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**MEDIA CLIPS – April 6, 2018**

**Rox break out in 9th after stellar Anderson outing**

**Thomas Harding / MLB.com | April 5, 2018**

SAN DIEGO -- Rookie **Ryan McMahon** spent much of Thursday afternoon watching Rockies starter **Tyler Anderson** baffle the Padres for six scoreless innings, while the defense made a series of dazzling plays. He wanted to do something.

The best he could do was nothing. McMahon drew a four-pitch, bases-loaded walk from Padres reliever **Brad Hand** in the top of the ninth to break a scoreless tie and open the door to a 3-1 Rockies victory at Petco Park.

**DJ LeMahieu** followed with a two-out, two-run single -- a necessary contribution because the Padres' **Manuel Margot** opened the bottom of the ninth with a homer off **Wade Davis**, who would go on to record his fourth save. At any rate, the Rockies will arrive Friday for their Coors Field opener against the Braves with a 4-3 record, based on contributions from all over the diamond.

McMahon -- **the club's No. 2 prospect** who made the team with an impressive Spring Training but has had trouble finding playing time, much less his swing -- was happy to have a tangible contribution, even if it meant keeping the bat on his shoulder. Hand walked three, and the Padres ended their season-opening homestand 1-6.

"I hadn't really done much to help the team, so it feels good to get out of here, help get a win and come home for Opening Day," said McMahon, who grounded out in his other plate appearance after entering the day as a reserve who was 0-for-9 with five strikeouts -- but now has one big game-winning RBI.

LeMahieu said of his hit, "I definitely didn't want to let him off the hook with the inning he was having."

The season started with poor starts by **Jon Gray** and Anderson in losses at Arizona. But those games were valuable because they underscored the adage that all the hitting in the world -- and the Rockies have plenty -- can't make up for poor starting pitching. They had five homers in the two losses to the D-backs.

But starting with **German Marquez**, who gave up no earned runs in five innings at Arizona on Saturday and will start Friday against the Braves, the starts since have all been solid. After Gray's seven scoreless innings in Wednesday night's 5-2 victory, it was Anderson's turn to point the right way after giving up seven runs in 2 1/3 innings at Arizona.

Anderson was helped by shortstop **Trevor Story**'s leaping stab of a **Freddy Galvis** liner to end the second and third baseman **Nolan Arenado**'s **dazzling snare** on an **Austin Hedges** liner in the third. But Anderson held the Padres to four hits and no walks, and struck out four -- including Hedges swinging and **Chase Headley** looking in the fifth after consecutive one-out singles. 40 PM ET

Padres rookie lefty Joey Lucchesi gave up a first-inning leadoff single to **Charlie Blackmon**, but no other hits while striking out seven in five innings, meaning Anderson had to be sharp.

"That first game was one of those where there were a lot of pitches where I barely missed, I was trying to be too perfect," Anderson said. "All of a sudden it's 2-0 and you made two pretty good pitches. Today, I just took that out of the equation."

## **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**If at first you don't succeed, you can still succeed:** Rockies right fielder **Gerardo Parra** dove for Galvis' one-out lined single in the bottom of the seventh inning, which bounced in front of him. Parra, however, blocked the ball, then erased **Hunter Renfroe** -- attempting to go first-to-third -- with a strike of a throw. 40 PM ET

He was helped by Story's actions, which fooled Renfroe into thinking Parra had caught Galvis' drive before it hit the ground.

"I saw the guy stop while he was trying to go to third base, so I threw it and got him," Parra said.

The inning ended with catcher **Chris Iannetta** throwing out Galvis on a steal attempt of second. Had Renfroe reached third, it's possible Galvis' steal attempt would not have drawn a throw from Iannetta.

**Infield tight, hitter's delight:** That's what LeMahieu thought went he smoked a grounder to shortstop Galvis in the top of the eighth. But Galvis made a diving stop, held Blackmon at third, and retired LeMahieu at first.

#### **QUOTABLE**

"It's no coincidence that DJ has won a Gold Glove, and Nolan's won a Gold Glove -- or five." -- *Rockies manager Bud Black, while discussing the Rockies' defense all around the diamond*

#### **WHAT'S NEXT**

Righty Marquez starts Friday's home opener against the Braves at 2:10 p.m. MT, with cold weather in the forecast. His first 2017 start, on a wet, windy night last April 25, was disappointing -- four innings, nine hits, eight runs in a loss to the Nationals. But on May 10, on a wet, 53-degree day, he held the Cubs scoreless on three hits over eight innings of a 3-0 win.

## **Arenado's diving snare highlights Rox defense**

**Thomas Harding / MLB.com | April 5, 2018**

SAN DIEGO -- A line drive by the Padres' **Austin Hedges** disappeared into the glove of Rockies star third baseman **Nolan Arenado**. So did the Padres' chance for early momentum Thursday afternoon in the **Rockies' 3-1 victory**.

With one out in the third, the Padres had not managed a baserunner against Rockies starter **Tyler Anderson** when Hedges lined a pitch down the third-base line. But Arenado made a full dive and grabbed it to offer yet another reminder why Arenado has won the Rawlings Gold Glove Award each of his five seasons in the Majors, which is a record career-starting run at his position.

