



MEDIA CLIPS – Aug. 4, 2018

Rockies walked off again, drop opener to Crew

Marquez magnificent in defeat as Story, CarGo go deep

By Curt Hogg / Special to MLB.com | Aug. 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE -- **Wade Davis'** curveball was sharp as he worked in the ninth inning on Friday night against the Brewers. On a 1-1 delivery to **Eric Thames**, he was simply trying to elevate a fastball, so that he could set up the hook once again and record the game's final out. Instead, Davis left it over the heart of the plate, and a rough road trip for the Rockies closer got even tougher.

Thames launched a three-run, walk-off homer off Davis to down Colorado, 5-3, on Friday night at Miller Park, giving the Rockies back-to-back walk-off losses and three for the week.

"I felt really strong," Davis said. "He was just ready for it, the fastball in. I was definitely trying to give him another 10-12 inches higher. We had thrown a couple curveballs in a row, so I was going to go back to it. I just wanted to get one up and in and go back to it, and I pulled [the fastball] down."

The homer, which sailed out to right-center field, was a continuation of Davis' recent struggles against the Brewers. Including a walk-off homer by **Travis Shaw** last September while Davis was with the Cubs, Davis has blown his last three save chances against Milwaukee.

On Thursday, Davis blew his fifth save of the year, as St. Louis' **Jose Martinez** lined a walk-off hit.

"When you've gone through stretches like this, it's tough to swallow more so for the team than for my own selfish reasons," Davis said.

It was largely the work of Rockies starting pitcher **German Marquez** that had the team in position to draw within two games of Milwaukee and Atlanta for a National League Wild Card spot.

Marquez's breaking balls were particularly sharp as he allowed two runs and struck out nine in seven innings of work. He was one out away from picking up his fifth consecutive victory, but still walked away owning a 2.95 ERA over his last six starts.

"I used it quite a bit because it was working for me. I had good command of that pitch -- the break, the depth -- it was pretty good."

Trevor Story and **Carlos Gonzalez** provided the offense for Colorado with homers in the fifth and sixth, respectively, against Milwaukee starter **Junior Guerra**. Gonzalez's was a two-run blast that came on a full count with two outs to break a 1-1 tie.

"It was a really good pitch, to be honest," Gonzalez said. "3-2 [count], I was trying to stay in the zone because he had a really good splitter going all night. I got the 3-2 count, I had first base open, but I also had a guy behind me who hit a home run in his last at-bat. I think that was huge for me, just mentally understanding that if he was going to give me a good pitch, it was going to be borderline."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

On the Marq-uez: For the last month, **Marquez seems to have figured it out on the mound**. Friday night was no different for the right-hander, but things looked a bit shaky early on.

After the first three Brewers batters of the game reached base, including a **Mike Moustakas** RBI single to make it 1-0, Marquez struck out **Jesus Aguilar** and got Shaw to fly out. Needing one more out to escape the jam with minimal damage, he fanned the scuffling **Jonathan Schoop**, who continued his hitless stretch since being traded to Milwaukee on Tuesday. Marquez went on to retire 15 consecutive hitters until a **Christian Yelich** shot led off the sixth inning.

"He was locating that fastball, changing speeds from 91 to 97 [mph] and had a good slider," Thames said. "He was locating it pretty well. He did a good job."

Story vs. Brewers pitching: When the shortstop launched Guerra's first delivery of the fifth inning off the batter's eye, it marked his fourth homer in five games against Milwaukee this season. Story ripped a hanging slider for his 21st long ball of the season to tie **Charlie Blackmon** for the second most on the team.

Guerra went on to get through eight innings of work, becoming the first Brewers pitcher to do so since **Jimmy Nelson** did so on Aug. 6, 2017.

HE SAID IT

"This happens in baseball. You hate to see it. You hate it to happen to anybody. But Wade's been such a great closer throughout his career ever since becoming a closer. He's been through this. He'll respond." -- *Rockies manager Bud Black, on Davis*

UP NEXT

Blackmon will look to get the one hit needed to reach 1,000 for his career as the Rockies take on the Brewers at 5:10 MT on Saturday at Miller Park. He has recorded all of his career hits with Colorado and would become the seventh player in franchise history to reach the milestone. Colorado sends lefty **Tyler Anderson** to the mound, while the Brewers counter with rookie right-hander **Freddy Peralta**.

Rockies' rotation revels in opening eyes

Colorado's starting staff has become an established group

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | Aug. 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE -- It was another Rockies starting pitching moment that wasn't supposed to happen, on a staff that isn't supposed to be tops in baseball for any period -- let alone more than a month.

Yet, **Antonio Senzatela**, who many have claimed doesn't have any weapon but his fastball, faced a bases-loaded situation in the sixth inning and fanned **Harrison Bader** on a slider in the dirt to protect what was at the time was a one-run lead during Thursday's eventual **3-2 loss to the Cardinals**. A starting staff, that, since June 28, entered Friday's game leading the Majors in ERA (2.97), batting average against (.207), opponent OPS (.596) and fewest hits per nine innings (6.79), and has provided such moments consistently.

Righty **Jon Gray**, who struggled earlier this year when games have gone negative, beat **Greg Garcia** with a slider for a key double play in Tuesday's 6-3 win at St. Louis. Lefty **Kyle Freeland** gave up three hits and no runs in six innings against the Athletics last Friday. **German Marquez** was stellar on **Friday night against the Brewers**, striking out nine in seven frames. Then there's also left **Tyler Anderson**, who turned in consecutive eight-inning starts on June 29 and July 4.

"Whenever you see a guy go seven or eight innings and really dominate a lineup, you want to go and do the same thing next time you start," said Freeland, who at 9-7 with a 3.20 ERA.

The Rockies take the field plastered with 25th Anniversary logos, but for much of that time, the pitching hasn't been worthy of celebration. But after a strong year from a young staff last season, pitching coach Steve Foster gathered the group in Spring Training and prepared for success.

"I don't really care if anybody really knows it, but I told the guys the other day, 'Fostie' told you guys you were the best pitching staff in the world in Spring Training," said Mark Wiley, the Rockies' director of pitching operations. "And now we've matched up against a bunch of these teams that are supposed to have the best pitching staffs in the world. And guess what? We've outpitched them."

