



MEDIA CLIPS – Dec. 5, 2018

**Inbox: What will Rox do at Winter Meetings?
Fans ask about possible moves, Gray's future, update on Ottavino
Thomas Harding | MLB.com | Dec. 4th, 2018**

Thomas Harding

@harding_at_mlb

· Dec 4, 2018

Please tweet in your questions now for a #Rockies Beat Reporter's Inbox

YankeeDoyle

@Bryan_Doyle

What moves do you predict the Rockies to make at next weeks Winter Meetings? If any?

The way the week has fallen, it looks more like the activity will be next week, rather than this one.

The Rockies have long held interest in first baseman/corner bat Carlos Santana but the Phillies sent him to the Mariners. Young standout Mets pitcher Noah Syndergaard's name has been connected to the Rockies, but the ability to make a deal and the Mets' desire to do so were always questionable, and Mets general manager Brodie Van Wagenen did his best to quash the idea Tuesday. The Marlins' asking price for catcher J.T. Realmuto thus far has been unrealistic for the Rockies.

Indications are the Rockies up to now have not been in play for Mariners outfielder Mitch Haniger, whose name has been bandied in reports as being available, or D-backs first baseman Paul Goldschmidt, or one of the Indians pitchers said to be available -- Trevor Bauer and Corey Kluber.

They haven't tipped their hand publicly or even to agents of available free agents, instead choosing to prepare their trading and signing strategies. If the Mariners, who have built financial flexibility into the future but haven't cut much in terms of 2019 salary costs, want to spin Santana, expect the Rockies to be involved. Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto has not ruled out trading Santana or first baseman Jay Bruce, who came in a trade with the Mets.

Multi-position free agents such as Marwin Gonzalez and Josh Harrison, and second basemen such as Brian Dozier, Jed Lowrie and Daniel Murphy are among the names the Rockies will have to evaluate.

Ideally, the Rockies would play Ian Desmond primarily in left field, where he could get regular at-bats or share time if another outfielder emerges the way David Dahl did last year. Ryan McMahon's ability to play first base and second base offers more flexibility to accommodate a signing.

Thomas Harding

@harding_at_mlb

· Dec 4, 2018

Please tweet in your questions now for a #Rockies Beat Reporter's Inbox

Ryan Bricmont

@BricmontRyan

Does Gray have a starting job going into the season? Coming off an NLDS appearance (where Gray wasn't on the roster) and considering Nolan's FA at season's end, it seems that now may be the time to upgrade.

The beauty of last season was depth. The Rockies covered for Jon Gray's midseason struggles and injuries to Chad Bettis (blister), Antonio Senzatela (blister, right shoulder soreness) and Tyler Anderson (left shoulder soreness). Righty Peter Lambert, who turns 22 on April 14 and is the organization's No. 3 prospect according to MLB Pipeline, finished last season in Triple-A and could be a factor.

The Rockies believe Gray will rebound. There may be trade interest, but the more likely scenario is he'll compete to stay in the rotation -- and he is determined to get back to his 138 ERA+ form of 2017.

Thomas Harding

@harding_at_mlb

· Dec 4, 2018

Please tweet in your questions now for a #Rockies Beat Reporter's Inbox

Fat Kyle Freeland

@bpcr32

Any updates on Ottavino? Has he been in contact with the Rockies or is he looking to sign somewhere else?

The New York Post last week connected Adam Ottavino with the Yankees, but all indications are the market is still developing. The Rockies have not jumped into the market, and their stated intention of improving the offense could make it difficult to prevail in what figures to be a multi-team competition for Ottavino's services.

Which division is the most interesting right now?
Andrew Simon | MLB.com | Dec. 4th, 2018

This is an eventful time in the National League East.

Early last week, the Braves moved to defend their division title by signing third baseman Josh Donaldson and reuniting with catcher Brian McCann. The Mets soon responded, signaling their intention to win now under new general manager Brodie Van Wagenen. On Monday afternoon, New York finally completed a long-discussed blockbuster trade with Seattle that netted second baseman Robinson Cano and closer Edwin Diaz.

The Nationals and Phillies haven't exactly been quiet, either. Washington struck on Tuesday afternoon, reportedly landing the most coveted free-agent starting pitcher, left-hander Patrick Corbin, on a six-year deal. Corbin would join Max Scherzer and Stephen Strasburg atop the Nats' rotation, pitching to a shiny new catcher tandem of Yan Gomes and Kurt Suzuki. Gomes was acquired last Friday from Cleveland to pair with Suzuki, who signed as a free agent on Nov. 20. The Nats previously landed a pair of talented bullpen arms (Kyle Barraclough and Trevor Rosenthal), seeking to address another 2018 weakness.

Meanwhile, the Phils landed a Mariners middle infielder of their own, having completed a deal for Jean Segura, who represents an immediate upgrade for the club at shortstop. And with Carlos Santana going back to Seattle in the trade, Philly now can have slugger Rhys Hoskins make a beneficial move from left field to first base. While the club fell short in its pursuit of Corbin, it has been connected to numerous other available players, including ultra-hyped free agents Bryce Harper and Manny Machado.

In other words, the Hot Stove is on high in the NL East, which now has four teams that clearly aim to compete for a postseason berth in 2019 (sorry, Marlins fans). That puts it atop this list of the most interesting divisions, which takes into account offseason activity and likely competitiveness next season.

1. National League East

2018 champ: Braves (90-72)

Other playoff teams: None

Biggest offseason add: Corbin (Nationals)

Projected 2019 front-runner (per Steamer): Nationals

Atlanta, knowing that standing pat was not a viable strategy after last year's surprise postseason run, has come out of the gates aggressively. Signing Donaldson to a one-year deal was a low-risk move that with good health could have a massive payoff. Meanwhile, the Mets improved their 2019 roster by adding an excellent hitter (Cano) and an elite closer (Diaz), which should set them up to do even more. The Phillies also appear primed to go big, but for now they have at least acted to address some clear needs by snagging Segura.

And it's doubtful anyone is sleeping on the Nationals at this point, even though they stumbled last season in their quest for a third straight division crown. Yes, manager Dave Martinez's rookie year went poorly. Yes, Harper might leave -- maybe even for an NL East rival. But there's a reason the early 2019 Steamer projections still had Washington atop the division, even before agreeing to terms with Corbin. There is no shortage of talent here, and general manager Mike Rizzo has proven again that he is not shy about making moves.

2. National League Central

2018 champ: Brewers (96-67)

Other playoff teams: Cubs (95-68)

Biggest offseason add: Lonnie Chisenhall (Pirates)

Projected 2019 front-runner (per Steamer): Cubs

This isn't about Hot Stove moves, as these clubs have been relatively quiet -- so far. But this was perhaps MLB's best three-team race in 2018, when it also was the lone division to have four clubs finish above .500.

