posted a video on Instagram of him hitting a home run at a ballfield in his native Dominican Republic.

The 24-year-old, who is out of minor league options, has hit .274 over parts of three seasons with Colorado while consistently proving himself as a contact hitter with speed in the high minor leagues. Hence, 2019 will be a pivotal year for the outfielder.

And finally, I'd be remiss not to mention David Dahl's well-Instagrammed grind this offseason down in Scottsdale, where he, Kyle Freeland, Ryan McMahon, Jeff Hoffman and an array of other Rockies live and train in the winter.

Dahl — likely to be one of Colorado's starting outfielders in 2019 — hit .273 with 16 homers in 77 games last season and could be in for a breakout campaign if he stays healthy throughout the summer. If the dedicated weightlifting regimen Dahl documented this winter is any indication, the 24-year-old is more than ready to go.

Rockies Mailbag: Fans not impressed with lack of offseason moves from Bridich and Co.

Bottom line: If the Rockies could have re-signed LeMahieu and acquired Murphy, their infield would have been one of the best in baseball.

Patrick Saunders | The Denver Post | Jan. 29, 2019

Denver Post sports writer Patrick Saunders posts his Rockies Mailbag every other week on Tuesdays during the season and once per month during the offseason.

Hey Patrick! I've never loved Charlie Blackmon in center field. I've always seen him as sub-par defensively and would rather not see him burn himself out playing center in that huge outfield at Coors Field. I know Garrett Hampson is naturally an infielder but what are the odds they try him out in center and to utilize his crazy speed?

— *Blake Coulter, Littleton*

Blake, there certainly is a chance that Hampson gets a look in center field during spring training, but David Dahl also will get a shot, as well Ian Desmond, whom both general manager Jeff Bridich and manager Bud Black have said will move from first base to the outfield.

Hampson remains in the running to replace DJ LeMahieu at second base, where he'll be competing with Ryan McMahon and prospect Brendan Rodgers for the job.

I'm very high on Hampson, as are the Rockies. They love his speed and his aptitude for the game (though he had a deer-in-the-headlights look a few times late last season). It will be an interesting spring, for sure.

I don't understand the LeMahieu dump. It looks like Mr. Bridich basically wanted Daniel Murphy instead of LeMahieu for exactly the same amount of money. What's the sense in that? Also, I know Jon Gray has spent the offseason doing intense physical work, but has he done anything to sort out what seem to be his complicated head issues? And by the way, Patrick, thanks for your great work.

— *John Ashton, Denver*

Thanks for the compliment, John.

I understand fans mourning the loss of LeMahieu, and I think the Rockies are going to miss his presence on the field and in the clubhouse. With LeMahieu's departure, Colorado's infield defense has been reduced from the best in the National League to one with question marks at both first and second base.

But this matter is not as straight forward as simply dumping LeMahieu and signing Murphy. True, the money is the same (two years, \$24 million), but Murphy will play first base, not second. Plus, Murphy also has the potential — keep in mind I said “potential” — to provide more power than LeMahieu. He could provide a spark to the offense that the Rockies were missing last year. I think signing Murphy was a strong move and I would not be shocked to see 25-30 home runs.

That being said, I think LeMahieu wanted to return but the Rockies didn't reach out to him with a real contract offer.

Perhaps Bridich figured that with Nolan Arenado's contract status in limbo, LeMahieu was never in their wheelhouse.

Also, remember that LeMahieu wanted to test free agency, so this was not a one-way street.

Bottom line: If the Rockies could have re-signed LeMahieu and acquired Murphy, their infield would have been one of the best in a baseball. As it stands, there are questions as we head toward spring training.

Awesome writers at the Post! I go crazy when I can't read about the Rockies every single day. Thanks! Do you think the reason Bryce Harper and Manny Machado haven't been signed yet might be that teams are saving their gold for Nolan Arenado next year?

— *Dave, Tooele, Utah*

Dave, that might be the case for a couple of teams — the Yankees and Angels come to mind — but the delay on Harper and Machado doesn't have much to do with Arenado. Rather, it has to do with the changing market in baseball. Teams are in the middle of a market correction and they don't want to pay as much money or give out lengthy contracts.

I wrote about the topic, and the brewing labor troubles, in my recent Sunday column. ESPN's Buster Olney, one of the best baseball writers in the business, also addressed the topic in a recent column in which he wrote that St. Louis' Paul Goldschmidt was the litmus test for free agency.

Hey Patrick, the hot stove season isn't over yet for the Rockies, they are going to sign a player well beyond his prime ... when they see CarGo is still out there because no one wants him, they are going to sign him again this season. It is gonna be another mistake by Bridich and Co.

Now I have to ask the important question, why have they not signed Matt Holliday yet? He would be a great veteran leader in the clubhouse for a team looking to win now. Keep up the solid work.

— *Rick, Aurora*

Rick, I don't I agree with your view of Carlos Gonzalez, because I think he will land with a new team. But even if he does return to Colorado, it would be as a fourth outfielder for much less than he was paid last year (\$8 million when all was said and done).

As for Holliday, he wants to return and the Rockies are aware of that. The problem is that with the molasses-like pace of the offseason, veteran role players will have to wait until spring training to land with a team. I wouldn't be shocked to see Holliday back in LoDo, but it's far from a sure thing.

As a Rockies fan and season ticket holder since 1993 I am very unimpressed with the Rockies hot stove moves this year. Is there anything we can look forward to regarding possible signings before the start of the season.

— *Jeff Sandman, a disappointed fan in Centennial*

Jeff, barring a surprise, I think the Rockies are done with big moves this winter. That means the addition of Murphy at first base is their one big splash. I wouldn't be shocked if the club brings in a veteran catcher on a minor-league deal and perhaps a veteran reliever. I agree that it's been a very unimpressive offseason by the Rockies, and that's going to put a lot of pressure on the "kids" like Dahl, McMahon, Hampson and Rodgers. We'll see how they respond.

And the Rockies certainly aren't getting much love by the national sports media. ESPN's David Schoenfield wrote that of all 10 teams that made the postseason last year, the Rockies are the least likely to return.

Looking at the roster at this point: Without blocking McMahon or Hampson, the only realistic areas to add are catcher and outfield. Why aren't the Rockies being a bit more aggressive on guys like A.J. Pollock, Marwin Gonzalez, or Yasmani Grandal? Wouldn't you agree that adding any of those put the Rockies in prime position to win a weakened NL West?

— Jason, Visalia, Calif.

Jason, I'm thinking you sent your question in some time ago, because Pollock has signed with the Dodgers and Grandal signed with the Brewers. The versatile Gonzalez is still a free agent, but I doubt the Rockies land him.

I do wish the Rockies would add another impactful player, and I do believe the division is relatively weak from top to bottom. The Dodgers, however, remain one of the best teams in baseball and present a huge challenge to the Rockies. At this point, Los Angeles remains a heavy favorite to win another NL West title.

I didn't know you were Dusty Saunders son, that's interesting. My mom thought he was really good and got me reading him. We didn't much care about television but he wrote so well that his columns were just enjoyable reading. Same with you and your columns.

— *Bill, Littleton*

Thanks, Bill. I will pass that on to my dad. He was born in Denver in 1931 and then wrote for the Rocky Mountain News and The Denver Post for more than 55 years.

I'm sure this is the No. 1 question on the minds of most Rockies fans: Why is the team so silent this offseason with a number of holes to fill? I'm concerned about the loss of Adam Ottavino with the likes of Bryan Shaw and Jake McGee as our alternatives.

— *Mike, Castle Rock*

Mike, we've touched on a number of these topics already, but looking specifically at the bullpen, Ottavino's departure to the Yankees via free agency does leave a big hole. I wrote a recent column about the topic:

"Shaw and McGee, however, were busts. In 61 games, McGee's ERA was a shockingly high 6.49. Shaw, known as a reliable workhorse in five seasons in Cleveland, had a 5.93 ERA in 61 games. The Rockies kept both pitchers off their postseason roster.

If the duo doesn't rebound in 2019, the Rockies could be in deep trouble, especially with Ottavino gone. The saving grace could be the emergence of right-hander Scott Oberg, who was scored upon just four times in his final 34 games, going 6-1 with a 1.85 ERA and 40 strikeouts vs. just five walks in that stretch.

Still, Ottavino's departure hurts. The Rockies kept in touch with him during the offseason but never offered him a contract. I texted Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich and asked him why the Rockies didn't pursue Ottavino. He didn't answer that question, saying only, "Except for July 19 to July 21 of 2019 (when the Rockies play the Yankees in the Bronx), we wish Adam nothing but the best. He gave us everything he had when he was here."