Interestingly, part of the philosophy for a pitching staff that has to tame a hitter-friendly park, as well as the park-befriended hitters, is to not attach numbers to self-worth. After all, the pitchers had a strong April and May to push the

Rockies into first place, and slumped badly by allowing a 6.20 ERA May 30-June 28, before the current surge. The message to the starters is know who they are, pitch to that, and the numbers will reflect it.

Gray, Freeland and Anderson are all first-round picks. Senzatela and Marquez (originally signed by the Rays) were prized international signees, and **Chad Bettis** (rehabbing a right middle finger injury) was a second-rounder. Why can't they be among baseball's top staffs?

"I don't look at the stats; had people not told me, I wouldn't know them," Foster said. "But I knew in my heart and head that it was coming."

The struggles in June actually provided the Rockies a chance to be creative in reminding the players of their capabilities.

The Rockies have plenty of pitching resources in manager Bud Black, Foster and bullpen coach Darren Holmes, who lends his expertise in pitching mechanics to the starters. But in late June, and for nearly two weeks, the Rockies also called in Wiley, who joined the organization before the 2013 MLB Draft that saw the Rox select Gray third overall, and co-pitching coordinator Darryl Scott, who worked with every starter at some point in the Minors.

The aim wasn't to kick the pitchers into action, or challenge them or offer new instruction.

"They weren't hands-on aggressive, trying to get us back in line," said Gray, who needed a two-start retool at Triple-A Albuquerque this season, but has posted a 1.66 ERA in three starts since his return. "They wanted to be there for us, really. There was just a lot of positive baseball talk."

Not long after the turnaround began, Foster invited Wiley to speak to the pitching staff and the catchers. Years back, when Wiley was the Marlins' pitching coach and Foster was his bullpen coach, Wiley would have Foster give a similar talk. It was simply to reinforce what was going right, offer key stats and background examples. It's stuck.

By being positive and merely reinforcing their belief and the small adjustments each pitcher needed to make, pitchers say they understood that even at their worst, they were close.

Marquez, for example, was working on developing his changeup and staying consistent with his motion. Rather than looking at big chunks of failure during his 2-3, 6.75 ERA performance in June, he said he was able to boil it down to "big adjustments in small moments."

Now, Anderson said, it's simply pitchers modeling positive examples.

"Sometimes you go off what you see," he said. "If you see your guys going bad, maybe you think the hitters are better than they are. You see guys dominate, you're like, 'Oh, I expect to do the same thing.'"

Blown away: Rockies, closer Wade Davis walk-off losers for second straight game

Eric Thames' three-run home run sends Colorado to fourth loss in five games

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Aug. 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE — The Rockies desperately needed a victory. Not just to keep pace in the torrid National League playoff race. They needed it for their psyche.

They didn't get it.

Eric Thames hit a gigantic, three-run walk-off homer off struggling closer Wade Davis to lift the Brewers to a 5-3 victory Friday night at Miller Park. It was Colorado's third walk-off loss in five games.

It was the first time Colorado suffered back-to-back walk-off losses since 2013. But that team wasn't in a pennant race, this one is.

The obvious question to manager Bud Black after the game was whether or not it is time to give Davis from his role as closer, at least for the time being.

"No," was Black's quick answer.

Davis, who blew a save against the Cardinals in the ninth inning on Thursday afternoon, struck out former Royals teammate Mike Moustakas to get the first out of the ninth Friday night. But then he walked Jesus Aguilar on five pitches and Travis Shaw on a full count. Out No. 2 came on a pop-up to Davis by Jonathan Schoop. Then came Thames' homer to deep right field — the second walk-off home run of his career.

"He was ready for it, a fastball in," said Davis, who blew his sixth save of the season and saw his ERA rise to 5.09. He's blown three saves in each of his last three chances vs. Milwaukee.

"I was definitely trying to elevate it another 10 to 12 inches higher," Davis said of the fastball Thames mashed 404 feet for the game-winner. "We had thrown two curveballs in a row and we were going to go back to it. I was just trying to elevate the pitch."

Black predicted that Davis, who signed a three-year, \$52 million deal to come to Colorado, will bounce back from the difficult stretch.

“He’s had a couple of rough ones, (but) you just have to keep going,” Black said. “He’s one of the best relievers in the game. He’s had a couple of rough nights. But Wade is going to be fine.”

Davis agreed. When asked if his confidence was shaken, he replied: “No. I had good stuff the whole inning. When you are going through stretches like this, it’s just tough for the whole team to swallow, more than (for) my selfish reasons.”

Right-hander Adam Ottavino, Colorado’s only truly dependable reliever all season, took care of Milwaukee in the eighth, setting the Brewers down in order despite a monster flyball from Christian Yelich to right field that finally settled into Carlos Gonzalez’s glove. Ottavino also got Gold Glove help from shortstop Trevor Story, who charged Lorenzo Cain’s slow roller to record the final out of the inning.

While the drama came at the end of the game, Rockies got strong performances from starter German Marquez, Story and Gonzalez.

Marquez pitched another terrific game. Over seven innings, he gave up two runs on just three hits, struck out nine and walked two. Manager Bud Black pulled him after seven innings for pinch hitter Ryan McMahon. At the point, Marquez had thrown 98 pitches (67 for strikes) and still looked strong. His curveball was exceptional.

“I used it quite a bit because I had command of that pitch,” Marques said. “The depth was really good, so I went to that a lot tonight.”

Story led off the fifth with a solo home run to center, a 417-foot blast that came off his bat at 104 mph. He mashed Junior Guerra’s first-pitch slider for his 21st homer of the season to tie the game 1-1.

Gonzalez’s two-run laser over the right-field wall off Guerra put Colorado ahead 3-1 in the sixth. He drove in Charlie Blackmon, who drew a leadoff walk. Gonzalez has 14 home runs, matching his total for the entire 2017 season.

Gonzalez acknowledged the tough loss, and the Rockies are 1-4 on the current road trip, but he said the Rockies will recover.

“Absolutely, because we have the right team to do it,” Gonzalez said. “It’s tough, but we have to be able to wash it off. You don’t really like blaming anybody because at the end of the day, we win together and we lose together.”

Milwaukee trimmed the lead to 3-2 in the bottom of the frame when Yelich punished Marquez’s 81 mph hanging curveball for a lead-off home run. Regardless, it was another fine performance by Marquez, who lowered his road ERA to 3.09.