The Brewers, Cubs and Cardinals should be battling it out once again next season, giving them plenty of reason to look for upgrades this winter. In particular, Milwaukee's search for starting pitching and St. Louis' search for another high-impact bat are situations to watch as the offseason continues. Pittsburgh and Cincinnati get lost in the shuffle, but both are worth keeping an eye on, especially with the Reds rumored to be pursuing significant rotation help.

3. American League East

2018 champ: Red Sox (108-54)

Other playoff teams: Yankees (100-62)

Biggest offseason add: James Paxton (Yankees)

Projected 2019 front-runner (per Steamer): Red Sox

Those not on the East Coast might tire of the Yankees-Red Sox storylines, but these teams combined to win 208 regular-season games last season, then clashed in the playoffs, before Boston eventually won it all. With the Sox now trying to defend their championship and the Yankees fighting to reassert their control of the rivalry, things will continue to be feisty and fiery atop the AL East. Acquiring Paxton gives New York another top-of-the-rotation arm to try to tame Boston's lineup, and nobody expects that to be the last significant addition these teams make before Opening Day.

While the Sox and Yankees draw most of the attention, the Rays flew under the radar to win 90 games in 2018, doing so in innovative fashion with their "opener" strategy. Tampa Bay already has traded for catcher Mike Zunino and should be looking to add some more pieces moving forward.

4. American League West

2018 champ: Astros (103-59)

Other playoff teams: A's (97-65)

Biggest offseason add: Jesse Chavez (Rangers)

Projected 2019 front-runner (per Steamer): Astros

Oakland gave Houston a surprisingly strong challenge in 2018, keeping things interesting down the stretch as Seattle fell apart after a promising start. While there is a long ways still to go this offseason, it's worth wondering if this will be any more than a two-team race in '19.

Even if the A's can build on last season -- no easy task following a 22-win jump -- the deep and talented Astros figure to once again make for a difficult target. Meanwhile, the Angels face some significant challenges with their roster (Mike Trout aside), the Rangers are coming off 95 losses, and the Mariners have begun retooling in earnest by trading several key pieces.

5. National League West

2018 champ: Dodgers (92-71)

Other playoff teams: Rockies (91-72)

Biggest offseason add: Eduardo Escobar (D-backs)

Projected 2019 front-runner (per Steamer): Dodgers

This division, long a three-team race involving Arizona, ultimately came down to a 163rd game between Los Angeles and Colorado. Could it be close again? Baseball is full of twists and turns, but for now, Steamer projects the Dodgers for 95 wins -- 13 games in front of the Rockies. That's before any significant roster tinkering from L.A., which has managed to keep Clayton Kershaw, Hyun-Jin Ryu and David Freese in the fold.

The Padres have a top farm system, but they almost certainly won't be ready in 2019. The Giants may be changing direction under new front-office leader Farhan Zaidi, perhaps even trading Madison Bumgarner. The D-backs are said to be considering a trade of Paul Goldschmidt and/or Zack Greinke, while also facing the loss of Corbin and A.J. Pollock through free agency. In other words, there could be a lot riding on the fortunes of the Rockies, who must find a way this winter to bolster their offense.

6. American League Central

2018 champ: Indians (91-71)

Other playoff teams: None

Biggest offseason add: Alex Colome (White Sox)

Projected 2019 front-runner (per Steamer): Indians

The Indians cruised to their third straight division title in 2018, finishing 13 games ahead of the Twins and 27 games ahead of any other AL Central club. Will there be a real race in '19? This offseason could offer some clues.

Next year's Indians could look quite a bit different, due to potential free-agent departures (Michael Brantley, Andrew Miller, Cody Allen, Donaldson, Chisenhall and others), and trade rumors that have swirled not only around Gomes, but also the club's starting rotation. It still figures to be an uphill battle for the rest of the division, though Minnesota and Chicago, in particular, have the talent to make things interesting.

**Rockies exploring trades, but asking price for talents like Noah Syndergaard very high
Carlos Santana's trade to Seattle likely ends Colorado's interest
Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Dec. 3, 2018**

The Rockies' offseason rumors have been little more than quiet whispers of speculation thus far.

While the Rockies are exploring possible trades, it's highly doubtful that slugging first baseman Carlos Santana will end up in Colorado. The same goes for powerful Mets right-hander Noah Syndergaard.

It is true that the Rockies had some initial interest in Santana last winter before he signed a three-year, \$60 million deal with Philadelphia. Recently, Thomas Harding of MLB.com wrote that the "Rockies can envision Santana ... providing big-time offense production at first base." On Monday, however, the Phillies shipped Santana to Seattle as part of a multi-player trade that netted the Phillies all-star infielder Jean Segura.

General manager Jeff Bridich said last month that his top offseason priority was improving Colorado's inconsistent offense. Monday's trade, however, would seem to derail any chance of Santana playing for the Rockies, a move that would have enabled them to move under-achieving Ian Desmond off first base and make him a true utility player.

Syndergaard, the talented but oft-injured 26-year-old, is another player the Rockies have reportedly kicked the tires on. Andy Martin of New York's SNY TV recently tweeted: "The Rockies and Brewers have shown some interest, but there is skepticism that Colorado would be able to assemble a package strong enough to nab Syndergaard."

Ken Rosenthal, the veteran reporter for The Athletic and the MLB Network, has also mentioned the Rockies as possible trade partner with the Mets for Syndergaard. The problem, of course, is that the Mets are asking for a lot in return and the Rockies traditionally like to hold onto their best prospects.

A potential roadblock to any Syndergaard trade is the blockbuster trade between the Mets and Seattle that became official Monday. The Mariners sent all-star second baseman Robinson Cano and all-star closer Edwin Diaz to the New York for outfielder Jay Bruce, reliever Anthony Swarzak, right-hander Gerson Bautista and prospects Jarred Kelenic and Justin Dunn.

It's clear that new Mets GM Brodie Van Wagenen is in a win-now mode, and that could mean he wants to keep Syndergaard in the rotation. However, there are some in the industry who believe a trade for Syndergaard is still on the table. And should the Mets be able to pull off a trade with Cleveland for veteran starter Corey Kluber, Syndergaard's availability could increase.

Here is what MLB.com's Mark Feinsand tweeted Monday: "After Cano/Diaz trade, Mets are clearly still thinking big. Could be a sign they plan to trade Noah Syndergaard, then turn around and bring in Kluber. Brodie Van Wagenen appears to be exploring every possible avenue to improve his team."