So I can only surmise that there was simply not enough money to go around. Having spent \$106 million on the bullpen last year, the Rockies weren't going to invest big bucks there again. What's more, star third baseman Nolan Arenado's future in Colorado could be dependent on offering him the biggest contract in franchise history."

Hi Patrick. I appreciate your straightforward answers to some tough questions regarding the Rockies. Here is another one. I know the Rockies were excited to sign Charlie Blackman to a long-term deal, but it appears, at this juncture anyway, that the contract was based upon one amazing season. It is not readily apparent that he will ever approach that same level of greatness that he did in 2017. I believe the Rockies are handcuffed if they do have two giant contracts on their payroll, assuming they pursue Arenado.

I would love for the Rockies to do well, but baseball needs a salary cap for the small-market teams to have a real opportunity. And please, no luxury tax provisions to circumvent the spirit of the rule.

It makes me ecstatic to see the Nuggets sticking it to LeBron and the other 3-star player teams. Go Rockies.

— Brad Sparks, Casper, Wyoming

Brad, thanks for reading. I don't really see a question in your post. I'm assuming you want a response to your opinion on Blackmon. I'm going to disagree with you. Blackmon is not a one-season wonder. He's a legitimate major-league star and he sets the tone for the Rockies. Consider these facts:

- Even though the Rockies' offense was bad last year, he led the NL with 119 runs scored, his second straight season leading the league in runs.
- He tied for sixth in the league with a team-high 180 hits and finished eighth with 49 multi-hit games.
- He recorded his third straight season with at least 100 runs scored and 25 home runs, joining Willie Mays and Duke Snider as the only National League center fielders to accomplish the feat.

Bottom line: I think Blackmon has at least three productive seasons left. Moreover, I think taking him out of center field will reduce the wear and tear on his body. Blackmon is 32 but he keeps himself in incredible shape.

Edgar Martinez will be inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame this year; Larry Walker won't. Martinez and Walker's careers were similar in time and length with Martinez playing from 1987-2004 and Walker playing from 1989-2005. But Walker had better career stats across the board: 72.7 WAR to 68.4; .313 BA to .312; 383 HRs to 309; 1,311 RBIs to 1,261; .965 OPS to .933. Walker also had 230 stolen bases and 62 triples to Martinez's 49 stolen bases and 15 triples. My question is: why was Martinez chosen for the HOF over Walker? I know the answer is probably the Coors Field bias, but I believe I read that during Walker's MVP season of 1997, he hit more home runs on the road than he did at Coors.

— Jeff Bear, Carbondale

Jeff, you're preaching to the choir. You have to remember that Martinez made it in his 10th and final year on the ballot, so there was a surge for him. The same thing could happen to Walker next year, but it's still going to be an uphill climb. I've written extensively about Walker's bid for a place in Cooperstown. Check out this recent story in which I talked to a number of voters from around the country.

Patrick, I love the "On the Rox" podcast you guys do. Any guests lined up during spring training?

— *Walt, Parker*

Thanks for listening, Walt. Yes, we do plan to have guests on during spring training. It all depends on who's available, who's willing and who'll give us the time.

Hi Patrick, where will Ian Desmond play? Who will be our outfielders, and will the Rockies carry two extras? Will Valaika be returning to utility role?

— *Dan, Juneau, Alaska*

Dan, those are good questions but hard to predict at this stage of the offseason. It appears Desmond will be given a chance to start in center field, but I expect the Rockies will utilize him in left field some, and also at first base from time to time. Right now, I project the outfield to be Dahl, Blackmon and Desmond, with Raimel Tapia and Noel Cuevas coming off the bench.

As for Valaika, I think it's going to be tough for him to make the team this year. He was so good in 2017, but struggled mightily last year when he slashed .156/.214/.246 and hit just two home runs in 122 at-bats.

I'm curious as to where you think Riley Pint will start the 2019 season. I have followed him as he and my nephew are both pitchers out of Kansas City. Riley showed amazing talent when I saw him throw in high school. My nephew while a good prospect and starting at the University of Kentucky was definitely a little behind Riley.

Kirk, Evergreen

Kirk, Pint has yet to blossom as the team had hope, but he's still just 21. I would imagine he will begin the season at low-A Asheville.

Here is what Thomas Harding of MLB.com wrote about Pint after attending a recent town hall meeting with Bridich.

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

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

Denver Post sports writer Patrick Saunders posts his Rockies Mailbag every other week on Tuesdays during the season and once per month during the offseason.

Mark Reynolds returning to Rockies on minor-league deal

Kyle Newman | The Denver Post | Jan. 31, 2019

Slugging first baseman Mark Reynolds, who hit 30 home runs and drove in 97 runs for the Rockies in 2017, is returning to Colorado.

Reynolds, 35, confirmed Wednesday that he has signed a minor-league deal with an invitation to spring training.

According to Jon Heyman of the MLB Network, Reynolds will get a base salary of \$1 million if he makes the team, plus a chance to make an additional \$1 million in incentives.

Asked why he chose the Rockies, Reynolds said: "Why not? I love the team, love the city, love their World Series chances."

Reynolds, who has hit 294 home runs in 12 seasons, had offers from other teams, but he met with Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich and manager Bud Black and all of those involved thought Reynolds could be a fit in Colorado again. Reynolds batted a combined .274 with a .354 on-base percentage and 44 home runs for the Rockies in 2016 and 2017. In both seasons he showed up at spring training in Scottsdale, Ariz. needing to make the team and ended up as the club's primary starting first baseman.

Reynolds earned the trust of six-time Gold Glove third baseman Nolan Arenado, who was disappointed when the Rockies did not sign Reynolds last year.

"I was kind of worried about that because I love Mark — I had him for two years, and the longest I had a first baseman was Mark," Arenado said at the time. "He scooped everything."

Reynolds, however, didn't land with a team last year until April 17, when he signed with the Nationals. He was a role player off the bench for Washington, but he did start 42 games, 36 of them at first base. All told, he played in 86 game and garnered 206 at-bats, slashing .248/.328/476.

Earlier this offseason, the Rockies signed veteran Daniel Murphy to a two-year, \$24 million contract with plans to use him as their everyday first baseman. That means Reynolds will primarily be a right-handed bat off the bench, if he makes the team.

Signing Reynolds also means that veteran outfielder Matt Holliday will likely not return to the Rockies.

Rosenthal: Why the Dodgers pulled away from Bryce Harper; Nolan Arenado's future; prospect on the move?

Ken Rosenthal | The Athletic | Feb. 1, 2019

If Bryce Harper signs with the Padres – the low-revenue, eight-straight-losing-season Padres – some Dodgers fans might stomp their feet hard enough to cause an earthquake.

The Dodgers' big outfield addition, free-agent center fielder A.J. Pollock, is a better defender than Harper and, as a right-handed hitter, better balances the team's lineup. At a maximum of \$60 million over five years, Pollock also will be less expensive than Harper, perhaps by hundreds of millions.

It's understandable some fans still see Harper, 26, as a better choice – he's five years younger, more durable, a former MVP, a bigger star. But the Dodgers have won six straight division titles, reached the NLCS in four of the past six years and appeared in back-to-back World Series. When exactly do they get the benefit of the doubt?

Yes, they could spend more. A team – particularly one with an \$8.5 billion TV deal – *always* could spend more. Still, fans of most other clubs would love their team to carry the same payroll as the Dodgers and achieve similar success.

To this point, only two teams – the Nationals (\$188 million) and Yankees (\$140.05 million) – have made greater free-agent investments this offseason than the Dodgers, whose signings of Pollock, reliever Joe Kelly, left-hander Hyun-Jin Ryu and infielder David Freese add up to \$107.4 million. Combine those with a new three-year, \$93 million deal for ace lefty Clayton Kershaw – a deal that was necessary to prevent him from *becoming* a free agent – and the Dodgers are tops.

The teams that sign Harper and Manny Machado almost certainly will surpass the Dodgers in spending, but Los Angeles is within \$4.3 million of the \$206 million luxury-tax threshold, according to rosterresource.com, and quite possibly will exceed the number after factoring in performance bonuses and midseason additions. Let's not forget, the Dodgers have made significant acquisitions at the past three non-waiver deadlines – Rich Hill and Josh Reddick in 2016, Yu Darvish in '17 and Machado in '18.

So, what's the rub?