The game, however, started off poorly for Marquez, as it does for so many Rockies pitchers. He walked Yelich and Lorenzo Cain to open the Brewers' first inning and then served up an RBI single to Moustakas. Of the 64 earned runs Marquez has allowed this season, 25 have come in the first inning. As a team, Colorado has allowed 91 first-inning runs, the most in the majors.

Looking ahead

Rockies LHP Tyler Anderson (6-3, 3.69 ERA) at **Brewers RHP Freddy Peralta** (4-2, 3.61), 5:10 p.m., Saturday;

ATTRM, 850 AM

Anderson has been a consistent and productive pitcher over his last six starts, save for a terrible seventh inning on Monday at St. Louis. Anderson walked three consecutive batters, allowing the Cardinals back into a game that Colorado eventually lost on a walk-off home run in the 10th inning. Still, over his past six outings, the left-hander has allowed just seven earned runs over 41 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings while striking out 40. Over that span, his ERA dropped from 4.23 to 3.69. But Anderson best be careful pitching to Ryan Braun, who is 3-for-6 with two home runs against him. Peralta allowed one earned run over four innings in Milwaukee's win over the Dodgers on Monday but did not factor in the decision. He only gave up three hits but needed 98 pitches to get through his short outing. Peralta dominated the Rockies in his big-league debut May 13 at Coors Field, holding them to one hit and striking out 13 over 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. — *Patrick Saunders, The Denver Post*

Sunday: Rockies RHP Jon Gray (9-7, 4.99 ERA) at Brewers LHP Wade Miley (2-1, 1.53), 12:10 p.m., ATTRM

Monday: Pirates RHP Joe Musgrove (4-5, 3.63) at Rockies LHP Kyle Freeland (9-7, 3.20), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Tuesday: Pirates RHP Jameson Taillon (8-8, 3.74) at Rockies RHP Antonio Senzatela (4-3, 4.56), 6:40 p.m., ATTRM

Journal: Tom Murphy emerging as Rockies' primary catcher, but questions remain
Colorado continues to carry three catchers going into the season's home stretch

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | Aug. 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE — The Rockies continue searching for the right combination behind the plate. So far, the results have been mixed.

Ideally, manager Bud Black wants someone who calls a great game, is a coach on the diamond and works in concert with his pitchers. Getting some consistent slugging would be nice, too. But two-thirds of the way into the season, production at the plate has been lacking.

Chris Iannetta, Tony Wolters and Tom Murphy have combined for a .204 average (13th in the National League), a .634 OPS (13th) and 10 home runs (12th). They're going to need to be better in the final third of the season.

Murphy, who started Friday night's game against the Brewers, is looking more and more like Colorado's primary catcher. It was his seventh start in the last 11 games. He's certainly putting in the work to improve, spending the hours before a game studying scouting reports of opposing hitters.

"I would say that 95 percent of my video work goes into my catching," Murphy said. "And I have a lot of stats to work with. As a catcher, I have a ton of numbers I can work with about the hitters we face, and I rely on my gut instincts, too."

Black said Murphy's dedication is beginning to pay off.

"Knowing our scouting report and how we are going to attack a lineup? I think 'Murph' follows that very well," Black said. "Also, instinctively, as the game unfolds, I think he sees what a pitcher is able to do on a given night."

Murphy has slumped at the plate lately, but entered Friday's game hitting a respectable .247 with two home runs and 11 RBIs since being recalled from Triple-A Albuquerque on June 12.

Given Murphy's emergence, I find it curious why Colorado continues to carry three catchers on its 25-man roster. Black said there are reasons.

“We brought ‘Murph’ up at a time when Chris and Tony were in a little bit of an offensive lull, and Murphy was really swinging the bat well in Triple-A,” Black said. “The thought was to bring up ‘Murph’ to see if we could find an offensive spark at the bottom of the order.”

Black also said that having three catchers enables the Rockies to use Iannetta as a “right-handed threat” off the bench. He also said that Wolters provides defense and can be used as a pinch runner for Iannetta.

“We have flexibility with those three guys,” Black said. “It made sense at the time we did it, and it’s made sense up until now.”

The Rockies also like to match their pitchers up with certain catchers. Lately, Iannetta has often been paired with Kyle Freeland, while Murphy has worked behind the plate during Jon Gray’s resurgence.

One-two punch. Before he went on the disabled list with an oblique strain, second baseman DJ LeMahieu was Colorado’s leadoff man, supplanting center fielder Charlie Blackmon in that role. LeMahieu returned from the DL on Thursday but hit second against the Cardinals. He batted second again Friday night, with Blackmon leading off once again.

“We have been successful, in DJ’s absence, with Charlie leading off,” Black explained. “And Charlie has been swinging the bat well lately.”

Blackmon’s 13-game hitting streak ended Tuesday, but during the streak he hit .345 with seven doubles and three home runs.

Footnotes. Matt Holliday, who spent five seasons with Colorado from 2004-08, was officially assigned to Triple-A Albuquerque on Friday. The plan is for Holliday, 38, to get back in baseball shape and then join the Rockies when rosters expand in September. ... Right-hander Chad Bettis made a Triple-A rehab start Thursday, pitching six innings, allowing four runs on five hits with two walks and four strikeouts. He had no issues with a blister on his right middle finger. There’s a possibility Bettis will be added to the bullpen.

Brewers 5, Rockies 3: Germán Márquez has great start, but Wade Davis blows it again

Trevor Story and Carlos González provided the offense

By Ryan Schoppe / Purple Row | Aug. 3, 2018

The **Colorado Rockies** almost got a big bounce-back victory tonight against the **Milwaukee Brewers**. After dropping three of four to start the road trip in St. Louis, the Rockies were looking primed for a victory to start the series in Milwaukee. Up 3-2 in the bottom of the ninth, Bud Black once again decided to give **Wade Davis** the ball simply because he's got the title of closer despite his performance being far from deserving of it this season, and once again, **Davis** coughed up the lead.

Germán Márquez pitched seven solid innings and was both in line for, and deserving of a win. While the offense was still missing in action for most of the game, two home runs by **Trevor Story** and Carlos González gave the Rockies just enough runs to give the Rockies a lead going into the bottom of the ninth.

