



MEDIA CLIPS – January 2, 2018

Will young arms take next step in development?

Rotation among 5 questions entering 2018

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | December 31, 2017

DENVER -- Not all wishes can be granted during the holidays. Here are five issues the Rockies hope are settled over the next months and during the 2018 season:

1. Can the young rotation take the next step?

Four rookies (German Marquez, Kyle Freeland, Antonio Senzatela and Jeff Hoffman) made a combined 93 starts in 2017. Jon Gray and Tyler Anderson were in their second year. Chad Bettis will be the "old man" in the rotation at 29.

Gray, Anderson and Bettis have been through ups and downs early in their careers, and they are en route to becoming solid Major League pitchers. Marquez stayed in the rotation throughout the season and made the Topps All-Star Rookie Team. The others had high moments, but they also struggled toward the end. The Rockies will need full years of effectiveness. Don't underrate the leadership of manager Bud Black, whose pitching background helps shorten the learning curve.

2. Can the bullpen shoulder the load again?

A solid relief staff helped the Rockies to the postseason in 2017, and that's part of the plan again. The Rockies tabbed Wade Davis to replace Greg Holland as the closer, re-signed lefty Jake McGee and signed free-agent righty Bryan

Shaw. They join lefties Chris Rusin, who threw 85 mostly stellar innings last season, and Mike Dunn, who led the staff with 68 appearances.

The Rockies also hope younger relievers Scott Oberg and Carlos Estevez are truly ready for full-time Major League duty, and Adam Ottavino bounces back from 2017 struggles (5.06 ERA).

3. Can these relationships keep going?

Center fielder Charlie Blackmon and second baseman DJ LeMahieu are in their final year of arbitration. Third baseman Nolan Arenado is at the end of a two-year, \$29.5 million contract, and after the 2018 season he will be in his final year of arbitration. All three are part of the club in '18, but fans will be hoping the Rockies can sign some or all of them to contract extensions rather than have to bid on them as free agents, 2017

4. Will offensive efficiency arrive?

As in most years, the Rockies finished 2017 at or near the top in traditional offensive stats. But the Rockies had some lengthy offensive droughts as well as periods of high strikeouts and unproductive outs. In the stat of Weighted Runs Created Plus, which attempts to quantify total offensive value and measure it by runs, the Rockies finished tied for 22nd with a 94. A 100 wRC+ is considered MLB average in a given year.

Free agent Carlos Gonzalez's struggles for much of the season, Ian Desmond's down year because of three trips to the disabled list and shortstop Trevor Story's growing pains in his second year were among the reasons for the downturn. Better years from Desmond, Story and Gerardo Parra, who was strong until sustaining a right quadriceps injury in June, could help. There will also be a concerted effort for better situational hitting.

5. Is this the year?

Last season, infielder Pat Valaika provided pinch-hit power, and speedy outfielder Raimel Tapia had some exciting offensive moments in his first extensive Major League action. Who will break out in 2018? Will outfielder David Dahl, who displayed power in '16, rebound from a rib injury that kept him out of the Majors all of '17? Ryan McMahon, one of the most productive hitters in the Minors last year, could get his shot, too.

Will young arms take next step in development?

Rotation among 5 questions entering 2018

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | December 31, 2017

DENVER -- The Rockies' bullpen buildup hit a new level on Friday, when closer Wade Davis agreed to come aboard on a three-year, \$52 million contract.

The deal breaks down in salaries of \$16 million in 2018, \$18 million in '19 and \$17 million in '20, with a \$1 million buyout on a \$15 million vesting player option, according to a Major League Baseball source. The Rockies re-signed lefty setup man Jake McGee and signed righty setup man Bryan Shaw, formerly with the Indians, to three-year deals worth \$27 million earlier this month.

General manager Jeff Bridich finished the offseason bullpen construction by landing Davis, 32, a top closer. Davis replaces former Royals teammate Greg Holland, who recorded a National League-leading 41 saves for the Rockies in 2017 and is a free agent.

During the 2017 regular season, Davis saved 32 games and posted a 2.30 ERA with 79 strikeouts in 58 2/3 innings as the Cubs won the NL Central title. Davis' postseason highlight was his 2 1/3-inning save in the deciding NL Division Series Game 5 against the Nationals. The right-hander finished with four postseason saves. Davis was also on the mound for the Royals as they clinched the '15 World Series over the Mets.

"[He's] a guy who's taken very seriously when he comes into the game," Bridich said. "If you're the opposition and you see Wade Davis coming in, just like Greg Holland and other top closers, those guys are taken seriously. The other team knows that they have it in for them to try to win that game that night.

"It's a big thing for a team with playoff aspirations, and hopefully it's a good thing for the organization for a number of years with Wade."

Bridich said Davis and Holland were among the free-agent options considered, and the club also looked at the trade market. The contract, which gives Davis the highest average annual value of any reliever (the Yankees' Aroldis Chapman's five-year deal in 2016 gave him a \$17.2 million AAV), quickly came together last week, Bridich said. According to the contract, if Davis finishes 30 games in '20, he can pick up a '21 option worth \$15 million or accept a \$1 million buyout.

Like Holland, Davis joins the Rockies with familiarity. Pitching coach Steve Foster was a coach with the Royals when Davis arrived in a trade with the Rays. Holland was Davis' predecessor as the Royals' closer.

To make room for Davis on a full 40-man Major League roster, the Rockies designated righty reliever Shane Carle for assignment. Carle, 26, debuted in the Majors in 2017 and posted a 6.75 ERA with no walks and four strikeouts in three big league appearances. He went 3-5 with a 5.37 ERA in 36 games at Triple-A Albuquerque. Carle originally joined the Rockies in a Nov. 11, 2014, trade with the Pirates for reliever Rob Scahill.

The Rockies earned the second NL Wild Card in 2017 -- and made their first postseason appearance since '09 -- in large part because of a staunch bullpen. Relievers combined to convert 77 percent of their save opportunities -- tops in the NL and second in the Majors to the Indians at 78.7 percent, according to Stats, Inc.

The Rockies passed on Holland and lost righty Pat Neshek, who signed a two-year, \$16.25 million contract with the Phillies, but are moving ahead with Davis and Shaw in their stead. The Rockies can splurge on the bullpen because they have managed a solid starting rotation despite having just one starting pitcher -- righty Chad Bettis -- reach his arbitration years. "The aggressiveness in the bullpen, especially this offseason, fits with a grander plan about our pitching, just adding the level of talent, the level of impact, and trying to do so in waves -- not just one guy here, one guy there," Bridich said.

The Rockies' bullpen also includes lefties Chris Rusin, who led the NL and was second in the Majors in relief innings pitched (85) while putting up solid numbers (5-1, 2.65 ERA, two saves), and Mike Dunn (5-1, 4.47 ERA), who led the team with 68 appearances. Three other intriguing options are righties Adam Ottavino, who slumped to a 5.06 ERA in 2017 after posting a 2.67 ERA in '16, and Scott Oberg and Carlos Estevez, each of whom finished last season on the postseason roster after experiencing youthful ups and downs.