Reviews on Syndergaard's future are mixed. In 25 starts last season, he posted a 3.03 ERA and a strikeout-to-walk ratio near 4.00. For his career, he has a 132 ERA+ and 4.94 strikeout-to-walk ratio. Syndergaard, however, has been limited to just 32 starts since 2017 due to injury. The good news for a potential trade partner: he won't qualify for free agency until after the 2021 season.

The stumbling blocks to the Rockies pulling off a major trade of any kind is that rivals have been asking for some of Colorado's top young players, including starting pitchers Kyle Freeland, German Marquez and Jon Gray, and top infield prospect Brendan Rodgers.

JAWS and the 2019 Hall of Fame Ballot: Todd Helton
Jay Jaffe | Fangraphs.com | December 4, 2018

2019 BBWAA Ballot

The Ballot's

Big Questions

Mariano Rivera

Edgar Martinez

Mike Mussina

Roy Halladay

Larry Walker

Scott Rolen

Todd Helton

The following article is part of Jay Jaffe's ongoing look at the candidates on the BBWAA 2019 Hall of Fame ballot. For a detailed introduction to this year's ballot, and other candidates in the series, use the tool above; an introduction to JAWS can be found here. All WAR figures refer to the Baseball-Reference version unless otherwise indicated.

Baseball at high altitude is weird. The air is less dense, so pitched balls break less and batted balls carry farther — conditions that greatly favor the hitters. Meanwhile, reduced oxygen levels make breathing harder, physical exertion more costly, and recovery times longer. Ever since major league baseball arrived in Colorado in 1993, no player put up with more of this, the pros and cons of playing at a mile-high elevation, than Todd Helton.

A Knoxville native whose career path initially led to the gridiron, ahead of Peyton Manning on the University of Tennessee quarterback depth chart, Helton shifted his emphasis back to baseball in college and spent his entire 17-year career (1997-2013) playing for the Rockies. "The Toddfather" was without a doubt the greatest player in franchise history, its leader in every major offensive counting stat category save for triples, stolen bases, caught stealing and sacrifice hits, none of which were major parts of his game. He made five All-Star teams, won three Gold Gloves, a slash line triple crown — leading in batting average, on-base percentage, and slugging percentage in the same season — and served as a starter and a team leader for two playoff teams, including its only pennant winner. He posted batting averages above .300 12 times, on-base percentages above .400 nine times, and slugging percentages above .500 eight times. He

mashed 40 doubles or more seven times and 30 homers or more six times; twice, he topped 400 total bases, a feat that only one other player (Sammy Sosa) has repeated in the post-1960 expansion era. He drew at least 100 walks in a season five times, yet only struck out 100 times or more once; nine times, he walked more than he struck out.

Because Helton did all of this while spending half of his time at Coors Field, many dismiss his accomplishments without second thought. That he did so with as little self-promotion as possible — and scarcely more exposure — while toiling for a team that had the majors' sixth-worst record during his tenure makes it that much easier, and as does the drop-off at the tail end of his career, when injuries, most notably chronic back woes, had sapped his power. He was "The Greatest Player Nobody Knows," as the New York Times called him in 2000, a year when he flirted with a .400 batting average into September.

Thanks to Helton's staying power, and to advanced statistics that adjust for the high-offense environment in a particularly high-scoring period in baseball history, we can see more clearly see that he ranked among his era's best players — and has credentials that wouldn't be out of place in Cooperstown. But like former teammate Larry Walker, an even more complete player who spent just 59% of his career with the Rockies, Helton will likely struggle to make headway with voters. He deserves better than that.

2019 BBWAA Candidate: Todd Helton

Player	Career WAR	Peak WAR	JAWS
Todd Helton	61.2	46.5	53.9
Avg. HOF 1B	66.8	42.7	54.7
H	HR	AVG/OBP/SLG	OPS+
2,519	369	.316/.414/.539	133

SOURCE: Baseball-Reference

Born in Knoxville, Tennessee on August 20, 1973, Helton is the son of former minor league catcher Jerry Helton, who spent 1968 and 1969 in the Twins' organization but retired to work as a chemical salesman and support his family. When Todd was five, Jerry built a tee from a washing machine hose and instructed his son how to hit in the family's garage, modeling Rod Carew's opposite-field approach; if Todd pulled the ball, he hit a fiberglass fishing boat parked in the corner.

Helton quickly became known for his baseball prowess, earning the nickname “The Blond Bomber.” By the time he reached Knoxville’s Central High School, he was a multi-sport star, starting at quarterback and defensive back for the varsity football team as a freshman and soon joining the varsity baseball team, playing the outfield, first base and pitching. As a senior, he was the Player of the Year for his region in both football and baseball; on the gridiron he passed for 22 touchdowns, scored 11 more, produced 2,455 yards of total offense, and intercepted seven passes, while on the diamond he hit .655 with 12 homers.

The Padres drafted Helton in the second round of the 1992 draft, offering a \$450,000 bonus, but Helton instead chose to accept a football scholarship to the University of Tennessee. After serving as backup to future NFL quarterback Heath Shuler as a freshman in 1993, he won the starting job as a sophomore, but a knee injury in Tennessee’s fourth game opened the door for freshman Peyton Manning. Meanwhile, he was a walk-on on the baseball team, playing first base and pitching (coach Rod Delmonico called him “the best pitcher I ever coached”). In his junior year (1995), he won the Dick Howser Trophy, given to the national college player of the year. The Rockies chose him with the eighth pick in that year’s draft — another football player, Nebraska punter Darin Erstad, was picked first — and signed him for a bonus of \$892,000.

Helton began his pro career at A-level Asheville but hit just .254/.339/.333 with one homer in 54 games. Even so, Baseball America ranked him 32nd on their Top 100 Prospects list the next spring. Ditching a pull-happy style that didn’t suit him, he hit .336/.427/.492 with nine homers split between the Rockies’ Double-A New Haven and Triple-A Colorado Springs affiliates, rising to 16th on BA’s list. After a sizzling 352/.434/.564 with 16 homers in 99 games at Triple-A, he joined the Rockies, debuting on August 2, 1997 — as a left fielder, since first base was occupied by the popular and productive Andres Galarraga — by going 2-for-4 against the Pirates, with a single off Francisco Cordova and a homer off Marc Wilkins. He went 2-for-4 with another homer, off Jon Lieber, the next day, and collected a total of seven hits over his first four games. Spending most of his time in the outfield corners, he finished at .280/.337/.484 with five homers in 101 PA, few enough to retain his rookie eligibility.