Auspicious beginnings

After walking two batters to begin the game, Márquez gave up a soft single that allowed the first run of the game to score. It was starting to look like things were going to get out of control and a big first-inning deficit was incoming. However, Márquez struck out the next batter and then quickly shut down the next two batters to not only escape the inning but also keep his pitch count from spiraling out of control.

Márquez continued to dominate for the rest of his outing with a **Christian Yelich** home run the only other blemish. After walking the first two batters, he didn't walk another batter for the rest of the game and only surrendered three total hits while striking out nine in seven innings.

Story Time

Story has been relatively quiet at the plate since the All-Star break. He went into the break on fire and had a great showing in the Midsummer Classic. Since then he's struggled to find extra-base hits, hopefully tonight's deep blast to center signals another hot stretch starting for the Rockies young shortstop.

Nolan being Nolan

It's so easy to take **Nolan Arenado**'s defense for granted because he makes great plays almost every game. To help counter that, it's always worth showing a great **Arenado** replay in every recap just to make sure we don't forget how lucky we are.

Colorado Rockies: Why isn't Adam Ottavino their closer?

By Olivia Greene / Rox Pile | Aug. 3, 2018

The 2017 offseason was one of rebuilding certain portions of the Colorado Rockies. General manager Jeff Bridich focused on making a strong bullpen with the signings of three relievers. The Rockies bullpen was then deemed the "super bullpen," but it definitely hasn't lived up to that name.

The **Colorado Rockies** bullpen, for the majority of the season, hasn't been top tier. However, there is truly one (and only one, in my opinion) who has been an outlier in the bullpen. That is **Adam Ottavino**. He's having a stellar year and definitely should've been on the All-Star team but was sadly overlooked. However, he is not overlooked by Colorado manager Bud Black as Ottavino is a prized asset who is called upon time after time.

Due to this, I question why he wasn't made the closer in recent days. **Wade Davis**, Colorado's current closer, has shown time and time again that he isn't able to shut down an opposing team in the final inning. Most recently, Davis has struggled in the series against the St. Louis Cardinals. Now, at the start of the series against the Milwaukee Brewers, he has shown just exactly that again, **giving up another walk-off hit**. Here you have a closer **who signed a record-setting deal**, yet he is suddenly unable to do the one job he was paid to do.

I shouldn't have to be extremely concerned and have my watch tell me my heart rate is too high because I see Davis trotting to the mound from the bullpen. Whenever Ottavino is making his way to the mound, we all have a sense of peace because this a man who can get the job done. Just look at his stats. He has a 4-2 record with a 1.38 ERA in 52.1 innings along with his incredible 78 strikeouts. These are the kind of stats you'd like to see a closer have.

The real question is how long are the Rockies going to let Davis continue to come into save situations and allow it to go so far out of hand that it's costing the Rockies games that they so badly need to win?

You can only blame Davis to a point. Eyes have to look towards Bud Black on his choice to leave Davis in these types of situations or even give the go-ahead nod for him to come out of the bullpen. Davis has **some issues right now** that he has to work on in order to show that he's worth all this money the Rockies decided to pay him.

The Rockies have a temporary solution to the closer problems. Adam Ottavino is a player who makes a strong case of a guy who could be their closer. Why they didn't do that in the first place is beyond me.

Looking at Davis' stats doesn't help either. His ERA over the last seven games is truly concerning at 10.50 and giving up seven earned runs in the last seven as well. He's appeared in 48 games, 31 of those he got the save which has equated to his 45.1 innings.

It's disheartening to see another quality start wasted by another late-inning rally. Bud Black has to do what he can to stop this from happening.

Right now, the move to Adam Ottavino as the closer makes sense. Let him shut the door for you and help the Rockies get back to the postseason.

Colorado Rockies: Chad Bettis is likely headed to bullpen

By Jake Shapiro / Rox Pile | Aug. 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE — Chad Bettis' rehab tour continued on Thursday with the right-hander starting in Triple-A. The Colorado Rockies were encouraged by his health, given that the 29-year-old has been shelved with a blister on his throwing hand since July 1.

His most recent start for Albuquerque featured six innings of two earned runs over 95 pitches. It was the third time the Colorado Rockies veteran pitcher took the the hill for the Isotopes and the first time he pitched more than four innings. Part of what was costing him length in game situations was uncooperative weather.

Now what's interesting is that he still is starting and part of this is to increase length, no matter the role he plays when rejoining the Major League club. However, the hints lean towards him working as a reliever when he returns to Colorado.

Bettis has worked out of the bullpen before. After his first eight games in the show were starts, he switched over to relieving and finished the 2013 season with eight appearances out of the bullpen. He spent 2014 exclusively as a reliever while at the Major League level and wasn't transitioned back to starting until he was demoted at the end of that season.

Since then, he has made just on appearance as a reliever and that was in Double-A Hartford while he worked to regain his strength following his successful war against cancer.

However, his time at the end of 2013 and during the 2014 season when he was a reliever did not go well. In fact, he could be the very well be the worst reliever in franchise history.

In 31.2 innings of work, he had a 9.09 ERA, 1.989 WHIP and opponents slashed .367/.425/.583 off of him. His ERA is the worst in Rockies history among relievers who have thrown at least 30 innings, as is his left on base percentage. Though it doesn't count against his ERA, six of the 12 runners who were on when he entered scored.

He was really bad.

He was also pretty young.

So why would he move back to the bullpen?

In his recent absence, Colorado's staff pieced together a healthy ERA of 3.16, the best for a single month in franchise history. That included an ERA of 1.71 from the starters at Coors Field.

All five starters have been great and may have more flash than Bettis, although he has been good for the Rockies with a career record of 29-22 with a 4.76 ERA as a starter. The last time he was fully healthy for a season — 2016 — he was terrific. This year hasn't gone as well but he's been dealing with blister on and off.

The role he could play is needed as the Rockies haven't had a solid long guy since last year when **Chris Rusin** was last right. Bettis would be somebody **Bud Black** is more confident handing the ball off to than rookie **Yency Almonte**. Bettis would no doubt bolster the bullpen if he could overcome those past demons.

There are some good reasons why the Rockies would send Bettis to the 'pen but it's key to remember his struggles and that they may pop up once more. Nevertheless, he's a much more experienced pitcher than he was back then and his veteran savvy may be all that it takes for him to be a key contributor for the Rockies in a unique bullpen role.