The play was merely part of a game that offered proof of the Rockies' defensive quality.

### **Additionally:**

- Shortstop **Trevor Story** had two key plays. He leaped to snag a **Freddy Galvis** liner to end the second. After the Padres made it a two-run game with **Manuel Margot**'s ninth-inning leadoff homer off closer **Wade Davis**, Story rushed in on **Jose Pirela**'s grounder that had ticked off Davis, and made a barehanded pickup and strong throw to first.

### **Story's bare-handed play**

- Right fielder **Gerardo Parra** dove but couldn't catch Galvis' line drive against **Adam Ottavino** with one out in the seventh. But Parra blocked the ball, then threw out **Hunter Renfro**, who was trying to go first-to-third.

### **Parra's throw out at third**

After Parra's play, catcher **Chris Iannetta** threw out Galvis trying to steal second to end the seventh.

The Rockies made just two errors, and more than their share of highlights, while going 4-3 on the season-opening road trip. Second baseman **DJ LeMahieu** snared a grounder to the middle by Padres pitcher Joey Lucchesi to end the third, and left fielder **Ian Desmond** chased down a **Carlos Asuaje** liner to open the eighth.

"They understand the importance in our park of defense -- run prevention," manager Bud Black said. "It's no coincidence that DJ has won Gold Gloves, Nolan has won a Gold Glove .. or five. Trevor is on his way. 'Desi' is a good defender, and 'Mac' [rookie first baseman **Ryan McMahon**], Carlos [Gonzalez's] diving catch last night. We do those things, and it helps."

### **Gonzalez's outstanding catch**

### **Worth noting**

Righty starter **Jeff Hoffman**, who was pulled out off the Cactus League schedule because of right shoulder soreness, will throw a simulated game at the Rockies' Scottsdale, Ariz., training center Friday, and soon will join Class A Advanced Lancaster on an injury rehab assignment. ... Righty reliever **Carlos Estevez** (left oblique strain) will join Triple-A Albuquerque during its season-opening series at Salt Lake City. ... Righty reliever **Ryan Gonzalez**, who was on the Major League radar before undergoing Tommy John surgery last spring, is nearing injury rehab games.

## **Rox unveil new scoreboard and features for '18**

New 8,369-square-foot scoreboard introduced along with new food offerings

**Manny Randhawa / MLB.com | April 5, 2018**

DENVER -- The Rockies open their 2018 home schedule on Friday afternoon against the Braves at Coors Field, but on Thursday, the club provided a tour featuring a brand-new scoreboard, as well as rebranded and renovated areas around the ballpark.

The new scoreboard is an upgrade of the video board the Rockies had in left-center field from the opening of Coors Field in 1995, through the 2017 season. Developed in partnership with Daktronics, it is 8,369 square feet in size, 258 percent larger than the former scoreboard. To put that into context, it's the equivalent of 784 60-inch televisions. The scoreboard also features 6.8 million LED lights, and high-definition 1080p technology.

The Rockies have also extended and upgraded the protective netting surrounding the playing field. The netting behind home plate has been upgraded with state-of-the-art material, and has been extended to the same height to the outfield end of each dugout to enhance fan safety. All 30 Major League clubs have extended protective netting at least to the end of each dugout this season.

As for the players' facilities, several upgrades were made over the offseason, including a new indoor batting cage that features technology that enables the lighting to simulate game conditions based on day or night start times. Other player amenities that have been added or upgraded include a new video room, quiet room, barber shop and laundry facility in the Rockies' clubhouse. A new media interview room has also been added.

Several areas of the ballpark serving fans have also been rebranded and/or renovated. These include the field-level premium seating area behind home plate, as well as the attached indoor high-end bar and restaurant. The entire space is now known as INFINITI Club. The Coors Light Silver Bullet Bar on the first level of the Rooftop has also been rebranded, and in addition to serving all Coors products, it will serve more than 25 local and national craft beers.

Other rebranded and/or renovated areas include the Captain's Deck, which is a Captain Morgan bar on the Mezzanine Level in center field; and the Club Level Bar on the third base side, which now expands onto the outdoor deck, which has been enclosed with floor-to-ceiling windows and increased seating areas for fans.

The Rockies are also introducing several new food offerings at Coors Field for the 2018 season. These include the Mile High Mac-N-Cheese (green chili mac-n-cheese, chorizo, pico de gallo), the Triple Play Dog (extreme dog, pulled pork, bacon bits, purple slaw), the Street Taco Trio (steak taco, chicken taco, topped with cilantro and cotija), and the Rocky Mountain Po' Boy (Rocky Mountain oysters, garlic slaw, green chili ranch, pico, guacamole, cotija). There are also two new drinks to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the franchise: the 25th Anniversary Cocktail (vodka, blue curacao, lemonade, lime juice, grenadine) and the 25th Anniversary Ale.

Some of the new food offerings at Coors Field for the 2018 season.