Though Galarraga had earned All-Star honors with 41 homers and a league-high 140 RBI in 1997, the Rockies let the 36-year-old Big Cat depart as a free agent to make room for the 24-year-old Helton. While he doubled twice on Opening Day, he didn’t hit his first homer of the season until May 5, but settled in en route to a very respectable .315/.380/.530 line with 25 homers, a 119 OPS+, excellent defense (+9 runs according to Total Zone) and 3.2 WAR. In a tight NL Rookie of the

Year race, he received 15 first-place votes, but Cubs starter Kerry Wood, the 21-year-old phenom who had dazzled with a 20-strikeout performance on May 6 and finished the year with 233 strikeouts, received 16 votes and won.

The Rockies underscored their commitment to Helton with a four-year, \$12 million extension, which he signed in the spring of 1999. He responded by launching 35 homers, though the across-the-board improvements in his batting line (.320/.395/.587) amounted to just a three-point gain in OPS+, as NL scoring rose from 4.60 runs per game to 5.00. Meanwhile, his defense dipped to average, and his WAR to 2.9. Not thrilling, but nice.

The thrills came in 2000. Helton opened the year with a 10-game hitting streak, kicked off May 10 with the first of two three-homer games in his career, and finished the month hitting .512/.588/1.000 with 11 homers in 102 PA. He made his first All-Star team, and after putting up similarly video game-like numbers in August (.476/.548/.848), carried an overall .395/.484/.717 line into September, with more plate appearances (570) than George Brett had in 1980 (515), the year he finished at .390 after being above .400 as late as September 4. The national media took notice of Helton's run at the magical mark; in Sports Illustrated, Rockies manager Buddy Bell and hitting coach Clint Hurdle both compared Helton to Brett, with the former saying, "Their passion, their work ethic and their respect for the history of the game are similar."

Hurdle, a former teammate of Brett's who would manage Helton from mid-2002 to mid-2009, made a similar comparison, but Helton, in typical fashion, rejected the notion. From the New York Times' Ira Berkow:

"It is such a flat-out sweet swing," Hurdle said. "I'm reminded of Don Mattingly or George Brett."

Helton said he knew people were impressed with the grace of his swing. "But I don't see it," he said. "I watch films and think: 'That could be better. It wasn't as pretty as it felt.' And I watch films of Brett, and think, 'Now that's a beautiful swing.'"

Helton hit "just" .274/.370/.613 for the month, but did bash seven homers in his final 11 games to finish with 42. His .372/.463/.698 line gave him the slash-stat triple crown, just as Walker had done the year before with a .379/.458/.710 line. In Colorado's high-scoring environment, his 163 OPS+ was merely third in the league behind Barry Bonds (188) and Gary Sheffield (176), but his 8.9 WAR was tops, as were his 216 hits, 59 doubles, 405 total bases, and 147 RBIs.

Nonetheless, voters completely discounted his season, in part due to the Rockies' absence from the postseason picture

(though their 82 wins marked their only time above .500 from 1997-2006) and in part due to the Coors factor. Helton finished fifth in the NL MVP race behind Jeff Kent, Bonds, Mike Piazza, and Jim Edmonds. As was perennially the case, Helton did hit better at home (.391/.484/.758), but his road numbers (.353/.441/.633) would have placed second (by two points, behind Moises Alou), first, and sixth, respectively — still a monster season.

In March 2001, the Rockies signed Helton to a nine-year, \$141.5 million extension — the fourth-largest in major league history to that point, after those of Alex Rodriguez, Derek Jeter, and Manny Ramirez — covering the 2003-2011 seasons. Helton's contract surpassed that of new teammate Mike Hampton, whom the team signed to an eight-year, \$121 million deal; that same winter, the team signed Denny Neagle to a five-year, \$51 million deal. Fortunately for the Rockies, Helton's contract turned out a whole lot better than either of the two lefties' did, but those are horror stories for another day.

Helton's raw slash stats fell off in 2001 (.336/.432/.685), but with the league scoring rate dropping from 5.00 runs per game to 4.70, his 160 OPS+ was nearly on par with the previous year, though still only good for seventh in the NL. He finished second in batting average, fourth in OBP and homers (49, a career high, but miles behind Bonds' 73), and fifth in WAR (7.8). Not only did he make the All-Star team again, he won his first Gold Glove. He continued to produce at a similar level over the next three seasons, hitting a combined .345/.452/.609 for a 159 OPS+ while averaging 32 homers, 194 hits, 112 walks and 6.9 WAR. He placed in the top five in OBP in all three years (second in both 2003 and -04) and in OPS+ twice in that span, and in the top 10 in WAR, with a high of fifth in 2004, with 8.3. He made three more All-Star teams, running his streak to five in a row, and won Gold Gloves in the bookend years. Helton's 37.5 WAR for the five-year period from 2000-2004 ranked third in the majors, behind only Bonds (51.2) and Rodriguez (43.5). Yet the Rockies continued to go nowhere. Their 94 losses in 2004 marked their highest total since their inaugural season in 1993. Late that season, they traded away Walker, who had missed 11 weeks due to a groin strain.

Though he led the NL with a .445 on-base percentage, the 31-year-old Helton's performance took its first downward turn in 2005. He began the season in a funk, and in June conceded, "I've changed my stance 42 times in 42 games. I haven't allowed myself time to see the baseball." Just as he was heating up in July, a left calf stain sent him to the disabled list for the first time, ending his streak of seven straight seasons with at least 152 games played (he averaged 157 for the 1998-2004 span). He hit just 20 homers, though between his 144 OPS+ and 4.6 WAR (tied for 14th in the league), it was still a

very respectable season. For him, at least; the Rockies lost 95 games and had just one other regular with an OPS+ above 100.

A bout of acute terminal ileitis, a painful inflammation of the small intestine, sent Helton to the DL in April 2006, and his production slipped to the lowest levels of his career to that point (15 HR, 118 OPS+, 2.3 WAR), though the Rockies did improve to 76 wins. The nucleus of a much better team was coming together, as productive regulars such as left fielder Matt Holliday, right fielder Brad Hawpe, and third baseman Garrett Atkins helped boost the offense, while homegrown starters Aaron Cook, Jason Jennings, and Jeff Francis showed it was possible to prevent runs at altitude. In late 2006, shortstop Troy Tulowitzki, the team's 2005 first-round pick, arrived and added another dynamic bat to the mix, as well as an excellent glove.

Though he only homered once, Helton hit .384/.518/.500 in April 2007, walking 25 times while striking out just five. He couldn't maintain that clip, but he did hit .320/.434/.494 with 17 homers, a 133 OPS+ and 4.5 WAR. The Rockies, who hadn't finished above fourth place in the NL West since Helton's cup-of-coffee 1997 season, were in fourth well into September. They were 76-72 on September 16, 4.5 games back in the Wild Card, when Helton hit his 300th home run of his career, off the Marlins' Mauro Zarate as part of a 13-0 rout. After a sweep of the Dodgers in a doubleheader two days later, capped by Helton's walk-off homer off Takashi Saito, the two teams were tied for third. The Rockies eventually stretched their winning streak to 11 in a row and 13 of 14, pushing them to 89-73 after 162 games, tied with the Padres for the Wild Card.