Colorado Rockies deny roster construction as cause for pitching success

By Jake Shapiro / Rox Pile | Aug. 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE — There's a narrative going around the internet surrounding the Colorado Rockies right now. Simply put, it's untrue and was quickly debunked by Rockies players on Friday.

The **Colorado Rockies** had a red-hot July where they paced for the third-best month in club history at 17-6. The Denver Nine has climbed back into relevancy and the playoff race, and it's all because of their play as of late. Since June 19, they've gone 24-12, highlighted by a 3.55 ERA from their pitching staff (fourth-best in Major League Baseball) and a 3.42 ERA from their starters (second-best in the National League).

If you go back to that time before this torrid stretch, the Rockies were reeling and, at one point, had even lost eight straight games at home. On June 12, they made a bold call to activate a third catcher and have kept all three on their roster since — said for a short paternity leave. Although at one point the rotation only had four starters for about a dozen games, most of this odd-roster juggle has come with the already handicapped four-man bench.

The four-man bench has been a staple of **Bud Black's** two-year tenure in Colorado and the skipper likes that because it allows him to have an eight-man bullpen. Why? One, it helps to have more pitchers for when games get out of control in Denver ... which happens quite often. Two, altitude affects recovery time negatively and it's harder to sleep in high-altitude environments so having one more reliever than most teams is supposed to hide guys who are resting.

But having two of your four bench players be catchers also limits position versatility and makes it harder for your position players to get a day off. Granted, **Ian Desmond** and **Ryan McMahon** have played several positions in the purple and **Tony Wolters** has shown he can step from behind the dish and be a capable middle infielder.

Catching has a profound impact on pitching and that's why so many teams are okay with their catcher hitting below the Mendoza Line. The backstop is the one spot on the field where the defensive aspects of it are so grueling that the offense is often an afterthought.

Having a trio of catchers has allowed the Rockies to keep their backstops fresh ... but it's also prevented them from consistent playing time.

Some have gone to another step and credited the Rockies' sick pitching success not with the pitchers themselves but rather credited having three catchers at once. Simply put, this is jumping the shark. Yes, the Rockies have never constructed their roster like this and they've never pitched like this so there is a surface level connection. However, correlation doesn't equate causation here.

To ignore the fact that the rotation is more talented than it has ever been before as the root to the success of the Rockies is to ignore the quintessential key to baseball: pitching.

"How would that help?" Rockies catcher **Chris Iannetta** questioned while responding to this notion of three backstops helping at all the success out on the hill.

"Probably not," **Kyle Freeland** told Rox Pile. "Chris Iannetta has caught 21 of my 22 starts. The correlation is that they're all intelligent."

The real help of the trio has been allowing the veteran Iannetta come off the bench as a pinch hitter without feeling like the club has burned its only protection in case of an injury. The call-up of Tom Murphy in mid-June also came at a point when Colorado's other two masked men were struggling to hit.

As for picking which of the triumvirate to play on a given night, Black has found it rather easy.

"There are a lot of things that go into it," he said on Friday. "A lot of is the opposing pitcher and the matchup we like and there's a component of who is pitching for us. We've stuck Iannetta with Freeland and Murphy with Gray."

As for any reasons other than those listed above, Black shook off that there were any other benefits.

Colorado Rockies: What's wrong with Wade Davis?

By Ryan Ladika / Rox Pile | Aug. 3, 2018

The Colorado Rockies signed former Royals and Cubs closer Wade Davis last December 29 to lock down the ninth inning after the departure of Greg Holland, hoping to get the same dominant reliever that Kansas City and Chicago had. It has certainly been a roller-coaster debut season in the Mile High City for Davis, much to the dismay of the Rockies.

August 2, 2018. The Colorado Rockies led the St. Louis Cardinals 2-1 entering the bottom of the ninth inning as Davis jogged in from the visitors' bullpen at Busch Stadium. The Rockies were playing the last of a four-game series on the road against the Cardinals, trying to earn a series split. Starter **Antonio Senzatela** labored through six innings of one run ball. Newly-acquired **Seunghwan Oh** threw a perfect seventh inning and, with the help of a crucial replay overturn, **Adam Ottavino** continued his dominant 2018 season with a scoreless eighth.

The first pitch Davis threw to **Yairo Muñoz** was a 90 mph cutter and induced a groundout to third baseman **Nolan Arenado**. Then the wheels came off. Davis allowed two straight hits to **Greg Garcia** and **Harrison Bader**, as well as a stolen base to Bader, putting two runners in scoring position for pinch-hitter **Jose Martinez**. Martinez lined a walk-off, two-run single off an elevated 92 mph fastball to right field and the Cardinals won the game and the series.

It was Davis' fifth blown save of the season, and fourth losing decision, raising his season ERA to 4.57. That's not what the Rockies were hoping for when they signed him. His five blown saves match his season totals from his previous three seasons combined. His 4.57 ERA is a full 2.27 runs higher than his 2.30 ERA with the Cubs last season, and would be the second-worst of his career if his season ended on August 2.

It begs the question, what has happened to Wade Davis this season?

A search on **baseballsavant.com** reveals some shocking numbers. Davis relies on five different pitches: his four-seam fastball (which he uses 44.9 percent of the time), cutter (31), curveball (22) sinker (1.8) and changeup (0.3). Because he so rarely uses his changeup, I'm going to ignore it.

Of his four main pitches, all have steadily lost average velocity each season since 2015. His fastball, the pitch he goes to the most, has decreased from 96.5 mph to 93.7 mph over that span. Conversely, his swing & miss percentage had actually risen since that span on his curveball, cutter and fastball, but peaked last season and have decreased this year.

His sinker has done the opposite. The swing & miss percentage on his sinker had decreased from 2014-2016, and has increased since then, to a career-high 37.5 percent this season. The average exit velocity on his sinker was 98.2 mph last season, and has dropped to 51.8 mph this season. That's a 46.4 mph difference!

Now, I'm no pitching coach, so I'm not going to pretend that the easy solution is to tell him to throw his sinker more and that it will be an automatic fix. It would logically seem like a good start, though. As Davis gets older and loses velocity on his pitches, it would make sense to back off of his fastball and focus more on effective offspeed pitches, similar to Ottavino's approach with his slider.