Expectations. Like the Yankees, the Dodgers last season achieved their years-long quest to get under the threshold and reset their penalty rate to the minimum 20 percent. Fans of both clubs anticipated spending sprees for a Harper or Machado. It hasn't happened in either case, though retaining Kershaw certainly figured into the Dodgers' planning.

Teams, though, do not simply want to get below the threshold one time. Dodgers president Stan Kasten, in an interview with the Los Angeles Times' Dylan Hernandez, said: "If we can do whatever we do and stay under, there are a lot of

advantages to being under — by the way, a lot more advantages than you all write about . . . I'm not going to go into that because that's real inside baseball economic stuff.”

Kasten wasn't only referring to the taxes and surtaxes teams face for exceeding the three tiers of the threshold, or the loss of 10 spots in the draft order for going \$40 million over. Other parts of the collective bargaining agreement also figure into the equation, though typically in less meaningful fashion.

If a big-market team such as the Dodgers exceeds the threshold for at least two consecutive years, it forfeits a percentage of the revenue-sharing refund it would otherwise receive. Teams also must remain in compliance with the debt-service rule, earning enough profits to adequately service their debt.

Again: The Dodgers could spend more. But club officials point out that not only will their 2019 payroll be among the highest in the NL, but that the team also will rank among the industry leaders in spending on facilities, front-office staff, revenue sharing and scouting and player development. Oh, and by the way, according to the Steamer projection system on Fangraphs, the Dodgers currently project to 93 wins, most in the NL even without Harper.

The Dodgers, unlike most clubs, do not need Harper to boost attendance (they've led the majors six straight years) or enhance their local TV appeal (while most regular-season games remain blacked out in the LA market, the team's landmark deal extends through 2038). And, like other clubs, they had reservations about Harper's defense and consistency, as well as his desired length of contract.

Teams generally find better values on corner outfielders than they do on other players. Harper, obviously, is better than most corner outfielders, but the Dodgers did not necessarily see him as the right player for, say, a 10-year commitment. Machado, a right-handed hitter, would have been a better fit, but the Dodgers became less enamored of him once they got to know him. The Rockies' Nolan Arenado and Nationals' Anthony Rendon are potential free-agent targets after the 2019 season, with third baseman Justin Turner under contract only through '20. Even if Arenado and Rendon sign extensions (see below), a number of other attractive stars — Mike Trout, Mookie Betts, Francisco Lindor — could hit the market in the years ahead.

By incorporating a large number of quality 0-to-3 players, the Dodgers sustained success while holding off on major expenditures in recent seasons; Andrew Friedman has yet to award a \$100 million contract since taking over as president of baseball operations in October 2014. Eventually — after years of trading prospects, selecting at the bottom of the draft and operating with smaller international signing bonus pools — the Dodgers will be in less of a position of strength.

When that happens — and when their division rivals, several of which are rebuilding, start to pose more of a threat — the Dodgers will be well-positioned to react to their increased urgency, well-positioned to spend big. They will benefit from the money they saved. The money they declined to spend on Bryce Harper.

Not necessarily yearning to be free

Though the Dodgers and Yankees are among the teams that likely would be interested in Arenado and Rendon as free agents, it's possible both third basemen will sign extensions and never reach the open market next offseason.

Arenado settled on Thursday with the Rockies on a one-year, \$26 million contract, a record for an arbitration-eligible player. He had asked for \$30 million. The Rockies had offered him \$24 million. A hearing was scheduled to take place within the next week.

While it's difficult to imagine the Rockies saying much negative about Arenado, a hearing might have torpedoed the team's chances of signing him long-term. The settlement, on the other hand, makes it more realistic Arenado will remain in Colorado for the rest of his career.

The two sides agreed on Arenado's new contract after a face-to-face meeting of several hours among Arenado, his agent Joel Wolfe, Rockies GM Jeff Bridich and owner/CEO Dick Montfort, sources said. In a meeting of that length, a one-year deal surely was not the only topic of conversation.

Arenado, who has won six straight Gold Gloves and averaged 40 homers the past four seasons, need not wait for Harper and Machado to sign their free-agent deals. If anything, the difficulties those two players are facing in the open market might make him more inclined to sign an extension. As a free agent, Arenado would hear questions about his age (he would hit the open market entering his age 29 season) and home-road splits (he has a career .984 OPS at Coors Field, compared to a .787 OPS on the road).

Rendon, who would hit the market entering his age 30 season, has spoken openly of his desire to remain with the Nationals long-term. The chances of the two sides reaching agreement almost certainly would improve if Harper – who is represented by the same agent, Scott Boras – signed with another team.

As reported previously, Rendon is targeting the seven-year, \$163.5 million contract second baseman Jose Altuve signed with the Astros before the 2018 season. Altuve was a year younger at the time and already had won a World Series and league MVP. But Rendon arguably has become one of the game's top 10 players.

Reds' India on the move?

The Reds selected University of Florida third baseman Jonathan India fifth overall in the 2018 draft, but it would not be a surprise if they included him in a trade for Marlins catcher J.T. Realmuto in the coming days. A rival executive notes India was a bit of a disappointment in his professional debut, adding the Reds have been quietly shopping him all offseason.

When asked what "quietly shopping" meant, the exec said the Reds started the offseason saying they were willing to move prospects. When rival clubs inquired, the Reds would steer the conversation to India, admitting they were unwilling to part with either infielder Nick Senzel or outfielder Taylor Trammell.

India, 22, was not necessarily considered a top pick entering his junior year at Florida, but he raised his stock with a big season. A top-five college selection normally is expected to dominate Low A, but India batted a mere .229 with a .735 OPS in 112 plate appearances in the Midwest League, perhaps giving the Reds pause.

“For him to be available all winter is telling,” the rival exec said.

The Marlins continue to talk to the Reds and other clubs about Realmuto, and they could package him with reliever Nick Wittgren, whom they designated for assignment in a surprise move on Tuesday.

Wittgren, 27, arguably was the Marlins’ second-best reliever last season after Drew Steckenrider, posting a 2.94 ERA and .629 opponents’ OPS in 33 2/3 innings.

Hey, leave the Rays alone!

A number of media reports indicated the Rays were a target of baseball’s recent proposals to reinstate the 15-day disabled list and increase the amount of time an optioned player must spend in the minors, also from 10 to 15 days. But the facts show the Rays’ introduction of “the opener” last season did not result in them manipulating either rule.

According to unofficial data obtained by *The Athletic*, the Rays ranked 12th in the number of pitchers optioned in 2018, increasing their total by just one from the previous year. The Angels led the majors with 42 pitchers optioned, followed by the Mets, Dodgers, Brewers and Braves. The Astros were last with nine.

The number of minimum-length DL stays for pitchers, meanwhile, totaled just 39 league-wide, an indication “the phantom DL” is perhaps not as big a problem as baseball believes. The Dodgers had five pitchers serve the minimum time, and the only other teams with more than two such stints were the Phillies (four), the Rangers (four) and the Red Sox. The Rays were one of nine clubs with zero.

Based on the numbers, it’s difficult to conclude the Rays employed their new and revolutionary pitching structure to exploit the system.

Around the horn

Information from major-league sources:

*How badly do the Phillies need Harper or Machado? For all the work they’ve done this offseason – adding outfielder Andrew McCutchen, shortstop Jean Segura, reliever David Robertson and others – the Steamer system projects the Phils will finish only fourth in the NL East at 79-83, behind the Nationals, Mets and Braves.

The Phillies could always load up with free agents besides Harper and Machado and wait for their Holy Grail, the Angels’ Mike Trout, who is scheduled to hit the open market after the 2020 season. But who knows if Trout – a native of Millville, N.J., and die-hard Eagles fan – will even become available? Like Arenado and Rendon, Trout might sign an extension before reaching free agency.

*The one-year, \$4.5 million deal between free-agent left-hander Wade Miley and the Astros is notable from both the player's and team's perspective.

Miley, 32, insisted upon a deal without a club option, believing he will build upon his 2018 revival and land a bigger contract next offseason.

The Astros, meanwhile, now have four starting pitchers entering free-agent years – Miley, Justin Verlander, Gerrit Cole and Collin McHugh. The return of free-agent left-hander Dallas Keuchel still would make sense as a long-term hedge against one or more of their departures.

*A number of additional teams expressed trade interest in outfielder Joc Pederson after the Dodgers signed A.J. Pollock, but it's not out of the question Pederson will remain in Los Angeles. Even with the addition of Pollock, the trades of Yasiel Puig and Matt Kemp left the Dodgers with less of a surplus in their outfield. Club officials also are wary of losing Pederson, who hit 24 homers and produced an .893 OPS in 386 plate appearances against right-handed pitching last season.