Davis comes with a reputation for being a mentor to younger relievers, partly by being a solid example.

Chris Iannetta

✓@Chris_Iannetta

.@Rockies, Championships are won with team chemistry, defense and PITCHING!!! We just got a step closer! Is it #OpeningDay yet????

12:18 PM - Dec 29, 2017

Carl Edwards Jr., Davis' former teammate with the Cubs, said, "He doesn't give in. He's the same guy every day. He goes out there and does what he has to do. He's a really big part of the team, and the bullpen, especially. He comes in and there's no second thoughts, just go right after guys."

Because Davis received a qualifying offer from the Cubs, the Rockies will lose their third-highest pick in the 2018 Draft, currently No. 61 overall. The Cubs will be awarded a compensatory pick, currently No. 75. Other free-agent signings can affect the exact pick numbers involved.

Fantasy spin | Fred Zinkie (@FredZinkieMLB)

One of the most talented relievers in baseball (1.45 ERA, 0.95 WHIP from 2014-17), Davis could compile more than 35 saves next season for a club that has a deep bullpen and a high-powered offense. But with fewer than 80 whiffs in each of the past three years and the added challenge of pitching home games at hitter-friendly Coors Field, the right-hander belongs in the second tier of closers for '18 fantasy drafts.

Blackmon, Arenado powered Rox to WC berth

All-Stars make list of year's top moments

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | December 30, 2017

DENVER -- The Rockies inspired their fans and tugged at their heartstrings during a solid 2017 season, which ended with a trip to the National League Wild Card Game.

The year ended with an 11-8 loss to the D-backs, but that won't be the lasting memory. Here are five moments from 2017 that fans are sure to remember for years to come.

1. Charlie Blackmon rounds the bases

Blackmon, the Rockies' leadoff man and center fielder, has had a knack for making each year better than the one before, and 2017 was no different. He led the National League with a .331 batting average, hit 37 homers and drove in 104 runs -- including a Major League-record 103 from the leadoff position. On April 21, he had his most exciting hit, home run and RBI, all rolled into one.

During the bottom of the fourth inning of an eventual 6-5 victory over the Giants, Blackmon lined a Johnny Cueto pitch to right field, where Hunter Pence slid and protected his face in a self-defense move -- the universal sign that the ball was lost in the stadium lights. Blackmon would speed around the bags for a two-run, inside-the-park homer.

Officially, Blackmon had two of those -- but not really. Against the Mets in a 16-4 Rockies victory on July 16, his liner to right-center cleared the Citi Field wall before rebounding onto the outfield grass as Blackmon rounded the bases. Umpires ruled that the ball didn't clear the wall, and the call stood unchallenged since he scored on the play anyways. TV replays showed that it was a homer.

2. Happy Mother's Day

Antonio Senzatela went into 2016 considered one of the Rockies' top prospects. However, he was placed on the Double-A Hartford disabled list with right shoulder inflammation. Quietly, the Rockies gave him time off to return home to Venezuela to spend time with his mother, Nidya, who would pass away from cancer.

Of course, Senzatela would start on Mother's Day 2017 against the Dodgers.

It wasn't easy emotionally, nor was the outing easy. Senzatela gave up two homers and four total runs on seven hits in five innings. But with two on and two out in the fifth, he forced a Chris Taylor fly ball and escaped with a 6-5 lead. The Rockies would hold on for a special 9-6 victory.

3. Historic (but bloody) Father's Day

Superstar third baseman Nolan Arenado homered on that Mother's Day, but he saved his best for Father's Day.

Arenado had carried the Rockies in a wild game against the Giants, with a first-inning triple, a fourth-inning single and a sixth-inning double, all off starting pitcher Ty Blach. But in the ninth, Pence would knock a two-run homer off Jake McGee, and Brandon Crawford's double made for a 5-3 Giants lead going into the bottom half of the frame. DJ LeMahieu's RBI single would cut the difference to 5-4 and set up Arenado, who lashed Mark Melancon's first-pitch fastball over the left-field wall for a cycle, and the game winner.

In the euphoric celebration, Arenado emerged bleeding, after Blackmon's batting helmet clipped him above the left eye. A little blood is a small price to pay for providing the Esurance Awards Best Moment of 2017.

4. Hurray for Homeboy

Left-hander Kyle Freeland was born in Denver on May 14, 1993, so making the Rockies' starting rotation was doubly special. He pitched the team to a 2-1 victory over the Dodgers in the home opener. But he nearly pitched his way into history on July 9 against the White Sox in the final game before the All-Star break.

Freeland overpowered and baffled the White Sox with a career-high nine strikeouts and eight hitless innings. With one out in the ninth, however, Melky Cabrera fought off an inside fastball for a soft single to left field. Freeland exited, and the Rockies finished off a 10-0 victory.

5. Back in a big way

Right-hander Chad Bettis was diagnosed with testicular cancer in November 2016, on his anniversary, and he seemed on his way back during Spring Training. However, doctors discovered the disease had spread to his lymph nodes. It meant nine weeks of chemotherapy, in a year in which he and his wife, Kristina, welcomed their first child, Brittany Rae.

But Bettis insisted on the stint that delivered the medicine being placed under his left collarbone, so he could throw between treatments. He stayed strong, pitched in Minor League games when cleared and returned on Aug. 14 at Coors Field against the Braves.

The reaction of the fans, who cheered Bettis' walk from the bullpen to the dugout and gave him a standing ovation before first pitch, said it all. Folks were happy he was back, regardless of how the night would go.

But all Bettis did was throw seven scoreless innings in an eventual 3-0 Rockies victory. Yes, Bettis was back.

Rockies will likely look to acquire corner bat

Reynolds, CarGo may be potential options with catcher, 'pen set

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | December 29, 2017

DENVER -- After fortifying the bullpen with a successful December shopping spree, Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich said on Friday that he will take a deep breath before putting the finishing touches on the offseason plan.

Bridich set catching and relief pitching as priorities. He filled those by signing catcher Chris Iannetta (two years, \$8.5 million), bullpen setup men Jake McGee and Bryan Shaw (three years, \$27 million apiece), and -- on Friday -- closer Wade Davis (three years, \$52 million).

The presumed hole is a corner bat, with first base or the corner outfield being places to fill that need. But the free-agent market for those positions has been moving slowly, so there is time. Bridich also said there is time to consider a possible contract extension for All-Star third baseman Nolan Arenado -- signed for 2018 at \$17.75 million, with arbitration-eligibility in '19.

That means time to see if the Rockies will reunite with first baseman Mark Reynolds, who has been solid, and at times spectacular, over the last two years, or right fielder Carlos Gonzalez, who made three All-Star Game appearances over nine years.