The fact is, though, the Rockies are currently experiencing the same thing with Davis that happened with Holland last season. Davis had a 3.72 ERA in 38.2 innings before the All-Star Break. He gave up 17 runs, 16 of which were earned, on 24 hits. In 6.2 innings since the All-Star Break, Davis has already given up seven earned runs on eight hits, good for a 9.45 ERA.

The Rockies' fast start last season helped them overcome a shaky second half from Holland and hold on to the second Wild Card spot, but this year Colorado doesn't have the same luxury. A healthy and dominant Wade Davis is crucial for the Rockies to make a second-half surge for the playoffs, which is why the Rockies need to fix what's wrong before it's too late.

BSN Exclusive: Carlos Estevez eyes imminent return

By Patrick Lyons / BSN Denver | Aug. 3, 2018

ALBUQUERQUE – Before the July 31st trade deadline, the Colorado Rockies made three additions to their roster that could help push them into the playoffs during the final two months of the season: outfielder and occasional first baseman Matt Holliday, and relief pitchers Seunghwan Oh and Santiago Casilla.

Other additions set to aid the Colorado roster are second baseman D.J. LeMahieu, starting pitcher Chad Bettis, as well as left-handed relievers Mike Dunn and Chris Rusin, all of whom are currently on the disabled list.

One oft-forgotten player on the 40-man roster also capable of delivering support to the Rockies in the days and weeks ahead is a young pitcher that the fans rallied behind for the past two seasons.

Between 2016-17, the sounds of The Troggs' rock and roll standard "Wild Thing" would emit from the PA systems at Coors Field to hearken one particular reliever from the bullpen as he emerged to take his place on the mound.

Carlos Estevez, 25, has been missing from the 2018 Colorado Rockies after appearing in 98 games as a valued member of the bullpen for the past two campaigns.

Out of action since March when he went on the disabled list with a strained left oblique, he was moved to the 60-Day DL in order to allow for sufficient recovery time from an injury that is at the core of all active movements.

Though it's been four months of rehabilitation, Estevez is still on the road to recovery. He took some time to discuss his process with the injury and his current state of health.

"Honestly, I'm just getting back to my normal form," Estevez told BSN Denver. "It feels really good."

Working with catcher Jan Vazquez and Albuquerque pitching coach Brandon Emanuel during a bullpen session before a game, Estevez felt positive about the progress he's been making.

"(The bullpen session) was more touch-and-feel," he began. "It was just location. Since I missed my Spring Training and a lot of the season, I'm just trying to locate my fastball and work from there."

On July 15th, once it was time for Estevez to return to regular action, the Rockies thought enough of him to designate Brooks Ponders, who had contributed for 15.1 innings with Colorado this season, for assignment.

In the month of July, Estevez had made ten appearances in Triple-A, seven of which were scoreless outings. He pitched ten innings during this span and surrendered just four earned runs, giving up twelve hits and walking four batters in the process. His seventeen strikeouts equated to an impressive 15.3 strikeouts per nine.

It wasn't long ago that Estevez was named the Rockies closer as a 23-year-old. One season away from making the playoffs, Estevez was inserted as Colorado's closer during June and July of the 2016 season, when he'd saved 11 games after then-closer Jake McGee hit the DL.

"It was real good to be the closer for a short amount of time, but I know that the team needed me right at that spot. I showed up for them. Things at the end didn't go as planned, but I think it was a really good time because I know what I can do in the big leagues. That was a big part at the beginning of my career, so I think that was really good."

During this period of time, he tied a rookie record with saves in three consecutive games. On July 26-28 against the eventual AL Wild Card Baltimore Orioles and National League Champions New York Mets, Estevez was the man who secured the Rockies victories.

"I had never pitched three days before, in a row," Estevez explained. "Not even in Little League. So, that was pretty tough, since I've been in professional baseball for a while. I get to the big leagues and at that point, you feel good, but you've never pitched on a third day. So, that was tough."

Ultimately, Estevez doesn't concern himself with statistics. Racking up saves or concerning himself daily with his earned run average is irrelevant. He just wants to contribute to the big league club.

"I just go out there and whenever they want me to do the job, like get in with runners on or throw a no-run inning so we can get back close where we're down by one or we're tied. Just a quick inning, get out of there. That's all that matters at that point."

The 2017 season began with Estevez on Colorado's Opening Day roster. However, he struggled with command, playing in just 35 games with the Rockies.

He found himself getting demoted and promoted six times between Albuquerque and Colorado. These series of moves took a toll on the second year reliever.

"It's pretty tough," he admitted. "Last year, I did [demotion/promotion] a lot. It's pretty tough with the travel. Your body doesn't feel the same, but if you have your mind in the right place, you're always going to be good to get balanced."

With support from family and teammates, he was able to work through the challenges that often plague young players who might interpret a demotion as a sign that they are simply not good enough.

"Sometimes, you've just got to slow down on baseball stuff. Sometimes, stop thinking about baseball because most of the day we spend on the field. And sometimes when you're having a time like that, bouncing around, you've got to forget about it. That's why you got your family there, people close to you."

Support has also come from his teammates and coaches, something that can go a long way for a young man from the Dominican Republic.

“They’re gonna let you know you are a part of that team. Even coaches will tell you, ‘We’re here for you’ and all this stuff. It’s tough. If you are in the right place in your head, you’ll be fine.”

Estevez is making his case for an opportunity in the Rockies bullpen and though production in Albuquerque doesn’t always translate to results in Colorado, belief in himself just may.

“I know I can close in the big leagues. They also know it, too.”

Rockies suffer their third walk-off loss in last five games

By Rich Allen / BSN Denver | Aug. 3, 2018

The Colorado Rockies, only two games back from the National League West division lead, are getting into crunch time as they enter the last third of their schedule.

After dropping three of four to the St. Louis Cardinals, the Rockies set off to Milwaukee to begin a stretch of five consecutive series against playoff contenders—albeit the Pittsburgh Pirates are borderline. To survive the next 17 games, Colorado will likely need to play some of their best baseball, and they can't afford to keep blowing games the way they have their last two.

Wade Davis blew his second straight save in bombastic fashion, issuing a pair of free passes before surrendering a two-out walk-off home run to Eric Thames.

It was the third walk-off loss the Rockies have suffered in their last five games.