What's next after Nolan Arenado's record-setting deal with the Rockies? 'Now it's time to make adult decisions'

Nick Groke | The Athletic | Jan. 31, 2019

The Rockies on Thursday solidified what will be their highest team payroll in the 27-year history of the club, after signing all-star third baseman Nolan Arenado to a \$26 million arbitration deal for 2019. They also raised the stakes on a nervous next few months.

Arenado's new deal set a record for arbitration-eligible players, surpassing Josh Donaldson's one-year, \$23 million deal last year. Bryce Harper, who last year made \$21.63 million in his final year of arbitration, is the only other player to top \$20 million.

That will all soon be a footnote. Arenado and the Rockies have already discussed a long-term deal, at least preliminary talks, and the club has made it clear they would like Arenado to remain in Colorado after this season.

But in October, Arenado is scheduled to become a free agent for the first time, where he will command a salary somewhere nearing the range of Harper and Manny Machado, the two biggest-name free agents this winter. But those two players remain unsigned, even as baseball's quiet winter flipped to February. Harper in Las Vegas on Thursday met with another new team, the Padres, to talk about a contract.

The Rockies held their own meeting, one state over, one that lasted several hours. Arenado and his agent, Joel Wolfe, had met in person with Rockies owner Dick Monfort and general manager Jeff Bridich over several hours, according to The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal, citing sources.

Thursday's announcement, though, was hardly the conclusion. Arenado's one-year deal settled a \$6 million disagreement, after the Rockies in January filed a \$24 million offer to the league office. Arenado countered by asking for \$30 million. If they had not agreed Thursday, both sides would have argued their cases at a hearing, an awkward exchange that would have required the Rockies to tell Arenado why they think he's not worth what he believes. Those hearings are scheduled to start Friday before ending Feb. 20, in St. Petersburg, Fla.

That Arenado and the Rockies avoided butting heads and are already speaking at length, and in person, suggests the club might have an early in-road on signing Arenado long term.

Almost exactly a year ago, the Rockies settled on a one-year arbitration deal with Charlie Blackmon, on Jan. 12. Less than three months later, just days before the start of the season, Colorado signed Blackmon to a superseding six-year extension worth \$108 million. His \$21 million owed this year is now outdone only by Arenado.

While Harper and Machado scour a chilly free-agent market luring suitors, the Rockies have an advantage in their dealings with Arenado. He is theirs to speak to alone until October.

“We would love to have Nolan around for a long, long period of time,” Bridich said last month. “We have had a great relationship with him and he’s had a great one — I don’t want to speak for him — but he’s had a great relationship for many, many years, ever since he was drafted with the Rockies.”

There is risk on both sides. The Nationals last September offered Harper a 10-year, \$300 million deal, one that he turned down. Washington is believed to still be in the running to sign Harper, but now they’re not alone. And the club at the time had to guess what Harper’s market might hold. Turned out, the free-agent market chilled.

Arenado will also have to guess. For two years now, baseball’s hot stove season was a winter dud. Teams suddenly have grown reluctant to agree on long-term deals. Machado was expected to set the bar for Arenado, two power-hitting third basemen, although Arenado is a year older. But Machado’s market seems quiet. And the teams that seemed a fit for him — the Yankees, for example — might wait for Arenado to become available.

Flirting with an arbitration hearing might have been a play at leverage for Arenado. With free agency in flux, the arbitration system might seem more attractive for players looking for a fair fight.

“I’m a little bit worried the way the free agent market has gone the last couple of years,” Blackmon said last week. “That’s always been the bedrock, the foundation of the way baseball players operate. That’s the end goal. To have that all of a sudden be a completely different experience is really going to change the way players feel about baseball and the agreement at which they show up at the park to play the game and get paid and all that kind of thing. I’m concerned.”

The last time the Rockies doled out the kind of long-term, big-money deal that seems to be in line for Arenado came in late November 2010, when Colorado and previous general manager Dan O’Dowd signed shortstop Troy Tulowitzki to a 10-year, \$157.75 million extension before he reached free agency.

That deal ended up burning the Rockies, who struggled to stay competitive and wanted to start fresh. Five years later, Bridich traded Tulowitzki and the \$107 million left on his deal to the Blue Jays.

Colorado’s payroll since then has increased every year, from \$97 million the year Tulowitzki was traded to nearly \$140 million last year. It will almost surely jump by perhaps \$10 million more this season, even after a gun-shy offseason saw them sign only first baseman Daniel Murphy to a two-year, \$24 million deal.

“We are not in a holding pattern and we are not drawing back on our payroll,” Bridich said. “We believe we can continue to grow responsibly.”

Bridich did not dismiss the idea of player contracts north of \$200 million for the Rockies.

For comparison, the last healthy position player to enter free agency after a record-setting arbitration contract was Prince Fielder, who settled on a \$15.5 million contract with the Brewers in 2011 before leaving his original club the next year. He instead signed a nine-year, \$214 million contract with the Tigers.

Fielder was working on the solid ground of free agency. Baseball's new landscape has shifted. And nearly everyone, it seems, is wondering what next. The backdrop to the Rockies' pursuit of Arenado is murky. But they will surely try to accomplish an agreement before Opening Day.

"He's come to this point in his career, and he's earned it. He's become one of the top three or five players in the game," Bridich said of Arenado.

"Now it's time to make adult decisions."

Colorado Rockies, Nolan Arenado avoid arbitration with record-setting deal

Justin Michael | Mile High Sports | Jan. 31, 2019

The Colorado Rockies announced on Thursday that the club has agreed to terms with third baseman Nolan Arenado on a one-year contract.

According to Jeff Passan, the deal is worth \$26 million, which would be a record for a one-year salary for an arbitration-eligible player. Earlier reports indicated that Arenado was looking to receive \$30 million for the 2019 season, while Colorado was hoping to pay him around \$23 million, so it seems the two sides were able to meet in the middle.

The one-year contract extension means that the Rockies were able to reach agreements with all eight arbitration-eligible players in the system.

In six years with the Rockies, Arenado has consistently been one of the best players in baseball and has the hardware to show for it. Arenado is a six-time Gold Glove recipient and four-time Silver Slugger. The 27-year old already has four All-Star appearances under his belt as well.

Arenado's batting average dipped from .309 in 2017 to .297 in 2018, but he led the National League with 38 home runs and totalled 104 runs scored. Defensively, Arenado was solid with a .967 fielding percentage.

While the deal is a positive sign, Rockies fans will remain anxious until the club locks Arenado down with a long-term extension.

Report: Rockies sign Mark Reynolds to minor league contract, spring training invite

Brandon Ewing | Mile High Sports | Jan. 30, 2019

According to Thomas Harding of MLB.com, the Colorado Rockies are signing Mark Reynolds to a Minor League contract to go along with an invite to Spring Training.

It was not long ago that Reynolds was wearing a Rockies uniform as he played with Colorado in 2016 and 2017. In two years with the Rockies, Reynolds had a .274 batting average to pair with 44 home runs and 150 RBIs. During his two seasons in Colorado, Reynolds started 253 games at first base, which one could argue is still a position of need for the Rockies.

Even with the Rockies signing of Daniel Murphy this offseason, adding Reynolds is a low-risk signing that provides them with another versatile player. It also gives Colorado another power bat, which Reynolds has shown he can provide throughout his 12-year career. Just last season, Reynolds played 86 games with the Washington Nationals and had a solid year hitting 13 home runs to go along with 40 runs batted in.

What Reynolds also provides the Rockies is more options when it comes to how Bud Black structures his lineup on a daily basis. Murphy and Reynolds would have the ability to platoon at first base, while Ian Desmond makes a transition to the outfield. Reynolds is without a doubt the best defensive first baseman of the three and has a nice bat to pair with it. For an offseason that has been fairly quiet for Colorado, the signing of Reynolds is a low-risk move that could pay off big when it is all said and done.

Colorado Rockies: The return of CarGo? Are you kidding me?

Aaron Hurt | RoxPile | Jan. 31, 2019

The Colorado Rockies continue to find ways to make me to want to scratch my head.

Earlier this week, I received a text message from a friend asking me whether or not the Colorado Rockies were going to bring back **Carlos Gonzalez**. My reply, in a little bit more colorful language, was absolutely not.