"After everybody gets back in and the holidays are done, we'll regroup and formulate that," Bridich said. "But we're certainly still keenly watching the market. It's been an interesting one to this point. There are a lot of players that are still unsigned."

Bridich acknowledged earlier this month that the club was staying in communication with Reynolds, who hit .267 with 30 home runs and 97 RBIs last season. The GM also on Friday remained open, but non-committal, about Gonzalez, who hit .262 with 14 home runs and 57 RBIs during a sub-par 2017 after managing 97 RBIs in 2015 and 100 in '16.

"He's part of the market," Bridich said. "As I've said before, I'm not going to specifically say yes or no to that."

On reports the Rockies had trade talks with the Pirates about multi-position spark plug Josh Harrison, Bridich said, "I'm not sure where the Josh Harrison stuff comes from."

With young starting pitching and a bullpen fortified for the next three years, a natural question will be whether to focus on locking up Arenado, one of the game's top stars, before he becomes eligible for free agency after the 2019 season.

"There definitely are conversations that will happen with Nolan," Bridich said. "That's a natural part of where he's at in his career and where we're at as an organization, and the relationships that have been built over a long period of time now between Nolan and the organization.

"It's not like there's a specific time clock on it. But for right now we're focused -- as is Nolan -- on getting ready for Spring Training. We'll figure that stuff out."

Get to know new reliever Davis

By Eric Chesterton / MLB.com | December 29, 2017

Opposing teams might want to think twice about the strategy of trying to chase the starter out of the game early when they're playing the Rockies in 2018. This offseason, they've added to their already-deep relief corps of Adam Ottavino, Chris Rusin, Mike Dunn and Jake McGee with Bryan Shaw and, now, Wade Davis, a source told MLB.com's Thomas Harding.

Here's what you need to know about the newest member of the Rockies bullpen. a souce told MLB.com's Thomas Harding.

The curveball

Since becoming a reliever in 2014, Davis has a 1.45 ERA, the lowest among all relievers with at least 100 innings over that span. A big reason for that is his curveball, which has the ability to make even the best hitters look silly. For example, you know you've got a good pitch when you can make Bryce Harper look like this:

The bat

Even in the National League, hitting isn't exactly a point of emphasis for relief pitchers. Nevertheless, it's certainly not a bad thing if a reliever can handle the bat a bit.

Now, Davis has only made two plate appearances since moving to the bullpen full-time in 2014, and both have ended in strikeouts. But, watch him foul off five pitches from Dodgers reliever Tony Cingrani and tell me he doesn't know what he's doing up there.

The animal bond

Up in the altitude of the Rocky Mountains, one never knows what sort of fauna one might encounter. The Rockies have found a pitcher in Davis who can roll with whatever Mother Nature throws his way. Back in 2015, he threw with a moth hanging out on his cap:

Earlier that same season, he was unfazed by the interruption of a squirrel running around on the field.

He waited for the squirrel to make its exit and proceeded to strike out the batter he was facing.

So, bring on the mountain lions or whatever is lurking up there in the mountains. Davis is ready.

Wade Davis signs a \$52 million deal with Rockies, as Colorado continues to spend big on a bullpen

The Rockies have now committed \$106 million to their bullpen in the past month

By Nick Groke / Denver Post | December 29, 2017

Wade Davis, a three-time all-star, signed a booming free-agent contract with the Rockies that will make him among the richest relief pitchers in baseball, the club confirmed Friday afternoon.

The Rockies capped an aggressive, offseason bullpen spending spree by making Davis their new closer. He accepted a three-year guaranteed contract worth about \$52 million — his annual take, about \$17.3 million, is the highest ever signed by a reliever based on yearly average.

The contract includes a fourth-year option that could increase Davis' total pay to about \$66 million. His deal outpaces the record-setting contract the Yankees gave Aroldis Chapman a year ago.

“There’s a lot to like,” Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich said of Davis. “His track record speaks for itself. And his experience pitching in important games, in playoff games, the presence that he has at the back end, is important. He’s earned a lot of trust.”

Davis pitched 58 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings for the Cubs this year, finishing with a 2.30 ERA and 32 saves in 33 opportunities. His 2.82 strikeout-to-walk ratio, with 12.1 K’s and 4.3 walks per nine innings, are statistical upgrades over Colorado’s closer in 2017, Greg Holland. And among balls in play, Davis forced 40.5 percent into groundballs — a keen trait to carry at wide-open Coors Field.

The 32-year-old right-hander has been among the best relievers in baseball since 2014, when the Royals converted him from a starter and moved him to the bullpen. In 241 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings over that span, Davis has a 1.45 ERA. He helped push the Royals to the World Series two years ago before landing with the Cubs in 2017.

“Cool, calm, collected. There’s a slow heartbeat there in pressure situations,” Bridich said of Davis. “That’s big for a team with playoff aspirations.”

With Davis and Holland at the back of their bullpen in 2015, the Royals helped set what would become a baseball wide trend of extended, shutdown bullpen innings. Davis’ 0.95 ERA in 2015 locked down even slim leads for the Royals. And in a four-year stretch, between the Royals and Cubs, his season-ending ERA finished below 2.00 three times.

The Rockies had been pursuing a new contract with Holland, but the signing of Davis appears to leave Holland in the lurch. Davis also replaced Holland as the Royals' closer after Holland began to suffer an elbow injury that led to him having Tommy John surgery.

Holland had a lucrative, incentive-heavy contract with the Rockies in his return from elbow reconstruction surgery that left him out of baseball for more than a year. He excelled with the Rockies, posting a league-high 41 saves and an all-star berth. Holland wanted to return to Colorado, sources said, and the Rockies were interested in re-signing him. Bridich said two weeks ago they had a "strong offer" on the table for Holland.

Instead, the Rockies fell into a deal with Davis that came together quickly over the past week, Bridich said. "I'd be very surprised if we added another reliever or a starter," Bridich said.

Long a desert of quality bullpen arms, Colorado has now built something of a super-bullpen. With Davis, Jake McGee and Bryan Shaw, the Rockies signed three of the top seven available free-agent relief pitchers this winter.

The Rockies have committed \$106 million to their bullpen in the past month. McGee re-signed with the Rockies, getting a three-year, \$27 million deal. Shaw, a setup man for the Indians last season, signed a similar \$27 million deal that includes a fourth-year option.

"The last few years, the teams that have deep bullpens — the Astros, Royals, Yankees, us in Cleveland — they all had deep bullpens," Shaw said. "The starters don't need to go seven or eight innings anymore. They can go five or six innings, then the rest of us can come in and throw an inning and a third here, or an inning and a third there. It's definitely a trend."

The Rockies also committed to paying \$7 million apiece to relievers Adam Ottavino and lefty Mike Dunn. And longman Chris Rusin is set to enter his first year of arbitration.