Throughout the 2018 season, the Rockies will have festivities to celebrate the franchise's 25th anniversary. There will be in-game promotions and special events, special features in Rockies Magazine, and a special 25th Anniversary Photo Day on Saturday, June 23, when several Rockies "All-Time 25" players -- selected by fans during the offseason -- will take photos with members of the current team and fans prior to the game. A full calendar of events is available at [Rockies.com/promotions](https://www.rockies.com/promotions), or [Rockies.com/25th](https://www.rockies.com/25th).

## **Rockies head home with solid defense, potent offense and questions about starting pitching**

DJ LeMahieu: Defense can be best in the National League

**Patrick Saunders / TheDenverPost.com | April 5, 2018**

SAN DIEGO — After 45 days of spring training in the desert, followed by seven games on the road, the Rockies are finally coming home.

They'll be greeted with the traditional, beer-inspired, purple-clad hoopla — and brisk Colorado weather — when they host the Braves in their home opener Friday afternoon at Coors Field.

So, what do we know so far about these 2018 Rockies, who own a 4-3 record?

Their starting pitching has been sporadic and remains a concern. The offense, despite getting only four hits in a 3-1 victory over the Padres on Thursday afternoon at Petco Park, has the potential to be potent, especially in LoDo.

The defense? It should be golden. Colorado has committed only two errors in the first seven games and five-time Gold Glove third baseman spun another web gem Thursday, going horizontal to rob the Padres' Austin Hedges of possible extra bases in the third inning.

"It's awesome, it's a great defense and really athletic," said two-time Gold Glove second baseman DJ LeMahieu, who roped an opposite-field, two-out, two-run single off Padres closer Brad Hand in the ninth inning to secure Thursday's victory. "We have great arms in the outfield and our infield, in my opinion, is the best defensive infield in the league."

Colorado's glove work was on full display Thursday afternoon. A prime exhibit: two pivotal plays in the seventh inning. Right fielder Gerardo Parra dove for Freddy Galvis' one-out, line-drive but was unable to make the catch. Parra, however, managed to block the ball, then erase Hunter Renfroe — attempting to go from first to third — with a strike to Arenado. The subtle moment within the play was a deke by shortstop Trevor Story, who held up Renfroe just long enough to get the out at third.

"We are very prideful of our defense, and we work really hard," Story said. "We just want to do everything we can to get those extra outs."

The inning ended with catcher Chris Iannetta making a perfect throw to nail Galvis attempting to steal second base.

In the final analysis, the Rockies' hopes to be a true contender come September will come down to starting pitching. They managed to win three of four games in San Diego, largely because of terrific performances from right-hander Jon Gray and lefty Tyler Anderson, both of whom bounced back from awful outings to begin their seasons.



Anderson vowed to manager Bud Black that he was going to be much more aggressive on Thursday than he had been in his lackluster first start of the season at Arizona. Anderson was true to his word.

He was perfect through 3  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings before Eric Hosmer rapped a single up the middle. By the time Black relieved him in favor of Adam Ottavino with a runner on in the seventh, Anderson had given the Rockies everything they wanted: six scoreless innings, four hits allowed and no walks. In stark contrast, Anderson gave up seven runs on five hits and four walks in a mere 2  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings vs. the D-backs.

“Today I was more aggressive in the strike zone,” Anderson said. “Buddy and I talked and I told him, ‘That’s not the pitcher I am, to give up those walks.’ My fastball command was a lot better today.”

Added Black: “I think this game was a momentum-builder for Tyler. His fastball was much better today and his changeup was effective, and the cutter-slider was good.”

Wednesday night, Gray pitched seven scoreless innings, allowing four hits, no walks and striking out seven as Colorado cruised to a 5-2 victory. That was a good sign from Colorado’s No. 1 pitcher.

“What I liked about our start (to the season) is how we pitched today and how we pitched last night,” Black said. “And (Kyle) Freeland pitched well on Tuesday, and (Chad) Bettis hung in there (on Monday), so I liked the way we pitched in this series. Now that has to continue.”

## **Ryan McMahon, DJ LeMahieu deliver in 9th as Rockies beat Padres**

Right-hander Adam Ottavino remains near perfect in relief

**Patrick Saunders / TheDenverPost.com | April 5, 2018**

SAN DIEGO — Rockies rookie Ryan McMahon wants to contribute any way he can. He did so in unconventional fashion Thursday afternoon in a 3-1 victory over the Padres.

He drew a four-pitch, bases-loaded walk off Padres closer Brad Hand in the top of the ninth, breaking a scoreless tie and cracking the door open for a late rally.

“It feels good to finally help,” said McMahon, who collected his first RBI of the season. “I hadn’t really done much to help the team, so it feels good to get a win here.”

Manager Bud Black was not surprised to see McMahon deliver.

“Even during spring training, I saw ‘Mac’ show some good plate discipline,” Black said.

After walking McMahon, Hand whiffed Charlie Blackmon, but then allowed a two-run single to DJ LeMahieu.