In the Game 163 tiebreaker, played in Colorado, Helton drove in two early runs with a sacrifice fly and a solo homer, both off of Jake Peavy, but the game ultimately went into extra innings. Scott Hairston's two-run homer in the top of the 13th pushed the Rockies to the brink, but they rallied against Trevor Hoffman with three straight extra-base hits, tying the score. After Helton was intentionally walked, and Jamey Carroll's sacrifice fly brought home Holliday with the winning run, albeit on a play that's still disputed.

With the Rockies back in the playoffs for the first time since 1995, Helton got his first taste of postseason baseball. He went just 4-for-26 in the Division and League Championship Series against the Phillies and Diamondbacks, respectively, but the Rockies swept both. Helton made the final out of the NLCS via a throw from Tulowitzki on an Eric Byrnes

grounder, thrusting his hands skyward for an iconic photo that symbolized the franchise's 14-year wait for a shot at the World Series.

While Helton went 5-for-15 with a pair of doubles in the World Series against the Red Sox, the series was nasty, brutish and short; the Rockies were swept in four games, outscored 29-10.

Helton's 2008 was all too brief as well. Having dealt with chronic back problems since 2002, he began experiencing leg problems also and was hitting just .266/.393/.391 with seven homers in 81 games when he was diagnosed with a degenerative disc in early July. Activated in September, he made just two pinch-hitting appearances, then underwent surgery at month's end. Healthy enough to play 151 games the next year, he returned to form (.325/.416/.489, 127 OPS+) while helping the 92-70 Rockies to another Wild Card berth, but went just 3-for-16 in a Division Series loss to the Phillies.

In the spring of 2010, Helton and the Rockies reworked the tail end of his mega-contract (which included a \$23 million club option and \$4.6 million buyout for 2012) into a guaranteed deal running through 2013, with over \$13 million deferred. His final four years weren't much to write home about. While he hit for a 117 OPS+ and 2.2 WAR in 2011, he totaled -0.1 WAR in the other three seasons, and managed just a 97 OPS+ for the four-year period. He made annual trips to the DL over that span, the most notable of which came in 2012, when he underwent season-ending surgery to repair his right hip labrum, followed by left knee meniscus repair.

On September 1, 2013, with the Rockies hosting the Reds, Helton doubled down the left field line off reliever Curtis Partch for career hit number 2,500, the last major milestone of his career. Play stopped while the Coors Field crowd of 30,594 gave the 40-year-old first baseman a lengthy, rousing ovation.

Two weeks later, just before the Rockies' final homestand, Helton confirmed his plans to retire at season's end. He hit .342/.350/.658 with a pair of homers over his final nine games at Coors, the second of them — along with the 592nd double of his career — coming off Peavy, then of the Red Sox, in his final start.

...

Helton's final years were not very productive, but they did pad out his career stats to produce totals that aren't out of place in a Hall of Fame discussion. No, he wasn't a 500-homer slugger, but that's true of 15 out of 21 first basemen already in the Hall, even if two of the three most recent inductees at the position, Frank Thomas (2014) and Jim Thome (2018), were. Likewise for the 3,000 hit plateau, which just two of the 21 enshrined first basemen have reached (three if you're counting Rod Carew, who for the purposes of JAWS is considered a second baseman). Indeed, Helton's totals of 369 homers and 2,519 hits are both above the median among Hall first basemen.

From a rate-stat standpoint, Helton was a perennial presence on the leaderboards, with seven top-five finishes in batting average and eight in on-base percentage; in addition to leading the league in both in 2000, he was runner-up in each category three times and had two other top-10 finishes. Slugging percentage-wise, he had four top-five finishes and two more in the top 10. Overall, he's one of just 18 hitters with at least a .300 batting average, .400 on-base percentage, and .500 slugging percentage in at least 7,000 career plate appearances; Thomas, Dan Brouthers, Jimmie Foxx, and Lou Gehrig are the only others among first basemen.

Of course, one can't get too deep into such comparisons without acknowledging the impact of Helton's ballpark and the era in which he played. For his career, Helton hit .345/.441/.607 with 227 homers in 4,841 PA at Coors Field, and .287/.386/.469 with 142 homers in 4,612 PA on the road. His home OPS of 1.048 is the sixth-highest among players with at least 3,500 PA in such a context:

Highest Career Home OPS

Rk	Player	PA	AVG/OBP/SLG	OPS
1	Babe Ruth+	5150	.346/.483/.698	1.181
2	Ted Williams+	4954	.361/.496/.652	1.148
3	Jimmie Foxx+	4678	.345/.454/.663	1.116
4	Larry Walker	3996	.348/.431/.637	1.068
5	Barry Bonds	6124	.301/.449/.618	1.067
6	Todd Helton	4841	.345/.441/.607	1.048
7	Chuck Klein+	3636	.353/.410/.617	1.027
8	Rogers Hornsby+	4685	.359/.437/.589	1.026
9	Frank Thomas+	5011	.305/.424/.599	1.024

10	Earl Averill+	3680	.343/.421/.588	1.009
11	Stan Musial+	6332	.336/.427/.582	1.009
12	Johnny Mize+	3655	.320/.406/.599	1.005
13	Manny Ramirez	4790	.311/.413/.591	1.003
14	Mickey Mantle+	4878	.305/.428/.569	.997
15	Mark McGwire	3777	.262/.402/.591	.993
16	Tris Speaker+	5934	.365/.451/.540	.991
17	Jim Thome+	5165	.276/.406/.579	.985
18	Mel Ott+	5600	.297/.422/.558	.979
19	Jeff Bagwell+	4644	.303/.417/.560	.978
20	Frank Robinson+	5649	.306/.403/.573	.975
21	Miguel Cabrera	4756	.326/.405/.571	.975
22	Chipper Jones+	5304	.314/.413/.558	.971
23	David Ortiz	5151	.305/.400/.565	.964
24	Ty Cobb+	5773	.369/.442/.519	.962
25	Duke Snider+	4121	.304/.390/.569	.959
26	Ken Griffey Jr.+	5508	.296/.385/.573	.958
27	Matt Holliday	4035	.316/.398/.559	.957
28	Al Simmons+	4712	.346/.397/.560	.957
29	Willie Mays+	6027	.302/.387/.567	.953
30	Vladimir Guerrero+	4598	.323/.381/.568	.950

SOURCE: Baseball-Reference

Minimum 3,500 plate appearances at home. + = Hall of Famer

Twenty-two of the top 30 players in home OPS are in the Hall of Fame. The rest are either outside due to their links to performance-enhancing drugs (Bonds, Ramirez, and McGwire), aren't yet eligible (Cabrera, Ortiz, and Holliday) or spent the majority of their careers with the Rockies (Helton and Walker). It's almost as though taking advantage of one's home park is a key element towards reaching Cooperstown.