Where Junior Guerra was efficient in the top of the first, throwing only eight pitches, German Marquez was the opposite in the bottom. His first three pitches of the game were nowhere near the strike zone, and he walked the first two hitters of the game after full counts. Recently acquired Mike Moustakas made him repent for his cardinal sin, dropping a middle-middle pitch into left-center and scoring Christian Yelich to give Milwaukee a lead before tallying an out.

In 22 starts, Marquez has allowed a run in the first inning 14 times.

Marquez rebounded, retiring the next three—two via strikeout—to leave a pair on and minimize what looked to be a big opportunity for the Brewers to put up a crooked number.

Meanwhile, Guerra held the Rockies without a runner until the second and a hit until the third, when Marquez beat his counterpart with a squib shot in between first and second. The base hit rose Marquez's batting average on the season to .359.

On the mound, Marquez settled in, retiring the next 15 batters he faced after the first three reached to start the game, striking out five over that stretch. Guerra continued to match him pitch-for-pitch, until Trevor Story turned a first-pitch slider around and off the center field batter's eye, knotting the game at 1-1.

It was Story's 21st home run on the season.

The Rockies then took the lead in the next frame on a two-run shot from Carlos Gonzalez, reaching for a low and away pitch and somehow still pulling it over the right-field wall. CarGo's 14th home run on the year ties his total from his 2017 campaign.

Marquez' retired-batter streak ended in the bottom of the sixth, hanging a breaking ball to Yelich that he hit for a home run to center and pulling the Brewers within one.

The Rockies starter ended the night with a pair of strikeouts and a weak grounder in the seventh. What looked at the very beginning to be a troublesome start for Marquez turned into one of his best of the season, tying his season-best with nine punchouts and allowed only two runs on three hits.

Adam Ottavino pitched a clean eighth, with the help of a Story defensive gem on a slow roller to nab Lorenzo Cain after Yelich just missed his second homer of the game, landing in CarGo's glove just shy of the wall.

Wade Davis, a day after blowing his fifth save of the season in St. Louis, came on in the ninth and struck out Moustakas before walking Jesus Aguilar to begin the dramatics. Orlando Arcia came into the game as a pinch-runner and was able to move into scoring position when Davis lost Travis Shaw, issuing his second straight walk.

In strode Jonathan Schoop who, after looking at a strike and swinging at one, fouled off four consecutive before popping out to Davis on the mound.

That left it up to Thames who swung ugly on the first pitch but got a center-cut fastball on the third pitch of the at-bat and did not miss it. And that was the ballgame. Again. Colorado fell to 58-51 and sit two games back of the lead in the NL West.

FINAL STATS:

German Marquez: 7 IP, 3 H, 2 ER, 2 BB, 9 K

Adam Ottavino: 1 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 0 BB, 0 K

Wade Davis: 1 IP, 1 H, 3 ER, 2 BB, 1 K (BS: 6)

Carlos Gonzalez: 2-for-4, 1 R, 2 RBI (HR: 14)

Trevor Story: 1-for-4, 1 R, 1 RBI (HR: 21)

WHAT'S NEXT: The second game of the series sees Tyler Anderson take on Freddy Peralta. First pitch at 5:10 Mountain Time.

Rockies lead nearly throughout, but Eric Thames hits walk-off winner for Brewers

By Rich Kurtzman / Mile High Sports | Aug. 3, 2018

New series, new town but a similar result.

The Rockies couldn't get out of St. Louis fast enough, and now in Milwaukee, they've lost again in walk-off fashion on back-to-back nights. This time, a 5-3 defeat at the hands of the hometown Brewers.

German Marquez pitched well, as he has since June, Trevor Story went yard in the fourth and Carlos Gonzalez's homer in the sixth added insurance. But the Rockies couldn't hold on as closer Wade Davis gave up a three-run bomb in the ninth to lose the game.

Marquez started his night out by walking two straight Brewers batters, and then Milwaukee took the 1-0 lead when Mike Moustakas singled to score Christian Yelich from second.

Marquez — the best hitting pitcher in the NL at a .359 batting average — actually got Colorado's first hit of the night off Ju Guerra in the third inning, but he was stranded at first base.

Everything got tied up when Story crushed a pitch 417 feet to center field of Guerra in the fourth inning. That was Story's 21st homer of the year as the first-time All-Star keeps proving he's one of the best, young shortstops in the game today.

Besides Story's homer, the Rockies had no hard hits off Guerra all night into the sixth inning. That is, until Gonzalez reached down and lifted a ball out of the building, a 2-run bomb, to give the Rockies a 3-1 lead mid-way through the sixth.

Meanwhile, Marquez was busy sitting down 15 straight batters at that point in the contest. That was, until Yelich went yard to center field to bring the game to 3-2, Rockies. Marquez went 7.0 innings, giving up only three hits with two earned runs and nine strikeouts. It was the fifth time in six games he pitched six or more innings, and he's a perfect 6-0 over that timespan.

Adam Ottavino came in during to pitch the eighth inning and Wade Davis came in to try and close it out for the win. Davis, though, walked the first two batters and then allowed Eric Thames to take a fastball from the middle of the plate to out of the building for the walk-off winner.

Colorado fell to 58-51, 2.0 games back of the Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL West. Marquez should have picked up his 10th win, but instead, is still at 9-8 for the season.

Rockies announcer Schemmel to attempt record-breaking bike ride for charity

By MHS Staff / Mile High Sports | Aug. 3, 2018

Rockies radio announcer Jerry Schemmel and Julie Lyons, Co-Founder of Love, Sweat & Gears, are planning on attempting something never before done in the state of Colorado – setting four world records for crossing the state of Colorado in one summer. Jerry and Julie will be challenging themselves to race across Colorado in four directions, solidifying a record in each crossing, all while raising funds for Race to Read – a nonprofit sponsored by the Bandimere Speedway Family of Colorado – and Project ReCycle; charities that improve the lives and the futures of children across the state.

The challenge looks like this:

- May 31, 2018 – starting from Raton Pass at the Colorado/New Mexico border, the Double J's will ride south to north across Colorado ending north of Ft. Collins at the Colorado/Wyoming border – 320 miles.
- July 23, 2018 – starting in Holly at the Colorado/Kansas border, the Double J's will ride east to west across Colorado ending just West of Grand Junction at the Colorado/Utah border – 640 miles.
- August 20, 2018 – starting from north of Ft. Collins, the Double J's double back to Raton Pass for a north to south crossing – 320 miles.
- September 6, 2018 – starting west of Grand Junction, the Double J's double back to Kansas for a west to east crossing – 640 miles.