So the Rockies have invested more than \$50 million in their bullpen for the 2018 season alone — among the priciest bullpens in baseball history — with Davis as their closer. His acquisition is an opulent watermark for a club that for years seemed reluctant to spend big on relief pitchers.

"We're excited to have talented and well-established guys want to come pitch for us," Bridich said. "There's a foundation that's been set for a deep 'pen." Bridich said he expects Colorado's player payroll in 2018 to be about what it was in 2017, when the club started the season with about \$127 million in salary costs and finished at about \$156 million.

Davis' contract outpaces a run of recent wealthy deals for closers. The Yankees before last season gave Chapman the then-highest yearly contract for a reliever, a five-year, \$82 million deal that pays him about \$17.2 million annually by average. The Dodgers are paying their closer, Kenley Jansen, \$16 million per year by average on a five-year, \$80 million deal.

By signing Davis away from the Cubs, the Rockies will forfeit a second-round draft pick in 2018. But after Holland declined their qualifying offer for next season, the Rockies will receive compensation if he signs with another team.

The Rockies' dive into the expensive free-agent bullpen market was made possible by an emerging rotation of young starters. All of their remaining starting pitchers from last season will make at or near the minimum MLB salary in 2018. Only 28-year-old Chad Bettis is due a raise in his first year of arbitration.

"It enabled us to be aggressive the last few years," Bridich said. "It fits into a grander plan with our pitching, to add talent and impact."

Spending big bucks

The Rockies signed free-agent Wade Davis to a three-year, \$52 million contract — the richest deal ever given to a reliever, based on average annual value:

Pitcher	Team	1st year	Contract	Annual avg.
Wade Davis	Rockies	2018	3 years, \$52 million	\$17.3 million
Aroldis Chapman	Yankees	2017	5 years, \$86 million	\$17.2 million
Kenley Jansen	Dodgers	2017	5 years, \$80 million	\$16 million
Mark Melancon	Giants	2017	4 years, \$62 million	\$15.5 million
Jonathan Papelbon	Phillies	2012	4 years, \$50 million	\$12.5 million
David Robertson	White Sox	2015	4 years, \$46 million	\$11.5 million
Francisco Cordero	Reds	2008	4 years, \$46 million	\$11.5 million

Davis' career stats

Year	Team	G	W	L	ERA	IP	BB	K
2009	Tampa Bay	6	2	2	3.72	36.1	13	36
2010	Tampa Bay	29	12	10	4.07	168.0	62	113
2011	Tampa Bay	29	11	10	4.45	184.0	63	105
2012	Tampa Bay	54	3	0	2.43	70.1	29	87
2013	Kansas City	31	8	11	5.32	135.1	58	114
2014	Kansas City	71	9	2	1.00	72.0	23	109
2015	Kansas City	69	8	1	0.94	67.1	20	78
2016	Kansas City	45	2	1	1.87	43.1	16	47
2017	Chicago Cubs	59	4	2	2.30	58.2	28	79
Totals	9 years	393	59	39	3.45	835.1	312	768

The Rockies are going in on the mega-bullpen model

The Rockies are investing a great deal to maintain the best bullpen in the National League

By Nick McIntyre / Purple Row | @Nick_McIntyre | Dec 30, 2017, 8:00am MST

The emergence of “bullpenning” and the “relief ace” has led to an explosion in high-dollar contracts for the upper tier of relievers over the past few seasons. Understandably, the desire to use more bullpen arms for more innings in any given game has appeared most on playoff teams, where the stakes in each game are high and starters are on a short leash.

In 2015, for instance, the **Royals** rode the arms of **Wade Davis**, **Greg Holland**, **Ryan Madson**, and **Kelvin Herrera** to a **World Series** title. In 2016, the **Cubs** traded for **Aroldis Chapman** to complement **Hector Rondon** in the bullpen and secured a title. In 2017, the **Yankees** “bullpenned” nearly the entire Wild Card game to beat the **Twins**. For 2018-2020, the **Colorado Rockies** have fully committed to a high-dollar, high-leverage bullpen that they hope will push them over the top in a talented NL West division.

With the signing of Wade Davis to a three-year \$52 million contract (with 2021 vesting option), the Rockies now have the highest-paid, and arguably the best, bullpen in the National League. It was already one of the better bullpens in baseball, ranking 7th in bullpen RA9-WAR and 3rd in Win Probability Added. While the bullpen ERA wasn't the best due to some big collapses in individual games, they got the job done when it counted most during the regular season.

The window for the Rockies now seems to be (at least) through 2019, after which **Nolan Arenado** will enter free agency (unless the Rockies extend him). The core of the bullpen, however, is locked in through 2020. What's notable is that the Rockies spent big on three relievers who are all past their age-30 season during a slow offseason for most teams. It is unlikely that Davis, Shaw, and McGee will increase in value during that time. This could make the window smaller than it appears at first sight if those players decline (or can't stay healthy). This is the risk in spending early and often in a slow free agent market. While other teams may be sitting tight and waiting for prices to drop (or waiting for next year's free agent class to hit market), the Rockies are acquiring assets and committing to 2018.

From one pitching staff strategy perspective, this makes sense. The Rockies are going to spend little more than *league minimum* in 2018 on a starting rotation that was roughly league average in most major pitching metrics last year and could see a jump in production. Taking advantage of that value is key. **ZiPS has zWAR projections** over 2.0 for **German**

Marquez, Jon Gray, Kyle Freeland, Antonio Senzatela, Tyler Anderson, and Jeff Hoffman. While we don't know exactly what the starting rotation will look like, we can predict that their WAR/\$ spent should be high.

Let's take a look at the Rockies' bullpen financial commitments as well as the possible value for the next three years. We will exclude the league-minimum contracts of fringe relievers Senzatela and Hoffman because their status in the starting rotation is unknown.

Here are the projected bullpen contracts and ages for 2018-2020, along with 2017 stats:

Rockies Bullpen Contracts, 2018

Player	Age	Salary	bWAR (2017)	ERA+ (2017)	WPA (2017)
Wade Davis	32	\$16 million	1.9	190	3.54
Bryan Shaw	30	\$7.5 million	0.6	130	0.65
Jake McGee	31	\$7 million	1.6	139	1.33
Chris Rusin	31	\$1.4 million	2.4	189	2.64
Adam Ottavino	32	\$7 million	0.6	99	0.23
Mike Dunn	33	\$7 million	0.7	112	1.76
Carlos Estevez	25	pre-ARB	0	91	0.89
Scott Oberg	28	pre-ARB	0.2	102	-0.07

Rockies Bullpen Contracts, 2019

Player	Age	Salary
Wade Davis	33	\$18 million
Bryan Shaw	31	\$8.5 million
Jake McGee	32	\$8.5 million
Chris Rusin	32	ARB 2
Adam Ottavino	33	Free Agent
Mike Dunn	34	\$7 million
Carlos Estevez	26	pre-ARB
Scott Oberg	29	ARB 1