Then, of course, to my utter dismay, this tweet by MLB Network insider Jon Heyman came out on Thursday:

Rockies are interested in bringing CarGo back again and are among teams in on him

HUH?!?!? This must be a joke, right? What is going on in the Rockies' front office that would make them even think about bringing back CarGo for the 2019 season?

For starters, the now-33-year-old Gonzalez has been average, at best, the last two seasons in Denver. Not to mention his woeful home/road splits and his success (or lack thereof) against left-handed pitching.

Standard Batting

Year	Tm	G	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	CS	BB	SO	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS	OPS+	TB	GDP	HBP	SH	SF	IBB	Pos
2017	COL	136	534	470	72	123	34	0	14	57	3	0	56	119	.262	.339	.423	.762	86	199	9	2	0	6	3	*9/D
2018	COL	132	504	463	71	128	32	4	16	64	5	2	37	113	.276	.329	.467	.796	99	216	5	1	0	3	4	*9/D

Provided by Baseball-Reference.com: [View Original Table](#)

Second, the Rockies do not need another left-handed bat in the lineup. They added left-handed **Daniel Murphy** to a roster full of lefties and the need for a right-handed bat was somewhat addressed on Wednesday, with **the low-risk/high-reward signing** of first baseman **Mark Reynolds** to minor league deal.

Most importantly, the outfield is already crowded and, like last season, the signing of CarGo would block the development of highly touted prospects. The Rockies' outfield already looks set with **Charlie Blackmon**, **Ian Desmond**, and **David Dahl**.

Raimel Tapia is out of options and will have to either make the roster as the fourth outfielder out of the spring or be traded. If they wanted to go with CarGo as a fifth outfielder, it would mean either one fewer are out of the bullpen or one

fewer infielder. This would also block the path for one of other outfielders on 40-man roster such as **Noel Cuevas, Yonathan Daza, Sam Hilliard, or Mike Tauchman** from making the majors.

We all love Carlos Gonzalez and his contributions to the Rockies' organization over the last 10 years but it is time to move on. There are a few problems that need to be addressed on the upcoming roster. However, the addition of CarGo is not one of the answers.

Colorado Rockies and Nolan Arenado avoid arbitration

Noah Yingling | RoxPile | Jan. 31, 2019

Surprisingly, the Colorado Rockies and third baseman Nolan Arenado agreed to a one-year deal to avoid arbitration on Thursday afternoon.

According to the **Colorado Rockies** on Twitter, they have avoided arbitration with their star third baseman, **Nolan Arenado**, on a one year deal.

Patrick Saunders of *The Denver Post* was the first to report that the deal would be worth \$26 million.

Originally, the Rockies proposed \$24 million and Arenado and his agency, the Wasserman Group, proposed \$30 million, a difference of \$6 million. However, Arenado and his agency came a little bit closer to the Rockies proposal as they went down \$4 million as the Rockies only went up \$2 million from their offer.

It was reported by Saunders recently that the Rockies and Arenado were likely to go arbitration **in this article**. That's part of the reason why it seemed like a foregone conclusion to many that the Rockies and Arenado would go to arbitration. If they had actually gone to arbitration, the hearing would have likely been held early next week. Some hearings started this week as the Houston Astros started their hearing with their shortstop **Carlos Correa** today, according to Jake Kaplan of The Athletic.

Carlos Correa's salary arbitration hearing is today in St. Petersburg, Fla. A three-person panel of arbitrators will decide within 24 hours of the end of the hearing whether Correa will make the \$5 million in 2019 salary his side proposed or the \$4.25 million the Astros offered.

Final Thoughts

I think that it is excellent that the Colorado Rockies and Nolan Arenado agreed to a deal. It eliminates some of the messy situation that could evolve between the two sides arguing in a hearing. While baseball is certainly a business, there is a lot to be said for making sure your All-Star third baseman doesn't need to hear all of the reasons why you think he doesn't deserve to earn more money.

Colorado Rockies: Help me, I'm dreading 2019

Colin Gaiser | RoxPile | Jan. 31, 2019

Rocktober 2018 came to an unceremonious end on October 7, when the Milwaukee Brewers embarrassed the Colorado Rockies 6-0 at Coors Field to claim a decisive NLDS sweep.

While it was gut-wrenching to watch the team take a big swing and miss at the 2018 playoffs, we could remind ourselves that the future was as bright as a sunset from the Party Deck. The Rockies went 91-72 despite glaring issues on offense, with only an afternoon at Dodger Stadium stood in the way of the Rockies' first-ever NL West title.

This team gives us so much to look forward to. There's the emergence of **Ryan McMahon**, **Garrett Hampson** and **David Dahl** as future impact players. There's the brilliant young starting rotation, led by legitimate aces **German Marquez** and **Kyle Freeland**. And I truly believe some of expensive bullpen pieces will bounce back.

But to be honest ... I'm kinda dreading the 2019 season.

Clearly, the lack of signings has not helped; the polar vortex seems to have swallowed up the hot stove. Sure, it's a league-wide problem, but the Rockies' front office went into hibernation after signing **Daniel Murphy**. Guys that would be excellent additions to the squad were scooped up by other teams, and tweets from reliable sources continued to indicate "the Rockies had no interest."

Meanwhile, we are in for a year of agonizing drama surrounding **Nolan Arenado**. He is predictably entering salary arbitration with the Rockies – he will almost certainly break the arbitration record – and the rumors, speculation and drama throughout the 2019 season are going to drive some of us into the *real* Rockies (a little off-the-grid time might do us good come mid-August.)

Up against this backdrop, I can't shake the queasy feeling that 2018 was Colorado's best shot at an NL West title. The team was so close to finally, FINALLY dethroning the Los Angeles Dodgers. But in that decisive tiebreaker game, well, the better team won.

That's why it felt like such a gut-punch when the Los Angeles Dodgers signed **A.J. Pollock** on a four year, \$55 million deal. I thought Pollock would be an excellent fit for the Rockies in 2019. Yet, he'll be helping the arch nemesis instead, along with a formidable pitching staff that improved with the addition of **Joe Kelly**.

While last season's NL champions will be a 90-win team at *worst*, will the Rockies be any better this year? The team overachieved last year, and while here comes Murphy and old friend **Mark Reynolds** (on a minor league deal), **DJ LeMahieu** and **Adam Ottavino** traded their purple pinstripes for black ones across the country in New York. It feels like a net loss.

ESPN's David Schoenfield wrote that the Rockies are more likely than any other 2018 playoff team to miss the playoffs in 2019. It is hard to agree with his reasoning, especially on the likely regression of the starting rotation. Another spoonful of dread, please.

Given the pitiful state of the NL West, this should be a thrilling time to be a Rockies fan. Yet the fanbase's ambitions do not seem to line up with the front office's. Meanwhile, uncertainty surrounding Arenado might overshadow anything the team does on the field this season.

Rockies avoid arbitration with Nolan Arenado

The Colorado Rockies and Nolan Arenado have agreed on a record-breaking one-year, \$26 million contract to avoid arbitration for the 2019 season

Ben Kouchnerkavich | Purple Row | Feb. 1, 2019

The Colorado Rockies announced on Friday that they have agreed to terms on a one-year contract with **Nolan Arenado** for the 2019 season. The Rockies' star third baseman will make \$26 million in his final year of arbitration. This breaks the previous record for an arbitration-eligible player, which was set by another third baseman, **Josh Donaldson** of the Toronto Blue Jays. Donaldson's previous record was \$23 million for the 2018 season. The Rockies have now come to terms with all of their arbitration-eligible players for 2019.

There was growing concern that Arenado and the Rockies would head to an arbitration hearing in the coming weeks. On January 11, the filing day for arbitration figures, Arenado requested \$30 million, while the Rockies proposed \$24 million. Arenado's contract will be just below the midpoint of the two figures and just \$100,000 short of MLB Trade Rumors' projected salary of \$26.1 million. Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic reports that a "face-to-face meeting of several hours" took place between Arenado, agent Joel Wolfe and Rockies' owner Dick Monfort. The team appeared to be pulling out all the stops to avoid taking the case to an arbitration hearing.

As Jeff Passan of ESPN notes, the Rockies still have interest in keeping Arenado in Denver on a long-term deal. Today's news does not preclude such an agreement. The Rockies came to terms with **Charlie Blackmon** to avoid arbitration prior to the 2018 season before working out his six-year, \$108 million extension a few days after the regular season had already got underway.

Rockies reportedly interested in bringing Carlos Gonzalez back

Are the Rockies getting the band back together?