“I was just looking for something over the plate,” LeMahieu said. “Once we got that run across, it felt like we could finally take some deep breaths. I was just happy to get a ball over the plate and put the ball in play. I definitely didn’t want to let (Hand) off the hook right there.”

Closer Wade Davis nailed down his fourth save in four chances, despite giving up a solo home run to Manuel Margot in the ninth. It was the first hit allowed this season by Davis, who settled down and struck out Eric Hosmer and Hunter Renfroe to end the game. Davis is carrying a 2.70 ERA.

“Otto did a great job today and Wade closed it out,” manager Bud Black said. “Those guys are in a good place.”

**Footnotes.** Charlie Blackmon, who on Wednesday signed an \$108 million contract, has batted 10-for-25 (.400) over his last six games after an 0-for-4 start. He had two of the Rockies’ four hits Thursday and stole his first base of the season. ... LeMahieu is hitting .322 in his career against the Padres and had multihit performances in three of the four games in the series here.

### **Looking ahead**

Braves RHP Brandon McCarthy (1-0, 3.38 ERA) vs. Rockies RHP German Marquez (0-0, 0.00), 2:10 p.m. Friday, ATTRM; 850 AM

Marquez, coming off a strong spring training and solid first start against the Diamondbacks, gets the honor of pitching in the Rockies' home opener in what promises to be a cold and blustery day at Coors Field. Though he did not factor in the decision against Arizona a week ago, he allowed only one run on a four hits, striking out four and walking four. He's never faced the Braves. McCarthy allowed two runs on six hits and three walks over 5 $\frac{1}{3}$  innings in Atlanta's 15-2 win over the Phillies last Saturday. He struck out five. DJ LeMahieu has hit McCarthy well, batting 7-for-15 (.467), while Nolan Arenado has two homers in 15 at-bats against the veteran right-hander.

**Saturday:** Braves LHP Sean Newcomb vs. Rockies RHP Chad Bettis (1-0, 3.60), 6:10 p.m., ATTRM

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

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

## **Sports Talk: Solana Beach's Black is back home as a visitor**

**Jay Paris / TheCoastNews.com | April 5, 2018**

Baseball being baseball, Bud Black couldn't resist. The Colorado Rockies manager poked his head out of his dugout and gave a Padre he once coached a ribbing.

"Yeah but the guys that I know, they are running out," Black said. "There are still a few."

Black, the former Padres skipper, is doing just fine in Colorado. He returned this week with his Rockies facing the Padres, but Black is no strange face in these parts.

Yes, he was hanging in Petco Park's visiting dugout. But is he really a guest when considering his Padres stint, his home being in Solana Beach and him being a San Diego State graduate?

School remains out on whether letting Black go midway through the Padres' 2015 season was a keen move. What isn't up for debate is the smooth job he's done with the Rockies.

Last year was Black's first with Colorado and things went swell. He led the Rockies to their first playoff berth since 2009 and their first winning season since 2010. It was an amazing turnaround for a franchise that was constantly tortured with its pitchers having to work at the mile-high elevation.

The ball doesn't stay put long in that thin air, so the Rockies tried something to combat it. They hired Black, a former pitcher, to direct the club. It was a move which paid off as Black, who won 121 games in the majors and was the pitching coach for the Angels when they won the 2002 World Series, could relate with his frustrated hurlers.

"I talk about that with our guys all the time," Black said. "There is a toughness that I think we have to have with our pitchers in Colorado. There has to be an unselfishness, an attitude where some of the internal numbers can't be looked at by the individual pitchers as a baseline of performance."

Translation? Pitchers have to ignore their statistics that can go askew because half their games are played at Coors Field. It's not a place to toast if asked to record outs.

So what, says Black. The only thing he wants is a victory.

"A pitcher has to be good and he just has to care about winning," Black said. "Out-pitch the guy in the same conditions you are pitching in. Do you have to do it as a starter and a reliever more often than the other guys? Absolutely.

"But at the end of the day someone has to win the game, so why not it be us? If you are worried about your ERA, your hits-per-innings pitched, number of home runs, all these things, you are probably in the wrong place."

Black is in the right locale. He awoke a sleepy franchise and quickly become a Rockies fan favorite.

That's not surprising as Black treated folks right in San Diego. When he exited for batting practice, numerous Padres boosters shouted salutations.

"It's different when you come back to a place that had such a big mark on your career," Black said. "The organizations that I was part of in my 40-plus years in the majors, it is different."

Not much has changed with the Padres.

They weren't good when Black was shown the door after the club's experiment of acquiring high-priced talent backfired. And it appears the local nine is headed for their eighth straight losing season, in the midst of another rebounding project.

While the Padres try to find the answer no one is questioning Black's want-to.

"His energy is great and you can tell he really enjoys being here," said Nolan Arenado, Colorado's All-Star third baseman. "You like that and you feed off that. He wants to win and it's good to have that."

It's always great to see Black, even as a visitor in his hometown.