All of these records will be fully crewed, officiated and recorded by the World Ultramarathon Cycling Association (WUCA).

Award-Winning "Race to Read"® Program Provides a Fun, Race-Themed Incentive for Elementary-Age Students

For the past 21 years, Bandimere Speedway has been conducting a reading program in local elementary schools. Started during the '95-96 school year, at Rooney Ranch Elementary School in Lakewood, Colorado. The program continues to thrive, with 63 schools participating in 2017, the program has been in 206 different Colorado schools since 1996. The support from racers and businesses through a variety of innovative ways have helped the program in its growth while further stating Bandimere Speedway's commitment to the community, young people, education, and families.

What is "Race to Read"®?

“Race to Read”®, is a six-week reading program, designed to encourage literacy by providing an exciting race-themed incentive for preschool and elementary-age students. The program can also be customized by schools to fit most any special education requirement for participating students.

“Race to Read”® is a six-week program that starts in March and ends in May, two weeks prior to the speedway’s season-opening event, the NAPA Auto Parts “Night of Fire & Thunder”, scheduled for a Saturday in the middle of May. In 2018, the dates for the program are March 26 through May 4. Prizes are awarded when students complete Take-Home Reading sheets provided by the program. Complimentary tickets for the reader and one accompanying adult to the “Night of Fire & Thunder” event are offered as prize incentives during the reading program.

“Race to Read”® has its roots at Jefferson County’s Rooney Ranch Elementary School in Lakewood, Colorado, where it helped kick-off the school’s inaugural year in 1995/1996. The response by the school community was tremendous and prompted many contacts from other schools interested in establishing the program for their students. In 1997, the program was expanded to eight schools with the same positive response.

How can you get involved with “Race to Read®”?

Because this program strives to be self-supportive through the Bandimere Family Foundation, your tax-deductible donation is extremely helpful in providing important funds as this program continues to reach more students each year. Your check can be made out to the “Bandimere Family Foundation”, a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, and mailed “Attention: “Race to Read” to the Bandimere Speedway offices, 3051 South Rooney Road, Morrison, CO 80465. A donation receipt will be mailed to you for tax purposes.

The program also benefits from your vehicle donation through carshelpingcharities.org.

Thames hits walk-off homer, Brewers top Davis and Rockies

By Associated Press / ESPN.com | Aug. 3, 2018

MILWAUKEE -- The first pitch Eric Thames swung at made him look foolish -- a looping curveball that bounced at the plate.

"I was like, 'OK, see the ball and trust whatever happens, happens,'" Thames said.

Thames found what he was looking for, hitting a three-run homer with two outs in the ninth off embattled Rockies closer Wade Davis, and the Milwaukee Brewers beat Colorado 5-3 on Friday night.

"I got a pitch to hit and I didn't miss it," said Thames, who hit the second walk-off homer of his career. "That was awesome. Seeing it, feeling it with the sweet spot off the bat and then seeing the team's reaction and the crowd's, that was an awesome moment."

Not for Davis. It was his sixth blown save of the season and his second in as many days after losing in St. Louis on Thursday.

Davis (1-5) struck out Mike Moustakas to start the inning before allowing a pair of one-out walks. After Jonathan Schoop popped out, Thames hit a 1-1 fastball deep into the right-field bleachers to end it.

"I was definitely trying to go about 10 to 12 inches higher," Davis said. "We had thrown a couple curveballs in a row. I was going to go back to it. I just wanted to get one up and in."

Miller Park continues to be a house of horrors for Davis, who also allowed a walk-off homer to Travis Shaw in his last appearance at Milwaukee with the Cubs on Sept. 23, 2017. It wasn't forgotten in the dugout.

"Our guys were talking about last year when Shaw hit the walk-off against Chicago off Davis: 'You remember that? Let's go, let's get him again,'" Thames said. "We did."

Padres manager Bud Black said he'll talk with Davis, who has blown his last three save opportunities against the Brewers, but had no plans to replace him.

"This happens in baseball. You hate to see it. Wade has been such a great closer throughout his career. He's been through this," Black said. "He will respond."

SWEET DREAMS

Thames' late heroics turned around what had been a pitchers' duel in which the Rockies' German Marquez got the better of Junior Guerra.

Marquez allowed two runs on three hits and two walks in seven innings. He struck out nine and retired 15 in a row at one point.

Guerra went eight innings, allowing three runs on five hits and two walks while striking out six.

Guerra had been sent home earlier in Milwaukee's seven-game road trip to get a good night's rest because of a late start in the series finale in Los Angeles. The rest of the Brewers straggled home at 6 a.m. local time Friday following a 21-5 loss to the Dodgers that set a franchise record for runs allowed.

"I got a good sleep," Guerra said.

STAT LINES

Corbin Burnes (2-0) came in with a runner on first in the ninth and retired the side for the win.

Christian Yelich homered for Milwaukee, while Trevor Story and Carlos Gonzalez went deep for the Rockies.

MINOR HOLLIDAY

OF Matt Holliday went 2 for 4 with a walk in his first appearance for Triple-A Albuquerque since signing a minor-league contract with the Rockies on Monday. The 38-year-old Holliday hit .231 with 19 homers and 64 RBI last year with the Yankees.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Rockies: The training staff checked LF Gerardo Parra's left hand after he appeared to jam it when he was caught stealing in the second. He remained in the game. Marquez also received attention from the training staff after being hit by Moustakas' liner in the sixth but came back throwing in the upper 90s.

Brewers: RHP Matt Albers (right shoulder) has struggled since coming off the disabled list on July 28, giving up eight runs and recording just two outs over three appearances.

UP NEXT

Rockies left-hander Tyler Anderson(6-3, 3.69 ERA) is holding hitters to a .144 average over his last six starts but has been plagued with a lack of run support. Milwaukee rookie Freddy Peralta (4-2, 3.61) faces the Rockies for the second time in his career. His first appearance against them was electric. The right-hander struck out 13 over 5 2/3 innings, taking a no-hitter into the sixth in his MLB debut in Colorado.