Eric Garcia McKinley | Purple Row | Feb. 1, 2019

The Rockies just may be in the process of getting the band back together. Jon Heyman tweeted that the Rockies are “interested in bringing CarGo back” for the 2019 season. He also notes that they are “among the teams” interested in him, which suggests that CarGo has more suitors than he did last offseason.

It's hard not to be a little bit happy at the prospect of having González back in purple for the 2019 season, but it's also hard to see how it would work given the roster. The Rockies look to have their three outfield starters in place for 2019: **Charlie Blackmon**, **Ian Desmond**, and David Dahl. Raimel Tapia is out of options, so he's either going to be traded or on the roster as the fourth outfielder. CarGo could fit as a fifth outfielder, but that would mean either one fewer bullpen arm or one fewer infielder. **Noel Cuevas**, **Yonathan Daza**, **Sam Hilliard**, and **Mike Tauchman** round out the rest of the outfielders on the 40-man roster.

This is nothing more than a moderately revelatory rumor, but right now it would make the most sense if CarGo is brought back on a low risk minor league deal, like Mark Reynolds. While he may not have a place in the daily lineup, he's very likely an upgrade over other minor league depth options in the event of injury.

Mark Reynolds is a smart free agent signing for the Rockies

Reynolds could add depth to a weak bench

Renee Dechert | Purple Row | Jan. 31, 2019

As a Rockies fan, I've found this hot-stove season to be, well, pretty darn frigid. Last year, the Rockies were *this close* to winning the NL West for the first time, but they just didn't have enough offense. In the off season, I kept waiting for the big signings . . . which never came. The Rockies signed **Daniel Murphy** to play first base, and that was it.

Not gonna lie: I was disappointed.

Earlier this week, I tried to move beyond my general malaise and evaluate the potential of the 2019 Rockies based on 2018 wRC+ and Steamer-projected wRC+. That article is [here](#), but to summarize, the 2019 Rockies look to be a bit better offensively than the 2018 Rockies. That said, the big unknown is the Rockies' decision to increasingly rely on four less-experienced players (**Noel Cuevas**, **Garrett Hampson**, **Ryan McMahon**, and **Raimel Tapia**) and utility infielder **Pat Valaika**, who had a miserable 2018 after a very good 2017.

MLB.com's Thomas Harding has now reported that former Rockies first baseman **Mark Reynolds** would return to the Rockies on a minor-league contract. (Read Eric Garcia McKinley's take [here](#).) According to Jon Heyman, he would receive a salary of \$1 million with the possibility of another \$1 million in various incentives. And to be honest, I like this decision because it fills in some bench gaps and makes the Rockies' plans for 2019 a little clearer.

Based on wRC+, here's what the Rockies look like after adding Reynolds:

Comparison of 2018 Rockies wRC+ and Projected 2019 Rockies Based on Steamer wRC+

Position	2018	wRC+	2019	Steamer Projected wRC+
First Base	Desmond	81	D. Murphy	115
Second Base	LeMahieu	86	McMahon/Hampson	92/94
Shortstop	Story	127	Story	111
Third Base	Arenado	132	Arenado	124
Left Field	Parra	80	Blackmon	111
Center Field	Blackmon	116	Desmond	94
Right Field	Gonzalez	96	Dahl	95
Catcher	Iannetta/Wolters	84/45	Iannetta/Wolters	98/70
---	---	---	---	---
Bench	Cuevas	40	Cuevas	78

Position	2018	wRC+	2019	Steamer Projected wRC+
Bench	Tapia	78	Tapia	84
Bench	Valaika	9	Valaika	68
Bench	Dahl	109	Reynolds	92
Bench	Hampson	108		
Bench	McMahon	68		
Bench	Reynolds	112		

At a projected wRC+ of 92, Reynolds would be a less effective player than he was in 2018 (112 wRC+), but he's still a significant offensive improvement for the Rockies' bench.

In addition to his bat, Reynolds brings experience and a knowledge of the Rockies' organization. If the Rockies are going to give four young players an opportunity to become everyday players, then a veteran presence will be key. **Jeff Bridich** and **Bud Black** have made clear that they value veteran leadership and experience, and Reynolds has that (just as **Matt Holliday** did in 2018). While **Daniel Murphy** certainly has experience, he will be new to the Rockies. That's not the case with Reynolds.

Lineup Possibilities

Reynolds makes sense as a first base platoon with Daniel Murphy. As Nick Groke tweeted today,

That's a \$1 million deal for Mark Reynolds to the Rockies, plus \$1 million more in possible bumps, according to And FYI...

Career OPS+ vs RHP/LHP:

Daniel Murphy 107/79

Mark Reynolds 99/103

Moreover, neither Reynolds nor Murphy are young players. Reynolds is an inexpensive signing, and neither he nor Murphy will block prospect Tyler Nevin, who isn't quite ready yet.

Based on this signing and comments Bridich and Black made at the Hot Stove 2019 meeting for season ticket holders, the Rockies' 2019 strategy is coming into focus.

- Murphy will play first base and hit between 2-5 in the lineup.

- Black said that they will not platoon second base, which means that either **McMahon** or **Hampson** will play second with the other becoming a utility infielder.
- Changes are coming to the outfield. On Saturday, Blackmon said, “I think you will see a little bit of mix and match until we figure out exactly what we like, and then you may continue to see versatility from players as the year goes on.” Black said, too, that they expect Hampson to play some center field during spring training. I had assumed Desmond would be a true utility player, but the signing of Reynolds suggests that Desmond returning to first base is unlikely.

So here’s — perhaps — the 2019 Rockies:

- Infield: Murphy, McMahon, Story, Arenado
- Outfield: Blackmon, Desmond, Dahl
- Catcher: Iannetta
- Bench: Hampson, Reynolds, Tapia, Wolters
- Starting pitchers: Freeland, Márquez, Anderson, Gray, Senzatela
- Bullpen: Rusin, Bettis, Oh, Oberg, Estévez, Shaw, McGee, Davis

You know what? That’s not bad. It’s a team with proven veterans and exciting new players.

Thoughts on the (Not) Hot Stove and Spring Training

Questions about free-agency in 2019 are serious and merit discussion. But given that this is how teams are approaching rosters now, Bridich’s decisions make sense. He’s being fiscally conservative (while spending more than the Rockies have traditionally), which is consistent with everything he’s said about “responsible growth.” Plus, I’m willing to cut him some slack because I want Bridich to have the flexibility to extend Arenado, Story, and some young pitchers.

I suspect with this group, Bridich and Black have crafted their initial roster for 2019. Now they see what happens, and if this team shows itself to be a contender, then they will fill various spots as the trade deadline approaches. In terms of signing other former Rockies, I do not see that happening in the near term. Bridich said in his conversation with Tracy Ringolsby that he did not see a place for **Matt Holliday** early in the season, which makes sense given his defensive challenges, but did not rule him out later in the season. And if choosing between **Carlos González** and **Gerardo Parra**, **Parra** is the better signing based both on his fielding and his ability to be an effective bench bat.

There has long been frustration at Bridich and Black’s unwillingness to play less-experienced players. I think that changes this year. These four players — five including **Tom Murphy** — are clearly in the mix for regular playing time. I think the

Rockies are going to give these players their chance, and some will not continue with the Rockies. I'm okay with that because if a player doesn't fit with the Rockies, I hope he has an opportunity to play elsewhere.

Initially, this doesn't seem like a loaded lineup. But Arenado, Story, and Blackmon are proven. Murphy and Reynolds bring more offense than the Rockies have had. Dahl is great if he can stay healthy. Now it's time to see what **Cuevas**, Hampson, McMahon, and Tapia can do. The Rockies have laid their bets.

I'm ready. And I wasn't until **Mark Reynolds** came back.

Nolan Arenado, Colorado Rockies agree to \$26 million, 1-year deal

Jeff Passan | ESPN | Feb. 1, 2019

All-Star third baseman Nolan Arenado agreed to a one-year, \$26 million deal with the Colorado Rockies on Thursday, setting a record for a one-year salary for an arbitration-eligible player and avoiding a contentious hearing a year before he's slated to hit free agency.

"It feels good to have things settled," Arenado wrote in a message to The Associated Press. "I think it's good to have less things in the back of your mind and this is one of them. It's [a] great day -- great mutual respect between me, my agency and the club."

Arenado, 27, is one of the best two-way players in the game, winning Gold Gloves in his first six seasons and finishing in the top five in National League MVP voting the past three years. Over the past four seasons, his 158 home runs rank third in the major leagues and his 503 RBIs first, and the combination of those numbers plus his defense emboldened him to ask for a \$30 million salary. When the Rockies countered at \$24 million, the parties agreed to continue talking before a trial in which a three-person panel would have chosen one of the salaries.