## 25 Years Later, That 1st Home Opener Seems Like Yesterday

Tracy Ringolsby / [InsidetheSeams.com](http://InsidetheSeams.com) | April 5, 2018

Eric Young walked to home plate, leading off the bottom of the first inning of the first game the expansion Rockies ever played in Denver on that afternoon of April 9, 1993. A record-setting crowd of 80,277 made its presence known.

“The fans had been wanting baseball for so long in the whole region,” Young recalled. “That afternoon there was something special in the air. It was like something big had to happen.”

And it did.

Young took the first five pitches thrown by Expos pitcher Kent Bottenfield, working a full count, and then, on the next pitch, Young swung a magical swing. The first Rockies batter in the first game ever played in Colorado hit a home run.

Okay, it wasn't the first home run in franchise history. Two days earlier at Shea Stadium in New York, Dante Bichette had connection off Bret Saberhagen of the Mets, but that was back East. That was just an appetizer for the baseball fans in the Rocky Mountain region.

Young's home run. However, ...

“Those people were so excited I said to myself, ‘I got to do something special,’” Young said. “When I hit that pitch it was like 80,000 people rose up and made sure that ball went over the fence. For the rest of my life I'll never forget that. It's never going away in the minds of the fans, which means I'm never going away, either.”

The Rockies, who had scored one run in losing the first two games of the seasons to the Mets right-handed duo of Dwight Gooden and Bret Saberhagen, finished that afternoon at Mile High Stadium with the first win in franchise history, 11-4.

Young went 4-for-4.

The impact of that afternoon 25 years ago wasn't lost on Young's teammates.

“The stadium was filled and the place was electric,” said Joe Girardi, the Rockies original starting catcher. “If you look at my career, I got to do some great stuff – play for the Cubs, be part of an expansion team, win a world championship (with

the Yankees). Those are things you can never forget. The chance to be part of something from the ground level like that (first Rockies) team was special.”

And it wasn't lost on the team's management.

“I'll never forget that moment,” said the late Jerry McMorris, the original managing general partner. “There are always going to be great moments, but that one was special. I remember to saying to Charlie (Monfort, another general partner), ‘To think Major League Baseball passed over Colorado and went to some of the other places it went to.’

“That game was a final statement that we were right, that the Rocky Mountain region was ready for the major leagues.”

Ready? The Rockies drew a record 4,483,350 fans to Mile High Stadium that season, a record, considering the seating capacity of the new stadiums, will never be broken. And the Rockies did that with 79 home dates, twice being forced to play make-up doubleheaders before the split-doubleheader became a staple for makeup games.

And that was a team with a group of basically unknowns, even among each other. Pitcher Bryn Smith, in fact, handed out name tags for each player to wear during spring training so they would know who each other was.

It was a team that went 67-95, including a 13-game losing streak from late July into early August.

“Most of the projections I remember seeing were that (the Rockies) might draw a couple million fans,” McMorris said. “I didn't know. You had to go by what the experts were thinking. Clearly, everybody missed the regional attraction of the franchise.”

Twenty-five years later, however, nobody is questioning the Rocky Mountain region's big-league status.

Their expansion cousin Marlins have floundered, despite winning two world championships, while the Rockies have flourished, from the first day until today.

## Thursday 4X4: Blackmon Rockies Record AAV

Tracy Ringolsby / [InsidetheSeams.com](http://InsidetheSeams.com) | April 5, 2018

Charlie Blackmon's six-year contract -- the last two years of which are at his option -- is the fourth largest overall guarantee in franchise history at \$108 million, but the \$18 million annual average value is the largest in Rockies history.

And Blackmon can walk away after four years, during which he is guaranteed \$77 million, which is an AAV of \$19.25 million. He has a player option on a \$21 million salary in 2022 and \$10 million in 2023.

Planning to attend the Rockies home opener on Friday? Well, bundle up. If the game is played, the forecast is for the coldest home opener in franchise history. The temperature at first pitch -- 2:10 p.m. -- is forecast to be 38 degrees, according to Weather Bug. Weather Bug forecasts a 30 percent chance of precipitation beginning at noon Friday, reaching 40 percent at 2 p.m., and then starting to drop, reaching 10 percent by 6 p.m.

The current lowest ever Opening Day temperature at first pitch is 40 degrees for the April 26, 1995 game against the Mets. The start of the season was delayed that year by the players' strike that wiped out the end of the 1994 season, the 1994 post-season and start of 1995 season. It is the only time the Rockies had a home opener at night. The lowest high for a day home opener is 44 degrees in 2004.

But this is the Rocky Mountain region, which always brings to mind the signboard at a Mr. Steak Restaurant in west Denver that proclaimed:

"Little Boys Who Lie Grow Up to Be Weathermen"

Before the Rockies get back to Colorado, though, they need to finish a four-game series in San Diego on Thursday afternoon. They go into the game needing a victory to wrap up a season-opening 4-3 road trip. A victory also would get the Rockies to .500 all-time at Petco Park, home of the Padres since 2004. The Rockies would become only the fourth visiting team with a .500 or better record at Petco.



Tyler Anderson starts Thursday's game for the Rockies. Past history does not bode well for Anderson, who suffered the loss in the second game of the season at Arizona last Friday. He has only one victory in 12 career starts in day games. He is 4-8 lifetime before the All-Star Break.