As noted within my Walker profile, Helton also has the fifth-largest gap between his home OPS and road OPS:

Largest Home/Road OPS Differentials

Player	Years	Home OPS	Road OPS	Diff
Chuck Klein+	1928-1944	1.027	.813	.214
Bobby Doerr+	1937-1951	.929	.716	.213
Larry Walker	1989-2005	1.068	.865	.203
Cy Williams	1912-1930	.934	.735	.199
Todd Helton	1997-2013	1.048	.855	.193
Earl Averill+	1929-1941	1.009	.846	.163
Ron Santo+	1960-1975	.905	.747	.158
Wade Boggs+	1982-1999	.934	.781	.153
Jimmie Foxx+	1925-1945	1.116	.966	.150
Kirby Puckett+	1984-1995	.909	.761	.148

SOURCE: Baseball-Reference

Minimum 7,000 plate appearances. + = Hall of Famer

Seven of the top 10 players there are Hall of Famers, but outside that, the list isn't as saturated with such players as the first one; many denizens of Coors Field, Fenway Park, or Wrigley Field dot the list. The problem for Helton is that we now have tools to put this stuff into context, where voters of the past lacked them, hence the disproportionate extent to which players from the high-offense 1920s and '30s are enshrined (thanks in part to the Frankie Frisch/Bill Terry Veterans Committees).

By OPS+, Helton doesn't stand out quite as much. For example, he had five top-10 appearances in OPS+ (three of them in the top five), and his career mark of 133 is excellent, but not world-beating. He trails 14 of the 21 enshrined first basemen and is tied with one (Orlando Cepeda) and ranks 18th among the aforementioned 18 .300/.400/.500 hitters, eight points behind the two players tied for 16th, Walker and Chipper Jones.

If that's the bad news, the good news is that Helton's longevity was worth something in this context, even given his end-of-career struggles. His 424 batting runs, the primary offensive component of WAR, is 13th among all first basemen, only nine of whom are enshrined. He's 33 runs better than no-doubt Hall of Famer Eddie Murray, for example, and 24 runs better than Fred McGriff, who's in his final year on the writers' ballot. He'd rank even higher had his final four years amounted to more than a combined -6 batting runs, but there's the breaks.

By the other components of WAR, Helton was 14 runs below average in base running and 11 below average in double play avoidance, but 72 above average with the glove, confirming his reputation as a strong fielder. In fact, he's 11th all-time there, trailing only Hall of Famers Roger Connor and Bill Terry.

With all facets of his game taken together, Helton's 61.2 career WAR ranks 17th among first basemen, 5.6 WAR below the standard, and below 12 of the 21 enshrined including Bagwell, Thome, and Thomas, whose careers overlapped with his. At the heart of that total is a 12-year run, from 1998-2009, where his 59.2 WAR ranked sixth in the majors behind A-Rod (90.9), Pujols (73.8, starting in 2001), Jones (64.5), Scott Rolen (59.7), and Derek Jeter (59.6) — all Hall-caliber talents, even if not all of them will be elected. Just below him are plenty of others in that category including Bobby Abreu, Carlos Beltran, Andruw Jones, Manny Ramirez, Vlad Guerrero, and Ichiro Suzuki (with the late start in 2001). That's an impressive crowd to rank among.

Helton's seven-year peak WAR of 46.5 is more robust than his career mark, ranking 10th at the position and 3.8 wins above the standard; of the nine players above him, only Bagwell and Pujols were contemporaries, with the latter the only one from that top 10 outside the Hall. In terms of JAWS, Helton's 53.9 is tied for 14th with Murray, 0.8 below the standard and smack dab in the middle of the other 20 enshrines.

JAWS isn't intended to give a binary yes/no, end-of-discussion answer to the question of enshrinement, where above it you're in, below it you're out. Being within one point of the standard, among the top 15 at the position overall and — most notable as far as I'm concerned — in the top 10 in terms of peak makes Helton a reasonable choice for Cooperstown. Yes, his raw stats were propped up by Coors Field, inflating his Hall of Fame Monitor score to 175, but the adjustments for park and league, and the inclusion of his defensive prowess, tells us he was more than just a mile-high mirage.

That said, Helton is no slam dunk. I suspect most voters will see him as a borderline pick, somebody to be considered for the last spot on the ballot but not a must-vote. I have to concede that my own preliminary triage puts him there, too, as I've got more than 10 candidates under consideration for 10 spots on my virtual ballot. In that respect, his case is not unlike that of Andruw Jones, who ranks 11th among center fielders, 3.2 points below the JAWS standard but 2.1 above the peak standard, with a brilliant 11-year run (1997-2007) followed by a rough denouement. Jones received just 7.3% in

his ballot debut last year, and while I expect Helton to exceed that thanks to his longer career, I also expect support akin to that of Walker, mired in the 20-ish percent range for awhile. We shall see.

Rockies vs. Dodgers: offseason comparison and template for change
Luke Zahlmann | MileHighSports.com | December 3, 2018

Game 163, the last chance for the Colorado Rockies to garner their first National League West title was all for naught, with the division-juggernaut Los Angeles Dodgers taking the crown.

Now, into the offseason, with the Rockies coming off of a sweep at the hands of the Milwaukee Brewers in the NL Divisional round, the battle is beginning once again. With the Arizona Diamondbacks already gearing up for a rebuild, shopping franchise cornerstone Paul Goldschmidt along with ace Zack Greinke. With the San Diego Padres still finding their way and the San Francisco Giants stuck in retrograde, two teams stand out.

The NL-pennant winning Dodgers are already rumored to have interest in nearly every free agent given their otherworldly funds to make moves. Their roster is in flux, with several moves yet to be made.

Before they begin to make moves to improve, here's how the Rockies and Dodgers stack up atop the NL West and where the former can bypass the latter.

Starting Rotation

The Rockies took a large step forward last year on the mound. Led by youngsters Kyle Freeland and German Marquez, the rotation tossed their way to the fourth-best ERA in franchise history.

After Marquez and Freeland, things get questionable for the Rockies rotation. Whether it is the up-and-down performances of lefty Tyler Anderson or a downtrodden former ace in Jon Gray, the bottom trio of the rotation for the Rockies is unpredictable.

With a bounce-back year from Gray, the Rockies have a chance to take yet another step forward in their pitching prowess behind manager Bud Black. Known for his pitching acumen, Black figures to help Gray turn things around. The former Oklahoma Sooner is too talented to not take the reigns of the third spot in the rotation.