The agreement between Nolan Arenado and the Rockies on Thursday sets a record for a one-year salary for an arbitration-eligible player. AP Photo/David Zalubowski

"Means a lot, we had good dialogue," Arenado told the AP. "Very honest, very straight forward. Everyone has tough skin and sometimes you have to in business and I realized that firsthand. Was great."

Settling near the middle bested the previous arbitration record, set last year by third baseman Josh Donaldson and the Toronto Blue Jays at \$23 million.

Colorado's desire to lock up Arenado to a long-term deal is clear, according to sources, although just how amenable Arenado is -- or what sort of financial commitment it might take -- remains opaque. Rockies owner Dick Monfort and general manager Jeff Bridich flew to California to meet with Arenado, sources said, during which they negotiated the \$26 million figure with agent Joel Wolfe.

While much of Arenado's market could depend on his performance in 2019, executives around the league are enamored with the notion of signing him. Similar sentiment, of course, was expressed last winter with Manny Machado and Bryce Harper, the two marquee free agents this offseason who remain unsigned despite pitchers and catchers being less than two weeks from reporting to spring training.

Nolan Arenado Agrees To A Record \$26-Million Contract For An Arbitration Player

Jack Etkin | Forbes | Feb. 1, 2019

As expected, Nolan Arenado and the Colorado Rockies avoided an arbitration hearing when the star third baseman agreed Thursday to a \$26 million contract for the upcoming season. The Rockies will try to work out a long-term contract with Arenado, who can be a free agent after the 2019 season.

Arenado's \$26 million salary is a single-season record for an arbitration-eligible player, surpassing the \$23 million Josh Donaldson and the Blue Jays agreed to last year. The record was never in doubt, since Arenado filed for \$30 million and the Rockies offered \$24 million, meaning the two sides settled for just below the \$27 million midpoint.

The Rockies have a limited history with arbitration hearings, and certainly didn't want one with a player of Arenado's stature. Hearings are adversarial by definition and can leave lingering bitterness on the part of the player as both sides state their case before a panel that makes the decision to accept one of the two figures exchanged with no middle ground. Even if the Rockies did their best to temper their argument about why Arenado did not deserve \$30 million, it would not be an ideal way to begin negotiations toward a multi-year deal. Both sides could claim that the hearing was simply business and then move on, but a hearing does nothing for goodwill. Particularly if the player attends, as the players' union recommends in hopes of forcing the club to be less strident in its argument.

Arenado made \$17.75 million in 2018 when he was in the final season of a two-year, \$29.5 million contract. The Rockies hope the path that led to a long-term deal a year ago with outfielder Charlie Blackmon can serve as a guidepost to a deal with Arenado. The Rockies and Blackmon, who was eligible to become a free agent after the 2018 season, avoided arbitration last winter when they settled on a \$14 million contract.

With Blackmon's salary set for 2018, the two sides continued to negotiate. Blackmon was given a \$12 million salary for 2018 along with a \$2 million signing bonus when he finalized a six-year, \$108 million contract that was announced on April 4. The deal gives Blackmon the right to opt out of the contract before each of its final two seasons, and the \$10 million player option in the final season can rise from \$8 million to \$18 million if Blackmon attains various incentives in the first five seasons of the deal.

Blackmon was about three months shy of his 32nd birthday when he finalized his multi-year contract. Arenado will turn 28 on April 16, meaning he should be entering the prime of what has been an exemplary career and will command a substantially more lucrative contract than Blackmon.

Arenado has spent his entire career with the Rockies, who drafted him in the second round in 2009 out of El Toro High School in Lake Forest, Calif. He has said he does not want to be like former Rockies great Todd Helton, who spent his

entire 17-year career with the Rockies from 1997-2013 and endured years of losing before getting to the World Series in 2007 and making a second and final postseason appearance in 2009.

Prospects appear bright for the Rockies, who are coming off back-to-back postseason appearances for the first time in their 26-year history. They won 91 games last year, but were forced to travel to Los Angeles to play a 163rd game to decide the National League West and lost to the Dodgers. The Rockies then beat the Cubs in the wild-card game but were swept by the Brewers in the Division Series.

The Rockies have never won the NL West and have lost two key free agents this off-season to the Yankees _ reliever Adam Ottavino, who signed a three-year, \$27 million contract, and second baseman DJ LeMahieu (two years, \$24 million). But looking to boost their lackluster offense, the Rockies signed free agent first baseman Daniel Murphy (two years, \$24 million).

And the young starting pitching that was the Rockies' strength in 2018 returns, a primary reason the team could contend with the Dodgers in what does not appear to be an imposing division. The Giants and Diamondbacks are in various forms of rebuilding. So are the Padres, winners of 66 games last year, at least until their rumored pursuits of Bryce Harper, J.T. Realmuto and Manny Machado bear fruit.

Meanwhile, the Rockies will attempt to finalize a long-term deal with Arenado. They could trade him at the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline if the team is not in contention, and Arenado has indicated he is not interested in signing a multi-year deal with the Rockies. If they are in contention, the Rockies likely would keep Arenado, knowing if he became a free agent after the season, they could make him a qualifying offer for the 2020 season. That offer was \$17.9 million this off-season. It will rise after the 2019 campaign but be below Arenado's \$26 million salary this season, so Arenado would likely decline. But the offer would net the Rockies a draft pick as compensation if he signs elsewhere.

Arenado was promoted from Triple-A to the Rockies on April 28, 2013, and made his major league debut at Arizona that afternoon hitting seventh . The Rockies had endured nearly a month of Chris Nelson at third base while playing the industry's service-time card with Arenado to assure he would not be eligible for free agency until 2019 instead of this winter.

Arenado is the rare player capable of regularly impacting a game on offense and defense. He's the only third baseman in major league history to win a Gold Glove in each of his first six seasons. He has finished in the top five each of the past three seasons in NL MVP voting, including third last year when he hit .297 with a .935 OPS, a league-leading 38 home runs and 110 RBI.

Arenado has won four consecutive Silver Sluggers and has been selected to the NL All-Star team each of those four seasons. During that span, Arenado has twice led the league in RBI, has tied or led the league three times in home runs and has averaged .297 with a .931 OPS while hitting 158 home runs with 503 RBI.

Lowdown: Arenado Gets Paid

Nick Doran | Rotoworld | Jan. 31, 2019

Arenado Breaks the Bank

The Rockies and 3B Nolan Arenado avoided arbitration by agreeing to a one-year, \$26 million contract. The two sides came to an amicable settlement after Arenado requested \$30 million and the Rockies countered with \$24 million. The \$26 million deal is a new record for an arbitration-eligible player, shattering the mark set last year when Josh Donaldson snared \$23 million from the Blue Jays in his last shot at arbitration. Arenado will be a free agent after the upcoming season unless the Rockies are able to convince him to sign an extension. Arenado's salary will be tied with Giancarlo Stanton for the tenth-highest in the majors this year. The 27-year-old third baseman batted .297/.374/.561 with 38 home runs and 110 RBI last year.

Ohtani to Start Season on the Shelf

Angels general manager Billy Eppler told reporters on Thursday that Shohei Ohtani will not be ready for Opening Day. Eppler also said that Ohtani has not yet taken any swings since undergoing Tommy John surgery on his throwing elbow in October. It is a foregone conclusion that he will not be able to pitch at all this season, but the hope is that he will be able to serve as the Angels' regular designated hitter. Today's news sets back his timetable quite a bit and makes him a very risky bet on draft day. He won the American League Rookie of the Year last season as the best two-way player in baseball since Babe Ruth. He batted .285/.361/.564 with 22 home runs, 61 RBI and 10 stolen bases in 367 plate appearances between pitching starts. So clearly, even as a one-way player he can still help lead fantasy teams to victory if he's healthy enough to see regular at-bats.

Snakes Find a Closer

The Diamondbacks signed RHP Greg Holland to a one-year, \$3.5 million contract. The veteran closer is now the pre-season favorite to snare the ninth-inning job come Opening Day. Youngster Archie Bradley was atop the Diamondback's bullpen depth chart prior to Holland joining the team. Holland has 189 career saves, ranking him sixth among all active pitchers -- behind Craig Kimbrel (333 saves), Fernando Rodney (325), Kenley Jansen (268), Aroldis Chapman (236) and Joakim Soria (220). Holland was basically the baseball version of Jekyll and Hyde last year -- he had a 7.92 ERA in 32 games with the Cardinals in the first half and then rebounded with a 0.84 ERA in 24 games with the Nationals in the second half. He had an unlucky .379 BABIP with the Cardinals and a lucky .186 BABIP with the Nationals. The real Greg

Holland is obviously in the middle. He has a career 2.83 ERA with a .296 BABIP and an 11.63 K/9 since making his debut with the Royals in 2010.