## Sarris: Why Charlie Blackmon is an unusually difficult player to evaluate

Eno Sarris / TheAthletic.com | April 5, 2018

The news didn't reach me in time, but by the time I saw Charlie Blackmon in the clubhouse yesterday, he had already put pen to paper to sign an extension that guarantees him \$63 million in new money from 2019-2021, along with two further seasons of player options. We were talking about his power surge, and how the ability to make contact served him well. I said, with the ball being different now, players were best served by putting it into play and taking advantage.

"Oh, so I'm not really that good, huh," Blackmon said with a smile.

"Told you so," said a nearby pitcher.

Just a little light-hearted exchange, but also a window into a difficulty that both the team and the player's agents may have had in correctly valuing the star center fielder. Because of the park he plays in, the shape of his offensive game, and his particular defensive skillset, Blackmon presents a unique challenge when it comes to trying to assess his true value to the team.

It's easy enough to just point to his home away splits for his career, I guess.

Split	BB%	K%	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	wRC+
Home	7.3%	12.8%	.346	.406	.566	.972	131
Away	5.3%	19.8%	.266	.314	.436	.750	100

There. He's a creation of his home park, you could say.

Except that's not fair. There's some evidence that Coors actually makes it *harder* to hit when you're away from Coors. Consider that, over the period of their existence, the Rockies have the league's worst park and league adjusted offensive numbers away from home. And then consider that Rockies hitters see more fastballs at home (because pitchers go to fastballs more often when their bendy stuff doesn't bend in the altitude), develop a fastball-centric approach at home, and then encounter more junk on the road.

All you have to do is look at his home and away strikeout split to see that something is going on here. It's the second biggest in baseball since Blackmon became a regular in 2014 (minimum 600 PA away). Look who's first.

Name	Team	PA	Home K%	Away K%	Diff
Carlos Gonzalez	COL	1015	18.2%	25.6%	7.4%
Charlie Blackmon	COL	1366	13.1%	19.9%	6.8%
J.D. Martinez	2 Tms	1055	22.8%	29.4%	6.5%
Matt Adams	2 Tms	730	19.5%	25.8%	6.3%
Pedro Alvarez	2 Tms	699	23.3%	29.0%	5.6%

And it shouldn't be any surprise that the team has the biggest home and away split in strikeout rate in baseball since they started playing baseball.

Team	Home K%	Away K%	Difference
COL	17.10%	21.80%	4.7%
KCR	15.40%	19.30%	3.9%
STL	16.30%	19.80%	3.5%
DET	17.00%	19.60%	2.6%
TOR	17.80%	20.10%	2.3%

So, it's probably true that Charlie Blackmon is better than a league average hitter on the road, and worse than 30% better than league average at home. Both things can be true.

But, back to the conversation we had, it's also true that Blackmon's power surge came right when the ball began to change. Even though he has made some adjustments and grown as a player, it's true that his biggest power years came after we discovered that the ball is tighter, the seams are lower, and the core of the ball is different.

That said, while league wide ISO is up 36 points since 2014, Blackmon's is up 118 points. He clearly took the (new) ball and ran with it.

Now we get to the defense. Blackmon has never once rated as a better than average center fielder by Ultimate Zone Rating, and has only one year where he was a positive by Defensive Runs Saved. The outfield in Colorado is huge, though — could the park again be mucking up the numbers, this time on defense?

Maybe not. By Outs Above Average, Statcast's advanced defensive stat, which takes into account fielder positioning and the ball's exit velocity and launch angle in order to fully appraise an outfielder's defense, Blackmon hasn't always fared well.

Year	OOA Rank
2017	113/165
2016	72/165

Context matters here again, though. He's only regularly been playing center field since 2015, and he's in the top quartile of the league when it comes to foot speed. He has the tools, and it's certainly possible he's understanding the position better.

Of course, since there's so much intrigue under the hood, the projections are split on him. Dan Szymborski's ZiPs system currently projects Blackmon to be worth 4.5 wins this year, while Steamer says he'll only be worth 3.0 wins. At 32 years old next year, if he's a 4.5 win player this year, a three-year extension “should've” been worth more like \$85 million (considering 5 percent inflation and \$8 million a win). If he's a 3 win player this year, though, that number drops to \$50 million. Split the difference, and you get nearly exactly the value of the extension Blackmon got, especially when you figure the next two years of player options have real, monetary value to the center fielder.

It's clear that Charlie Blackmon is a very good player and that the Rockies are happy to lock him up for the next three-plus years. It's also clear that it's difficult to know *exactly* how good Charlie Blackmon is. Just another thing to blame on Coors Field.

## Rockies rally in 9th vs Hand to beat Padres 3-1, take 3 of 4

Associated Press / ESPN.com | April 5, 2018

SAN DIEGO -- All-Star closer Brad Hand was struggling again, so all rookie Ryan McMahon needed to do was stand in the batter's box and watch as four straight pitches missed the strike zone.