Then comes the Dodgers.

Led by three-time NL Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw, the Dodgers rotation is loaded. Walker Buehler, Rich Hill, Hyun Jin-Ryu and Ross Stripling figure to make up the rest of the rotation, pending the acquisition of another ace as they've been rumored to be looking at.

FOX Sports Radio

@FoxSportsRadio

Dodgers Reportedly in Hot Pursuit For Trade Involving Corey Kluber in Exchange for Yasiel Puig. <https://ihr.fm/2KHWibo>

The aforementioned Buehler is the wild card of the Dodgers rotation. In his first consistent type in the majors, the 23-year old pitched to a 2.62 ERA, including four postseason starts at a 3.80 mark.

Dubbed a young Justin Verlander, if Buehler can maintain his pace, the young right-hander will give the Dodgers a one-two punch that rivals any team in baseball.

With their fourth and fifth starters in Ryu and Stripling both pitching to 1.97 and 3.02 ERA respectively, the Dodgers have more certainty all around.

With the rumored acquisition of Corey Kluber, the Dodgers would pose a trio atop their rotation (Kershaw, Kluber and Buehler) that has accumulated five combined CY Youngs, one NL MVP and 10 All-Star appearances.

Edge: Dodgers

Solution: There is no readily available solution that the Rockies can take to bypass the Dodger starting rotation at the moment.

Noah Syndergaard, Dallas Kuechel and Zack Greinke could all be had this offseason, but outside of acquiring all three, the Rockies cannot catch the Dodgers. Instead, the team should focus on the continued development of Freeland and Marquez, along with the rehabilitation of Gray from one of his worst seasons.

Bringing in a free agent like Kuechel would make sense given his high-groundball tendencies and postseason experience that the Rockies' young arms lack.

Lineup

The batting orders of the two NL West titans is where things get more interesting.

Led by the breakout of Max Muncy and comeback seasons of Yasiel Puig and Matt Kemp, the Dodgers posed a threat throughout their lineup last year. With the addition of Manny Machado and Brian Dozier at the deadline now being mute, however, the lineup is set to take a hit.

The Machado acquisition figures to be offset to a degree by the renewal of shortstop Corey Seager who is coming off of Tommy John Surgery.

As well as losing Machado and Dozier, the Dodgers figure to lose production from players that are returning as well.

Already 28 years old, Muncy figures to regress. As a hitter that struggled to reach the Mendoza line for his career in the majors, last year's .263/.391/.582 slash line across 481 plate appearances is anomalous. Yes, the former Oakland Athletic changed his swing, but a 29.4-percent home run to fly ball rate is unsustainable.

The only hitters with a higher rate in the majors: NL-MVP Christian Yelich and J.D. Martinez. Muncy is the name that doesn't belong in that trio.

Kemp, who fell apart in the second half of last year figures to see similar regression.

The opposite is true for the Rockies, mainly in leadoff hitter Charlie Blackmon.

After finishing fifth in 2017 NL MVP voting, Blackmon regressed greatly last year. The problem was not in the strikeout or walk tendencies as both stayed similar, rather, a back injury and various other ailments played a role.

A healthy offseason figures to allow Blackmon to get back to his hard-hitting ways atop the Rockies' lineup. regardless, the Dodgers still hold the current edge.

Edge: Dodgers

Solution: The Rockies have several avenues they could take this offseason as far as hitting goes.

The Diamondbacks and Chicago White Sox are both exploring moves for their star first basemen in Goldschmidt and Jose Abreu. Both could be had by the Rockies as rentals for the upcoming year, likely without the inclusion of top youngsters Brendan Rodgers or Riley Pint.

Free agents like Daniel Murphy and A.J. Pollock are also likely on the Rockies' radar as holes in their outfield and first base slots loom large.

A lineup constructed of Pollock at the top, with Blackmon sliding to the second spot, followed by Nolan Arenado and one of the three aforementioned first base targets in the cleanup spot would be a large upgrade.

Finding a solution to their catching woes in one of the various catchers on the market, and a full season from David Dahl will also pay dividends.

The road to beating the Dodgers won't start on the mound, but overcoming their conference foes in their lineup and developing starters to hold steady against their stable of arms is.

An NL-West crown is very possible next year.

Could the Colorado Rockies and Toronto Blue Jays make another trade? Kevin Henry | RoxPile.com | December 4th, 2018

The Colorado Rockies and Toronto Blue Jays have been trade partners in recent years. Could the pair of teams work another trade before the 2019 season begins?

Among the more notable trades in Major League Baseball in recent years, the Colorado Rockies traded Troy Tulowitzki to Toronto during the 2015 campaign. Last season, the Rockies received relief pitcher Seunghwan Oh from the Blue Jays just before the trade deadline. There are examples of Colorado and Toronto working together ... and just maybe it could happen again with a trade that could benefit both clubs.

It is no secret that the Rockies are looking to improve in the outfield. It's also no secret that the Blue Jays are considering moving on from center fielder Kevin Pillar, a player who has earned the nickname of Superman because of his spectacular defensive plays. Could Pillar make sense in the Rockies outfield, bringing his defensive tenacity to the expanses of Coors Field?

Pillar was recently tendered a contract by the Blue Jays after some questions on where the club would keep the soon-to-be-30-year-old. After a solid showing in the Japan All-Star Series, Pillar is showing that his offense is certainly to be valued as well. Last season, he totaled 15 home runs and 59 RBI while putting together a slash line of .252/.282/.426 and 2,5 WAR.

True, his numbers have diminished some over the last couple of seasons. However, Pillar could still provide value for a Rockies team that could be in "win now" mode in 2019 with the uncertainty of Nolan Arenado's contract looming.

In discussing a potential Rockies-Blue Jays trade with our friends at JaysJournal.com, it is believed that pitching prospects would be the priority in a swap for Pillar. The Rockies received Jeff Hoffman from the Blue Jays in the Tulowitzki deal. Could he go back to the Toronto organization or would someone like a Ben Bowden, Robert Tyler or even Harrison Musgrave (or a combination thereof) make sense to deal?

Pillar would not only solve Colorado's defensive issues in center field and allow Charlie Blackmon to move over to a corner outfield spot, but he would also have a chance to add to Colorado's lineup. Pillar batted fifth or lower in the Toronto

lineup during the majority of last year's games so he could add some stability to the bottom of the Rockies order, a place that was a definite issue last season.

He is expected to make \$5.3 million in arbitration this offseason and won't become an unrestricted free agent until the 2021 season. The timing could be right for the Rockies to make a move to shore up their outfield.