Rockies Bullpen Contracts, 2020

Player	Age	Salary
Wade Davis	34	\$17 million
Bryan Shaw	32	\$9 million
Jake McGee	33	\$9.5 million
Chris Rusin	33	ARB 3
Mike Dunn	35	\$6 million team option
Carlos Estevez	27	ARB 1
Scott Oberg	30	ARB 2

A few things pop out here:

1. This is a really good bullpen top to bottom, especially for 2018. Based on bWAR from 2017, it is not out of the question the Rockies have a 7-8 bWAR out of the top six arms in the bullpen. By comparison, the Yankees top six relievers turned in a 9.2 bWAR in 2017. With just small improvements from young players like Oberg and Estevez, as well as minimal declines from the veterans, this could be a scary pen.
2. Age is a concern beyond 2018. Of course when you are signing free agents, players tend to be further along, but the Rockies are going to be relying heavily on six arms all over the age of 30. While McGee improved in 2017 over 2016, Shaw, Davis, and Dunn saw a dip in multiple metrics. **Chris Rusin**, who has blossomed in his bullpen role, should be relatively consistent through his arbitration years. If multiple relievers see a big drop-off in performance, the Rockies could be in trouble and be forced to bank on Senzatela or Hoffman improving and eating innings.
3. With over \$40 million already committed to the bullpen for three years, the Rockies need to figure out how to be competitive in 2020 with Blackmon and Arenado off the books by that time. Of course, the Rockies could sign either or both of those players, and a lot changes in two years, but it is hard to see the Rockies being competitive without more bats going forward. 2018 will be an important indicator, but as those bullpen arms age, they will become harder to offload via trade if things go poorly.

★ ★ ★

This offseason has been slow for most ball clubs, but the Rockies are jumping at the chance to solidify a bullpen for multiple years and bring a new standard of “pitching first” to Coors Field. This next season is shaping up to be a fun one for Rockies fans.

The Rockies have solidified their bullpen – What now?

4 lingering questions about how the Rockies will look in 2018

By Eric Garcia McKinley / Purple Row | @garcia_mckinley | Dec 30, 2017, 12:44pm MST

The question that begins every offseason starts with “What should.” Entering November, that question tended to look like “What should the **Rockies** do to maintain the bullpen” and “What should the Rockies do to improve the offense?” The Rockies have answered the first question. The major question after the three bullpen signings is “What now?” The specifics to that question pertain to both the bullpen and the offense.

*What about **Adam Ottavino**?*

The Rockies’ erstwhile closer now appears to be, at best, number five on the bullpen depth chart (after **Wade Davis**, **Bryan Shaw**, **Jake McGee**, and **Chris Rusin**; possibly after **Mike Dunn** as well). Ottavino is owed \$7 million in 2018, after which he’ll become a free agent. If Ottavino rediscovers the strike zone and returns to his previously dominant self, it won’t help the Rockies as much as it would appear. There are only so many high-leverage innings to distribute to relief pitchers, so there’s a point of diminishing returns if Ottavino is excellent but serving as a mop-up reliever and only occasionally being asked to get big outs.

Of course, the one thing all pitchers are good at is getting injured. Ottavino could also be a critical depth option if any of the guys at the top of the depth chart end up on the disabled list—something that’s likely to happen. The role that makes the most sense for Ottavino right now is insurance on the 25-man roster.

It could make sense for the Rockies to gauge the trade market for Ottavino. If he can manage to find his control and command again, he’s an elite reliever. But he’d have to prove that with real innings before the Rockies could get a solid return for him.

*What about **Antonio Senzatela**?*

Senzatela’s situation may not have changed at all. He doesn’t seem to have room in the starting rotation, and as a two-pitch pitcher, Senzatela appears destined for the bullpen. As opposed to Ottavino, however, Senzatela’s value isn’t necessarily as a shut-down reliever. If we consider Davis, Shaw, McGee, Rusin, Dunn, and Ottavino bullpen shoe-ins,

that leaves two spots. The remaining relievers on the 40-man roster, according to RockiesRoster.com, are **Scott Oberg**, Carlos Estévez, **Zac Rosscup**, Rayan González, Jairo Díaz, **Jeff Hoffman**, and Senzatela.

I think the Rockies still want Hoffman to be a starter, so I'd expect him to begin the year in the Albuquerque Isotopes' starting rotation. González and Díaz are high-octane relievers who both recently had Tommy John surgery. I expect both of them to be called upon only in the case of injury. That leaves **Oberg**, Estévez, Rosscup, and Senzatela. Rosscup could find his way on the roster as a fourth lefty, but he'd be redundant.

It makes sense for the Rockies to fill out the seventh and eighth spots with one of Oberg or Estévez in the role of "last man in the 'pen" and add Senzatela as the right-handed version of Rusin.

What about the offense?

This is the elephant in the room. The Rockies have solidified the 2018 bullpen; however, without any offensive upgrades, it's not clear whether or not the 2018 team will be any better than the 2017 club. Given how much the Rockies have invested in free agent relievers, it seems unlikely that they'll get the checkbook out for a free agent hitter.

That leaves two options. First, the Rockies could still upgrade the offense on the trade market. The farm system is still deep, and they could use that to get someone like José Abreu or **Andrew McCutchen** without draining the farm or coming close to that old yarn "mortgaging the future." To do that, players like **Ryan McMahon**, Ryan Castellani, **Yency Almonte**, **Raimel Tapia**, Colton Welker, and Riley Pint will have to be on the table. The Rockies could trade for a bat without trading their jewel, Brendan Rodgers.

Finding an established bat is probably the safest way to turn this offseason from a qualified to an unmitigated success. And while nobody gets awards for "winning the offseason," it would set the Rockies up to do a lot of winning during the on-season as well.

The other option is to gamble on bounce-backs and the immediate maturation of young hitters. **Ian Desmond** is a great bet to be better in 2018, but that doesn't mean he'll be a positive contributor. The same goes for **Trevor Story** (though Story adds a lot with his glove). But we also can't discuss bounce-backs without also acknowledging some declines. Blackmon probably had a career-year in 2017, and while he should be well above average again, it's not exactly pessimistic to think he'll have a hard time repeating his MVP-caliber season. On the young hitter side of the

coin, **McMahon**, **Tapia**, and **David Dahl** all have high potential, but I'd feel better if the Rockies weren't relying on them too much.

If the Rockies do nothing and count on players who had good seasons repeating (not to mention counting on the rotation repeating its performance, which is a story about risk for another day), players who had poor seasons bouncing back, and prospects to be immediately effective, it could work. But it's a risk. If the gamble doesn't pay off, a solid bullpen may not be able to save the season.

Besides the offense, what else can the Rockies do this offseason?