News From Around Baseball

** Multiple outlets reported that the Astros have signed free agent left-hander Wade Miley to a one-year, \$4.5 million contract. The deal is not official yet but there is so much smoke around this one that there has to be a fire. The Astros have three rotation slots locked down by Justin Verlander, Gerrit Cole and Collin McHugh. Miley will take the fourth slot. He employed a smoke-and-mirrors approach to register a 5-2 record and 2.57 ERA in 16 starts for the Brewers last year despite his strikeout rate tumbling to a career-low 5.58 K/9. Fantasy owners should be skeptical that he can come anywhere close to repeating that minuscule ERA again. His ERA was 5.61 in 2017 and 5.37 in 2016. It would not be a surprise if the Astros were to sign another free agent starter in the next few weeks, perhaps even Dallas Keuchel, who remains unsigned after declining a one-year, \$17.9 million qualifying offer from the Astros.

** Joe Frisaro of MLB.com reports that the J.T. Realmuto trade talks are in "advanced stages." Frisaro pegs the Padres, Reds, Dodgers, and Braves as all being "in the mix," with San Diego possibly emerging as the "frontrunner". The Reds made an aggressive push to acquire Realmuto earlier this week and reportedly wanted a window to negotiate a contract extension for Realmuto but were denied that permission. Last week the Reds were able to make signing Sonny Gray to a contract extension a make-or-break condition of their trade with the Yankees, but they couldn't pull it off with the Marlins this time around -- at least not yet. Realmuto batted .277/.340/.484 batting line with 21 home runs and 74 RBI over 125 games last season. He is considered the best fantasy catcher in the league at this time. The Marlins' asking price for Realmuto has been astronomical for years. Any team that acquires him is going to have to sell the farm to get him.

** The Twins signed LHP Martin Perez to a one-year, \$4 million contract with a \$7.5 million club option for 2020. He is expected to join the rotation despite putting up a 6.22 ERA and 52/36 K/BB ratio across 85 1/3 innings for the Rangers in 2018. He might be better utilized as a situational lefty reliever because of his massive career platoon splits. For his career, right-handed batters have posted an .815 OPS against him, while left-handed batters have recorded a .650 OPS against him. Over the past three seasons combined, Perez's 5.18 K/9 is the lowest mark in the major leagues (min. 400 IP).

** MLB.com's Jon Morosi writes that the possibility of a Corey Kluber trade is "diminishing by the day." Kluber has drawn trade interest from a range of clubs, including the Dodgers, Padres, Reds, and Brewers, but the Tribe's asking price for the 32-year-old ace remains understandably sky-high and we're now just two weeks away from the beginning of spring training. Look for Kluber to take the bump on Opening Day for the Tribe. He finished third in the American League Cy Young Award balloting last season after going 20-7 with a 2.89 ERA, 0.99 WHIP, and 222/34 K/BB ratio in 215 innings.

** The Athletic's C. Trent Rosecrans reports that the Reds are in "serious" discussions with free agent reliever Zack Duke. The situational left-hander registered a 4.15 ERA with 51 strikeouts in 52 innings while seeing action in a whopping 72 games last year for the Twins and Mariners. He missed most of the 2017 season due to forearm surgery but was one of the better left-handed relievers in baseball for a number of years before that.

John Heyman of Fancred Posts Flurry of News

** There are at least four realistic teams pursuing Bryce Harper. He lists the Padres, Phillies, Nationals and White Sox. The Padres sent a high-level delegation to Harper's home in Las Vegas on Thursday to see if they could entice him to choose San Diego as his new workplace.

** Sources believe that the Braves are "lying in the weeds" to sign free agent reliever Craig Kimbrel. Heyman also notes that other teams interested include the Phillies, Nats, Red Sox, Twins and a mystery team. Kimbrel was seeking a six-year deal in the \$90 million range early in the offseason but it is believed both the years and dollar amount have been dropping in recent weeks. Sooner or later the price will get low enough for a team to jump on it. The 30-year-old is coming off a season where he saved 42 games and posted a 2.74 ERA with a 96/31 K/BB ratio for the Red Sox.

** The Athletics are pursuing veteran catcher **Matt Wieters**. Wieters missed a big chunk of last season and batted just .238/.330/.374 with eight home runs and 30 RBI across 271 plate appearances for the Nationals.

** The Twins are "looking to add a reliever" and free agent Ryan Madson is among the "considerations." Madson registered an ugly 5.47 ERA and 1.41 WHIP in 52 2/3 innings of relief last season between the Nationals and Dodgers.

** The Rockies are interested in re-signing free agent outfielder Carlos Gonzalez. The 33-year-old outfielder had some great seasons for the Rockies in his heyday but has settled into mediocrity the last couple of years. Last year he batted .276/.329/.467 with 16 home runs and 64 RBI in 132 games.

Quick Hits: Utilityman Hernan Perez underwent surgery to remove the pisiform bone from his left wrist after the 2018 season. He is expected to be ready for the start of spring training. ... Rockies signed 1B Mark Reynolds to a minor league contract with an invitation to spring training. ... Pirates signed RHP Brandon Maurer to a minor league contract with an invitation to spring training. Maurer registered an awful 7.76 ERA over 37 appearances with the Royals in 2018. ... Andrew Cashner (knee) expects to carry a clean bill of health into spring training. Cashner posted a wretched 5.29 ERA and 99/65 K/BB ratio in 153 innings with Baltimore last year. ... Pirates signed OF J.B. Shuck to a minor league contract with an invitation to spring training. Shuck posted a brutal .192/.255/.231 batting line with zero home runs and four RBI in 142 plate appearances last season with the Marlins.

Nolan Arenado and the Colorado Rockies agreed to the largest one-year arbitration contract in MLB history

Pat Graham | The Associated Press | Feb. 1, 2019

DENVER (AP) — Nolan Arenado produces big numbers whether he steps into the batter's box or up to the negotiating table.

The All-Star third baseman and the Colorado Rockies agreed to a \$26 million deal to avoid arbitration on Thursday, the largest one-year salary for an arbitration-eligible player.

"It's a great number. Very happy," Arenado wrote in a message to The Associated Press.

He and his side met with Rockies owner Dick Monfort and general manager Jeff Bridich to hammer out the historic deal. Josh Donaldson set the previous mark at \$23 million with Toronto last season. The 27-year-old Arenado was set to pass that record even if he went to arbitration. Arenado asked for \$30 million earlier this month, while the Rockies offered \$24 million.

"Means a lot, we had good dialogue," Arenado said. "Very honest, very straight forward. Everyone has tough skin and sometimes you have to in business and I realized that firsthand. Was great."

One short-term solution figured out.

On deck, perhaps another of the longer term variety.

Arenado becomes eligible for free agency after the 2019 season and figures to be the top player on the market next offseason.

That is, if he and the Rockies can't work out a deal beforehand. The free-agent market has been highly unpredictable the past few offseasons, with Bryce Harper, Manny Machado and many other free agents still without deals as spring training rapidly approaches.

For now, Arenado's relishing in this moment.

"It feels good to have things settled," said Arenado, a second-round pick by Colorado in 2009 who's been an All-Star the last four seasons. "I think it's good to have less things in the back of your mind and this is one of them. It's (a) great day — great mutual respect between me, my agency and the club."

Arenado has won a Gold Glove at third base in each of his six major league seasons. He is a career .291 hitter with 186 home runs, 616 RBIs and a .886 OPS. He batted .297 with an NL-leading 38 homers last season, finishing third in MVP voting while making \$17.85 million.

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Even more, he helped Colorado to a second straight postseason appearance and nearly the team's first NL West title, before losing in a tiebreaker at Los Angeles in Game No. 163. The Rockies advanced by beating the Chicago Cubs in the NL wild-card game. They were swept by the Milwaukee Brewers in the Division Series.

One thing's for sure: Manager Bud Black certainly wouldn't mind scribbling Arenado's name into the lineup for years to come.

"I do think there's a desire on both sides to get something done," Black said. "I'm not in that loop on a regular basis. But regardless of what happens short-term or long-term, Nolan will be ready to play. He knows his purpose is to be a baseball player. And that's what he does. He plays."