However, some Rockies fans may still remember a 2017 incident where Pillar was suspended for two games after uttering what was described as "an anti-gay slur." Would that be enough for Colorado fans to want their team to steer clear of him?

Mets, Others Involved In J.T. Realmuto Market
Steve Adams | MLBTraderumors.com | December 4, 2018 at 8:32

8:32pm: The Mets have spoken to the Marlins and are at least considering the possibility of including Nimmo as a centerpiece in a Realmuto deal, tweets Joel Sherman of the New York Post. That said, Sherman cautions that there's no deal close and that the Marlins are still in talks with multiple other clubs.

However, whether that would be enough for the Mets remains to be seen. Jim Bowden of MLB Network Radio on SiriusXM tweets that the Marlins don't view Nimmo as a potential Realmuto centerpiece and would prefer Rosario or Conforto to headline a package of young players instead. That's at least somewhat curious, given the fact that Conforto has only one more season of club control remaining than Realmuto.

6:55pm: Mike Puma of the New York Post tweets that it's unlikely the Mets would include Conforto in a trade for Realmuto.

5:35pm: Trade chatter surrounding J.T. Realmuto will persist throughout the offseason following the definitive declaration that he won't be signing an extension with the Marlins. While the Marlins reportedly have a preference to trade Realmuto outside of the division, Andy Martino of SNY writes that the Mets are looking into Realmuto now that they officially have Robinson Cano and Edwin Diaz on board. Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic, in fact, reports that the Mets reached out on Realmuto earlier today and are being "aggressive" in their pursuit (Twitter links).

Newsday's Tim Healey tweets that the belief is that the Mets would have to include at least one young Major Leaguer in order to pry Realmuto loose from Miami, and Rosenthal suggests the same. (The Mets subtracted a pair of high-end prospects from its system when trading outfielder Jarred Kelenic and right-hander Justin Dunn to Seattle in the Cano/Diaz swap.) Martino speculated that Amed Rosario's name could come into play, and Rosenthal adds both Brandon Nimmo and Michael Conforto as the type of talents that could pique Miami's interest. Of course, that doesn't mean that the Mets would have any actual interest in dealing from that promising young trio. More specifically Fancred's Jon Heyman tweets that Rosario and Nimmo would be Miami's top two targets in talks.

The Mets already tendered contracts to both Kevin Plawecki and Travis d'Arnaud, though either could be traded elsewhere or designated for assignment anyway, should the organization land an upgrade in the form of Realmuto. (Speculatively, either could also be sent back to Miami as a short-term stopgap in the absence of Realmuto.)

Elsewhere in the NL East (which, to this point, has been the runaway most active division in terms of offseason activity), Craig Mish of SiriusXM tweets that the Phillies have inquired on Realmuto but are considered to be a long shot. The Phils presently have Jorge Alfaro and Andrew Knapp as in-house catching options now that Wilson Ramos is a free agent, and they've been aggressive early this winter, already acquiring Jean Segura and James Pazos from the Mariners.

Mish also suggests that the Braves have inquired on Realmuto, although both David O'Brien of The Athletic and Heyman have tweeted otherwise. O'Brien indicates that he was somewhat bluntly told there's no validity to the report that Austin Riley and Mike Soroka have come up in discussions, while Heyman reports that the Braves haven't even engaged on any serious Realmuto talks this winter. O'Brien further adds that the Braves have shifted their focus to adding a corner outfielder and shoring up the pitching staff (Twitter links).

Looking outside the NL East, Jon Morosi of MLB.com tweets that the Rockies have checked in on the catcher — although talks between the two sides, to this point, have failed to progress. Colorado would make a perfectly logical landing spot, though, given that none of Chris Iannetta, Tony Wolters or Tom Murphy stands out as an obvious front-line option. The Rockies also have plenty of young pitching — much of it MLB-ready, which would surely be of interest to the Marlins as they continue to build for the future.

It's worth remembering, too, that the clubs here likely only represent a fraction of the market for Realmuto. Heyman notes that 14 teams have inquired with the Marlins about Realmuto this winter, and while clearly not all of those clubs will be particularly aggressive in their pursuit, the sheer volume underscores how many teams view the All-Star backstop as a potential difference maker. A trade isn't necessarily guaranteed, but it's likely that Realmuto's value is at its apex this winter. The Marlins surely know that their time with Realmuto is limited following comments from agent Jeff Berry and, per Mish, a pair of rejected extension offers of four and five years in length (both at prices that are nowhere near Realmuto's actual market value).

**New batting stat could improve view of Rockies hitters
BP's DRC+ may be what Rockies fans have been waiting for
Eric Garcia McKinley | PurpleRow.com | Dec 3, 2018**

In May 2014, Matt Gross published the most widely read article in Purple Row history — “Either the numbers are lying or the game is rigged.” The basis for the first provocation of the title was that the Rockies had a huge home/road split when it came to team wRC+. For those unfamiliar, wRC+ is a batting statistic that adjusts for park. Essentially, it asks, “All things equal, how good was each player compared to league average?” If the numbers were accurate, it would mean that the Rockies have been playing with a major road disadvantage. That conclusion led to the title’s second provocation.

A lot of folks around Purple Row thought that the first explanation, inaccurate numbers, was the more likely culprit, mostly based on how wRC+ adjusts for park. Essentially, the metric takes a player’s home park and applies that park adjustment to all of his plate appearances. We’ve long suspected that stats like wRC+ don’t reflect Rockies players very well because of that. Now, there finally seems to be a batting metric that does a better job.

Today Baseball Prospectus introduced Deserved Runs Created (DRC+). Like wRC+, it’s a statistic designed to reflect how good a player was compared to league average. Unlike wRC+, it park adjusts for every plate appearance (in addition to other adjustments), which means that a Rockies’ batter’s hitting on the road isn’t penalized because he plays his home games at Coors Field.

Based on that adjustment, we should expect Rockies hitters to have a better mark with DRC+ than wRC+. BP will have some Rockies-specific case studies later this week, but at first glance, that appears to be the case. Nolan Arenado’s 132 wRC+ in 2018 ranked 22nd in baseball; however, his 146 DRC+ ranked fifth. That’s quite a change. We see the same type of shift with Trevor Story, whose 127 wRC+ ranked 33rd in baseball, but who clocked in at number 11 with a 136 DRC+. Even Ian Desmond got a huge boost, from 81 to a basically league average 98.

So what does this all mean? It depends who you ask. If you ask the Rockies, it may not mean much at all because it’s possible they already have an in-house metric that’s does the same job. The Rockies won’t be more competitive because of DRC+. If you ask fans and analysts, it means there’s a new tool in the toolbox that can help us understand baseball a little better. It’s nice that that understanding, for Rockies fans in particular, also includes a greater appreciation of the players we get to watch all summer.