Here's something they can do: Lock Nolan Arenado up long-term. The Rockies, and Rockies fans, may be shy to do this given how the **Troy Tulowitzki** extension turned out, but they're different players. In Arenado the Rockies have a generational third baseman who's already halfway to a Hall of Fame career. As it stands, he has two years remaining with the club. My heart is telling me that I want him to stick around for his entire career. But my head agrees. Extending Arenado will make this the most ambitious offseason in Rockies history.

Rockies designate Shane Carle for assignment

The Rockies needed the roster spot for Wade Davis

By Eric Garcia McKinley / Purple Row | @garcia_mckinley | Dec 29, 2017, 3:06pm MST

The **Rockies** have designated right-handed reliever **Shane Carle** for assignment, **according to Major League Baseball**.

The move comes after the Rockies officially announced the **signing of closer Wade Davis**. The team had a full 40-man roster, and the addition of Davis required somebody be removed. The Rockies added Carle to the 40-man roster prior to the 2017 season to protect him from being taken in the Rule 5 draft. He only pitched four major-league innings, however. Carle, 26, spent most of the season in Triple-A, where he posted a 5.37 ERA in 62 innings pitched.

The Rockies now have a seven-day window in which they have to either trade Carle or place him on waivers. If he goes on waivers and somebody claims him, he belongs to that team. If nobody claims him, the Rockies can either release Carle or outright him to the minor-leagues. Carle was only likely to play an emergency relief role for the Rockies in 2018, and he could very well still be in that role if he passes through waivers and the team chooses to keep him in the system.

Colorado Rockies: 18 things we are looking forward to in 2018

By Kevin Henry / Rox Pile | January 1, 2018

We are officially less than 100 days until Opening Day of the 2018 Major League Baseball season. On some of these cold and snowy Colorado mornings, thoughts of summer nights at Coors Field and cheering on the Colorado Rockies can be the things that get fans through these dark and dreary days.

When the Rockies take on the Arizona Diamondbacks on Chase Field on March 29, it will begin the 25th anniversary of Colorado's franchise. It will also begin a season where Colorado will be attempting to make the postseason for the second consecutive year after securing the second National League Wild Card slot last year. The Rockies have never made the playoffs two straight seasons. Will this be the year that that changes?

That is just one of the things that we will be watching closely this season from our seats in the Coors Field press box. There are plenty of other things that we will be keeping our eyes on ... and plenty of other things that we are already looking forward to seeing next season.

With that in mind, here are 18 things that we think are going to be fun and interesting to watch when the 2018 season begins and unfolds.

Every season, Colorado's All-Star third baseman does something that we all shake our head at and wonder how he did it. To the delight of many Rockies fans, he always saves some of his best moments for the San Francisco Giants. Whether it's the "tarp catch" in San Francisco, hitting a game-winning home run to complete a cycle on Father's Day at Coors Field or this little gem below, Nolan has a way of always plaguing the Giants.

Of course, it isn't just against the Giants where Nolan excels. His defensive prowess makes him one of the game's elite third basemen and one of the rare MLB players who are worth the price of admission every game. And yes, we're talking every game because Arenado will rarely take a day off (unless it's demanded of him).

Number 2: Sliding stops from DJ LeMahieu

Is there anything prettier than Colorado's All-Star second baseman sliding into the grass to smother a grounder and make the throw to first, turning what could have been a single into an out? We don't think so.

There is a reason why LeMahieu is a two-time Gold Glove winner. He is often underrated at the plate and in the field, but we are ready to see DJ spin some more magic in 2018.

*How **Bryan Shaw** will change the bullpen*

So far, Colorado's biggest offseason signing of a player who wasn't with the team in 2017 has been Bryan Shaw, a workhorse right-hander who is expected to be one of the key pieces of Colorado's late innings next season.

Shaw has seen action in 70 or more games each of the last five seasons, starting in 2012 with the Diamondbacks and continuing for the next four campaigns with the Cleveland Indians. That trend should continue in Colorado next season.

Last year, **Mike Dunn** led the Rockies with 68 appearances followed by **Scott Oberg**'s 66. In all, there were six Rockies pitchers who appeared in 60 or more games last season. How will Shaw be used? Will he be a true set-up man or more of a specialist? Will his appearances reduce the number of times we might see an Oberg or even **Chris Rusin**? Shaw will change things in the Rockies bullpen and we are interested to see how.

Of course, the Rockies shook things up on Friday **by signing closer Wade Davis**, making their bullpen even more formidable.

Number 4: Another veteran catcher working with young pitchers

Along with Shaw, Colorado made a splash by signing **Chris Iannetta** to a two-year deal before the Winter Meetings began. The catcher will turn 35 during the 2018 season so the Rockies are bringing him on for his experience as much as his play on the field.

That experience will serve two purposes. First, it gives Iannetta the chance to mold Colorado's young rotation in a similar fashion to the impact **Jonathan Lucroy** had on the pitchers late last season. So many in the Rockies clubhouse will tell you of the difference Lucroy made so Colorado is hoping Iannetta can continue that trajectory.

Second, Iannetta can also serve as a mentor to young catchers **Tony Wolters** and **Tom Murphy**. Iannetta hasn't appeared in 100 games in three consecutive seasons so catching will likely be a platoon situation this year. That means plenty of growing opportunities for Wolters and Murphy. Both struggled last season. Will the presence of Iannetta and another year under their belt help them? Rockies fans hope so.

We talked about Colorado's young rotation on the last slide and Kyle Freeland, German Marquez and Antonio Senzatela will be in the spotlight when the 2018 season rolls around. The trio surprised many around the league in their first full Major League seasons last year. They won't have that luxury this season. They will be expected to perform and perform well.

The trio combined for 32 wins last season and carried the Rockies when Jon Gray and Chad Bettis were both out of the rotation with injuries.

Speaking of missing time, what will Tyler Anderson bring to the mound in 2018 after an injury-plagued 2017? Don't forget that the 28-year-old southpaw went 3-1 with a 1.19 ERA in September when he finally regained his health. That was huge for a Rockies team fighting for its Wild Card life down the stretch.

Number 6: Another year into the Jon Gray curveball project

Jon Gray has a devastating slider and wicked fastball. Last season, he worked on his curveball and using it as his third pitch. There were moments when it worked wonderfully ... and there were moments like in the Wild Card game where it didn't.

Gray has another offseason to work on the pitch and harness its potential power. If he can add it to his repertoire, it will go a long ways toward him establishing himself as not only the ace of the Rockies staff but also as one of the game's up-and-coming pitching stars.

Ian Desmond

There is no question that 2017 did not go the way that the Rockies or Ian Desmond planned. After signing a big contract in the offseason, Desmond struggled to stay on the field and struggled to produce when he was on it.

In just 93 games last season, Desmond totaled just seven homers and 40 RBI, far below his numbers from the past five seasons. Colorado is betting on Desmond returning to form in 2018 ... and the Rockies offense needs that to happen.