McMahon drew a bases-loaded walk off Hand to break a scoreless tie in the ninth inning and DJ LeMahieu added a two-run single for the Colorado Rockies, who beat the San Diego Padres 3-1 Thursday to take three of four.

"It feels good to finally help," said McMahon, who played in 17 games late last season and made the opening day roster for the first time. "I hadn't really done much to help the team so it feels good to help them get the win and get out of here and head back home for opening day."

Pitching in a non-save situation, Hand (0-2) walked Trevor Story and Chris Iannetta to open the ninth and the Rockies loaded the bases when second baseman Carlos Asuaje committed an error when he couldn't hold onto the throw from third baseman Christian Villanueva after Gerardo Parra's bunt.

Hand struck out pinch-hitter Carlos Gonzalez, but then walked McMahon on four pitches to bring in Story. Charlie Blackmon struck out before LeMahieu singled to with two outs. All three runs were unearned.

"I think Mac showed in spring training and even here that there's a little bit of plate discipline to his approach, which is great," manager Bud Black said. "Again, you want a guy to be aggressive there with bases loaded and one out, but he saw the ball and he took the borderline first couple of pitches and then from there it looked as though he saw the ball well and they were out of the strike zone."

McMahon said he was determined not to get fooled by a slider or curveball.

"I just went up there looking for a heater," he said. "I got to 2-0, still looking for a heater, he missed low with it, I was taking 3-0 and he didn't execute and I took my walk."

Said Hand: "Things aren't going my way right now. I just have to keep going out there and competing and get it turned around. I feel good, just those walks came back to hurt me. Three walks in an inning is never good."

Starters Tyler Anderson of the Rockies and rookie Joey Lucchesi of the Padres pitched well but were gone before the game was decided.

"Today was a rough one for him," Padres manager Andy Green said of Hand. "Today the command wasn't there. He's a guy we rely heavily on and a guy we believe in and I'm certain he'll get it back. Just a rough outing for him today.

"We didn't help him. We pick up a bunt, throw the guy out at first base and none of those runs score. That's part of the equation right there. Outside of what Lucchesi and (Craig) Stammen did, we played a bad baseball game today. Have to score runs if you want to win, and more than one, and we didn't do that."

The Rockies had only four hits.

Adam Ottavino (1-0) pitched two innings for the win and Wade Davis worked the ninth for his fourth save. Davis allowed Manuel Margot's leadoff homer, his first, and then retired the side.

Anderson lasted into the seventh inning in a strong rebound from a rough first start, when he allowed seven runs in just 2 1/3 innings at Arizona on Friday. Anderson retired the first 11 Padres batters and allowed only four hits while striking out four and walking none.

Lucchesi threw five strong innings in his second big league start, allowing just one hit and striking out seven while walking three. He retired his last 10 batters.

Lucchesi allowed a leadoff single to Blackmon and then picked him off. Lucchesi walked consecutive batters with two outs in the second before striking out Anderson. The rookie then retired the side in the next three innings.

Chase Headley pinch-hit for Lucchesi with two outs in the fifth and struck out looking with runners on first and second. Headley is hitless in 12 at-bats. Headley has made just two starts at third base.

The Padres were willing to take on his \$13 million salary in order to get Bryan Mitchell from the Yankees. Mitchell struggled in his first start, a loss to Colorado on Monday night.

## **QUOTABLE**

"I felt comfortable and settled in after the first inning, just competing," said Lucchesi, the first of a wave of Padres pitching prospects to reach the majors. "I just go out there and try to give my team a chance to win. That's all I care about."

## **UP NEXT**

Rockies: Return to Denver for their home opener Friday, when RHP German Marquez (0-0, 0.00) is set to oppose RHP Brandon McCarthy (1-0, 3.38).

Padres: Head to Houston to open a three-game series with the defending World Series champion Astros starting Friday night, when RHP Luis Perdomo (0-1, 11.25) is scheduled to start against RHP Lance McCullers Jr. (1-0, 3.38).

## Murray | Blackmon extension with Rockies a win-win

Robert Murray / FanRagSports.com | April 5, 2018

**Charlie Blackmon's** six-year, \$108 million extension with the **Colorado Rockies** made all the sense in the world for both the team and player.

Scheduled to be a free agent after the 2018 season, Blackmon would have run into a few issues: A qualifying offer would be attached to him, limiting his value; his age – he is currently 32; teams would have argued his numbers were inflated due to playing at Coors; he shares free agency with Manny Machado and Bryce Harper, among others.

Blackmon is a tremendous player, arguably a top-five outfielder in the game. Yet, when looking at the numbers, teams would have a right to question whether his success has been a primary factor of playing in Colorado.

A look at his numbers throughout his career, home vs. away:

- Home: 372 games, 61 home runs, 212 RBI, 117 walks, 205 strikeouts, .346 batting average, .406 OBP, .566 SLG, .972 OPS.
- Road: 398 games, 54 home runs, 149 RBI, 85 walks, 318 strikeouts, .266 batting average, .314 OBP, .436 SLG, .750 SLG.