Desmond's offense was penciled in to be a plus for a lineup that already featured plenty of sluggers but outside of Charlie Blackmon, Nolan Arenado and DJ LeMahieu, Colorado's lineup produced a 0.0 WAR last year. Not good. The 32-year-old outfielder and first baseman will need a bounceback season in 2018 and he will be given every opportunity to make that happen, likely splitting time again between the outfield and first base.

*Number 8: More bat antics from **Gerardo Parra***

If there is a role model for Desmond in 2018, it is looking at how Gerardo Parra bounced back from a bad 2016 to make an impact last season.

Parra hit .571 in six June game before going out with a leg injury, but returned with a vengeance in July by hitting .443 in 16 contests. His offensive outburst led Colorado during the middle part of the campaign ... and he did it often with flare. **Check out the “bat pose” after his home run against the St. Louis Cardinals.**

Are you ready for more playing time for **Ryan McMahon** and **Raimel Tapia**? Get ready, because the young duo is likely to have a big impact on Colorado's 2018 season.

If the Rockies don't sign another first baseman, McMahon will likely hold down first base, giving Ian Desmond more versatility to play in the outfield. Tapia, meanwhile, will benefit when Desmond is at first base, likely moving into the right field slot vacated by **Carlos Gonzalez**.

Those aren't the only two youngsters who will likely see time with the Rockies in 2018. Last year, players like **Mike Tauchman** and **Shane Carle** made their debuts. **Jairo Diaz**, **Jeff Hoffman** and **Carlos Estevez** saw time on the mound.

Colorado has a young and deep farm system and that will be evident again in 2018 as Rockies fans get a deeper taste of what the future might hold at 20th and Blake.

Number 10: Another year of the Carlos Estevez experiment

Speaking of Estevez, the 25-year-old right-hander made Colorado's Opening Day roster last season but then bounced back and forth between Colorado and Triple-A Albuquerque. He was recalled by the Rockies seven times last season, making it one heck of a back-and-forth campaign.

He went 5-0 with a 5.57 ERA and struck out 31 in 32.1 innings of work. Manager **Bud Black** and the Colorado administration are all high on the potential that Estevez brings. If he can harness his power and “throw the ball like he is capable,” as Black said **in this article**, Estevez can make a strong Colorado bullpen even stronger.

*Number 11: **Pat Valaika**'s expanding role*

Last season, Pat Valaika burst onto the scene with 13 homers and 40 RBI and became Colorado's spark plug off the bench in many situations. In 57 games last season, Valaika hit in the ninth spot (pinch hitting in many of those situations) and finished with a .309 average with four homers and 11 RBI.

Valaika probably could have had more opportunities had it not been for **Alexi Amarista** serving as a pinch hitter on several occasions. With Amarista gone, Valaika should not only get more opportunities at the plate but also in the field as well. The 25-year-old will move into the primary utility infielder role in 2018 as well as likely be the team's designated pinch hitter.

More opportunities for Patty Barrels? We will take it. **is stride?**

The former ninth overall pick in the draft enters the 2018 season in a bit of flux. Colorado has a deep and talented rotation and a deep and talented bullpen. Right now, Hoffman does not fit into the top tiers of either on the surface.

Hoffman flashed his potential last season in four consecutive starts, spanning May and June when he went 3-0 with a 1.43 ERA. However, he surrendered nine runs in a June 21 contest against Arizona that signaled the beginning of the end of Colorado's early-season dominance.

He was sent to the bullpen in September and October and gave up 11 runs in 7.2 innings of work, ending 2017 on a sour note.

What will 2018 hold? Will another offseason give Hoffman a chance to fully realize his talent? Colorado seems deep enough next season that it's not a necessity for it to happen, but it would be a huge plus.

*Number 13: We are even closer to the debut of **Brendan Rodgers***

We have talked a lot in this article about Colorado's future, but let's talk for a moment about perhaps the brightest star in the constellation that is the Rockies farm system.

He earned a call-up to Double-A last season after hitting a ridiculous .387 for Class A Lancaster. He will likely start the season in Hartford and could well be in Triple-A midway through the season (if he continues to progress the way he has). That puts the 21-year-old Rodgers knocking on the Major League door in 2019.

This is a situation that bares watching for Rockies fans. If Rodgers keeps progressing the way he does, he could push himself into the Colorado lineup in 2019. That is the same year that DJ LeMahieu is scheduled to become an unrestricted free agent. The timing is convenient and very, very interesting.

No, Rodgers will likely not be a member of the Rockies in 2018 but keep an eye on the minor league box scores to see how he is doing. We will be.

*Number 14: **Trevor Story's maturation***

Looking at the overall stats from 2017, Trevor Story took a bit of a step backwards last season, posting a .239 average and striking out 191 times in 503 at-bats. However, let's slice a little deeper.

In September, Story hit six of his 24 home runs and drove in 22 of his 82 RBI. He also struck out 34 times in 107 at-bats, his lowest monthly ratio of the entire year. He started to find his stride just as the season was ending.

Defensively, however, Story improved dramatically in 2017, **becoming one of the National League's best defensive shortstops** and having some ask if he was worthy of Gold Glove consideration. Playing between Nolan Arenado and DJ LeMahieu, Story was a piece of one of Major League Baseball's best infields last year.

In his third full season in 2018, Story has the chance to not only get better at the plate, but in the field as well. That is a scary thought for Colorado opponents.

OK, seriously, on these winter days, is there a better thought that sitting at Coors Field with a cold beverage in your hand and watching the sun set over the Rocky Mountains? It creates one of the best settings for photos in Major League Baseball.

This year, not only will Rockies fans get to see the sun go down over the left field wall, they will also be looking at a new scoreboard as part of the whole sunset (and in-game) experience. The new scoreboard measures 8,369 square feet, which is about twice the size of the previous scoreboard. There will also be a new speaker sound system installed in time for next season.

Number 16: TONIIIIIIIGHT

Fear not, Rockies fans. Charlie Blackmon and his signature walk-up song will be back in time for the 2018 season. There is nothing like sitting at Coors Field and having The Outfield blare over the speakers with the crowd singing TONIIIIIIIGHT

in unison to end the Charlie Blackmon walk-up experience. I remember one game last season when the song didn't play as Blackmon walked to the plate and the crowd sat in stunned silence. Yes, it's that big of a deal at Coors Field.

And hey, the song will be playing over a new sound system next season. And just when you thought The Outfield couldn't sound any better...

Speaking of Charlie Blackmon, how in the world is he going to top last year's historic season? One of the game's best leadoff men, Blackmon has established himself as an offensive threat from the time the first pitch is delivered. He might not be able to top last year, but even coming close and pairing that with typical seasons from Nolan Arenado and DJ LeMahieu, plus better seasons from Ian Desmond, Trevor Story and Gerardo Parra can make the Rockies a team few pitchers want to face.