After a winter in which players – key ones, at that – suffered in a market so dry and limited with cash, accepting a long-term offer to stay in a place he's called home his entire career was the best option. Blackmon, with those questions and concerns, was the type of player who could have suffered greatly in a loaded 2018 free agent class, as FanRag's Jon Heyman and Jeff Passan of Yahoo! Sports, among others, have said.

Which is likely among the reasons why Blackmon fired his previous agents, Sports One, and hired ACES as his new representation in the offseason; he had a new contract in mind.

ACES, led by Sam and Seth Levinson, are typically known as one of the most aggressive agencies in landing their clients new deals. In previous years, ACES were among the first to get their players signed, instead of waiting the market out like other agents.



Knowing this, as well as having relationships with people at ACES, Blackmon made the move, leading to negotiations beginning.

Talks between the Rockies and the Levinsons had been going on for some time. Ultimately, it was Blackmon's call on whether he wanted the deal to get done, but when the terms became clear to him, it was a no-brainer.

The details, as Craig Calcaterra of NBC Sports reported:

- **2018:** \$12 million, \$2 million signing bonus;
- **2019:** \$21 million;
- **2020:** \$21 million;
- **2021:** \$21 million;
- **2022:** \$21 million Player Option;
- **2023:** \$10 million Player Option, w/ bonuses and escalators.

With bonuses and escalators, the deal can be worth up to \$116 million. Initially, some argued that the deal seemed a little light, but with the number of questions surrounding his upcoming free agency, it's a deal that made plenty of sense.

*"It's a great deal," one agent texted. "He's paid \$108 million guaranteed through his year-37 season. Name me another player locked up until 37 years old in a deal..."*

*"Happy for him," another agent texted. "Good deal for a 32-year-old. Very smart."*

For both the team and the player, this is a deal that had to get done. Colorado keeps a key piece of the puzzle for the long-term, and Blackmon lands the nine-figure deal he's deserved for years, without having to go through free agency.

Win-win.

## **On Coors Field's Opening Day, Rockies return to postseason depends on starting pitching — weather or not**

**Paul Klee /Gazette.com | April 5, 2018**

DENVER — At long last, we'll have the answer: At the center of the sports universe, does it snow?

Going back-to-back-to-back, the Nuggets (Thursday) and Avs (Saturday) are hosting games at Pepsi Center with — dun, dun — playoff implications. Sandwiched in between is the Rockies' Opening Day, Friday at Coors Field.

And the Broncos signed... a punter.

It's a couch potato's dream tripleheader — or a ticketholder's call to body armor.

"First pitch: 35 degrees and windy with possible snow," said Chris Bianchi, a meteorology guru at WeatherNation. "The snow shouldn't accumulate much if we see it. But you never know..."

Colorado's pro sports teams, minus Vance Joseph's Broncos, are heating up. The Rox return to baseball's postseason must start with the starters.

"We've got to guard a little against the sophomore season (slump)," manager Buddy Black said in the offseason, a telling statement that the skipper, like the rest of us, would like to see the young fellas prove it.

Sophomores Kyle Freeland, German Marquez (who starts Friday in the home opener against the Atlanta Braves), Antonio Senzatela and Jeff Hoffman performed varying roles as big-league freshmen. They were the surprise that helped the Rox into the Wild Card game last October. Freeland and Marquez are in the rotation, again, while Senzatela (bullpen) and Hoffman (10-day disabled list) began the season in other spots.

Can the sophomores double down their second time around? The Rockies wrapped up their first road trip on Thursday at 4-3. A winning swing away from Coors Field will always and forever be a win for the Rockies.

The high-priced bullpen has been as advertised. And if a lineup of Charlie Blackmon (the first fly fisherman to make \$108 million at his night job), D.J. LeMahieu, Nolan Arenado, Ian Desmond, Trevor Story and Carlos Gonzalez can't generate enough runs, there should be an investigation.

(Just don't ask the Denver City Council.)

What the purple people greeters want to see is if the Rockies' starting pitching can duplicate what it did a year ago — give the lineup a chance to swing away and give the 'pen the stage in the seventh, eighth and ninth.

The Rockies beefed up elsewhere. The bullpen is pulling in over \$100 million. Desmond's been a bust at \$70 million, and CarGo is back for one more time at \$8 million. They locked in Blackmon with the fourth-richest deal in club history. The Monforts have shown Rox fans the money.

All that hasn't been adjusted, improved or tweaked is the starting pitching rotation. The Rockies are counting on organic development. The men selected for the job (and this will change) are all familiar: Jon Gray, Tyler Anderson, Chad Bettis, Marquez, Freeland. If the results are familiar, the Rockies will go back-to-back to the postseason for the first time.

Marquez was A-OK in his season debut at Arizona: four hits, no earned runs, five innings. Now he's a 23-year-old native of Venezuela pitching in 30-degree temperatures on opening day. The coldest openers here, according to Denver's CBS4, were 49 (1998, loss), 50 (2003, win) and 52 degrees (2014, win). The 26th opening day forecasts as a Rox record.

Will it snow at the center of the sports universe?

Bring it.