If there is any area where Blackmon might be able to up his game, it is in the stolen base category. Last season, he swiped just 14 (his lowest since 2013) while being caught 10 times. We had to dig deep to even find that, just showing the type of year Blackmon had last season and the type of season Rockies fans hopes he can produce in 2018.

Chuck Nazy talked about what will motivate him for next season [in this interview](#) with MLB.com's Thomas Harding.

Number 18: The many emotions of Bud Black

Colorado's manager is one of a kind. We in the media are lucky enough to often hear his baseball stories and jokes, but even those in the stands can see the charisma that he brings to the dugout on a nightly basis.

Of course, there are times when Black isn't the most jovial person on Earth. Just ask Kyle Freeland, who saw it first-hand ... as did the rest of the world ... on July 4 at Coors Field.

All of the emotions go into making Black the ideal manager for a young Rockies team and one of the best skippers in Major League Baseball today.

Colorado Rockies: What signing Wade Davis really means

By Olivia Greene / Rox Pile | December 29, 2017

Yahoo Sports columnist Jeff Passan tweeted early Friday morning that former Cubs closer Wade Davis has agreed to a deal. Passan reports that Davis, 32, will be getting a 3-year deal amounting up to \$52 million with a fourth year option that totals out to \$66 million. It's an extreme amount of money for any reliever, Davis will be one of the most highest paid relievers next season.

Davis first started showing his worth with the **Kansas City Royals** in 2014 with an ERA of 1.00 and then in 2015 with an ERA of 0.94. After the 2016 season, he was traded to the Cubs and he put up dominating numbers with an ERA of 2.30, 37 saves, and 12.1 strikeouts per nine innings. There is no question that Wade Davis will be an efficient pitcher and he'll put up good numbers for the Rockies.

One problem is solved, but a few still remain

The Colorado Rockies have seem to fixed their bullpen dilemma. Along with Davis they have **Bryan Shaw**, **Chris Rusin**, **Jake McGee**, and **Adam Ottavio** just to name a few. With Davis as the closer as well, the additions that GM Jeff Bridich has signed the bullpen has been solidified.

With the bullpen now coming together you can't just say that the Rockies have solved all their problems. They've only answered a few of their questions, which leaves me to wonder: will the rest be answered.

The Rockies seem to be going down the imaginary checklist of things they need in this offseason. It's not a bad thing to do, but it's also not the best they could do.

Yes, it's great the Rockies are going to have a stellar bullpen, but calculate the amount of money spent on 3 free agent relievers. Also, add in **Chris Iannetta**'s contract. Altogether that's four free agents with serious amounts of cash which in past seasons the Rockies haven't really done, excluding **Ian Desmond**.

The main point is that of course signing Wade Davis is a big deal, but we can't forget that the Rockies are missing a few gears. This signing doesn't erase the first base and outfield predicament. It does, however, change how the front office might approach both of those issues.

Davis is getting a large payout which may call off the search for free agents. This leads to the Rockies most likely going internal for both positions. It's not a bad thing, but it may be a wasted moment due to them having the opportunity and not taking it. If they go with an external option, it will most likely be through a trade and not through free agency.

The Rox have options as to what they want to do when it comes to first base and right field. Now as the majority of their money is being spent on relievers it's likely fitting to say that they will use **Ryan McMahon** and Ian Desmond. This is a good thing indeed, it allows Desmond to get playing time and McMahon to show his worth.

Final Thoughts

Everything is up in the air when it comes to the Rockies' outfield and first base situation. That being said the bullpen should be nothing but foolproof. Question will remain until we see what exactly the front office does. Many "what if's" are going come up, but don't let that stray you from a good team.

Jeff Bridich **believes the Rockies can win it all in 2018**. Is this the right route to go for them to get there? Only time will tell as Spring Training is right around the corner.

Bridich gives Arenado even more reasons to stay in Colorado

By Ronnie Kohert / Mile High Sports | December 30, 2017

Building a winning baseball team is hard enough, but convincing star players to remain in town long enough to make it happen is something else entirely — especially if you don't have an unlimited budget or extraordinary history, like the Dodgers, Giants, Yankees and Red Sox. But Colorado Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich has continued to show star third baseman Nolan Arenado why he should remain a Rockie — for life.

Arenado is widely regarded as the best third baseman in baseball, and it's not far-fetched to say Arenado could finish his career as the greatest ever at his position — that's how good he is. So naturally, as Arenado's potential free agency creeps closer and closer with no long-term lock-up in sight, anxiety creeps into Rockies' fans hearts. Colorado must prove to Arenado that winning is the top priority. Many teams will say it; far fewer will prove it.

"There definitely are conversations that will happen with Nolan," Bridich said on Friday, when discussing the notion of contract negotiations with Arenado this year.

Arenado will be an unrestricted free agent in 2020 and according to OverTheCap.com, Arenado's market value currently sits at \$26.5 million a year. That's a major chunk of change, and one that the Rockies have never handed out before, but for a player of Arenado's stature, it'll be necessary. That's just today's value; Arenado could see that yearly salary balloon even higher the longer the team waits. But it's worth noting that players want long-term deals and the security that comes with them. Bridich and the Rockies has proved that they're no longer afraid to spend to win.

The signing of closer Wade Davis to a record-breaking deal and adding ace setup man Brian Shaw have a bonus even beyond the obvious; bringing All-Star talent to Colorado — it's showing Arenado that this is the place he should call home for the rest of his career.

Arenado can become the John Elway of the Rockies; a nearly mythical figure forever revered in Denver sports history, if he could help deliver what Rockies fans have dreamed of ground broke at 20th and Blake in 1992 — a World Series championship. The Rockies are tantalizingly close. If Arenado stays long term, it could become a reality.

Aggressive moves like outbidding teams for closer Greg Holland last year in free agency, and signing outfielder Ian Desmond are just some of the moves that bolstered the Rockies to their 87 wins last year and first playoff appearance

since 2009. But not only that, trading for Pat Neshek and Jonathan Lucroy — even knowing both moves could only be a short-term rental — also can be seen as evidence that the Rockies are trying to win, and win big.

Throw out the outdated ‘money for party deck’ takes; the Rockies’ culture has changed. More money is being spent than ever before, and the front office has proven that they’re not window shoppers anymore — they’re buyers. This year, but in the season and out of it, should have taken a major step forward in convincing Arenado of this. The trigger man in Bridich is pulling all the right levers and it feels like something special may be on tap at Coors Field.

And I’m not talking about the microbrews.

Rockies agree to record-breaking deal with All-Star closer Wade Davis

By MHS Staff / Mile High Sports | December 30, 2017

As first reported by Yahoo's Jeff Passan, the Colorado Rockies on Friday agreed to terms on a deal with three-time All-Star closer Wade Davis. The team announced the signing later in the day.

Davis was named an All-Star in each of the last three seasons, most recently with Chicago and with the Royals in the two years prior.

Shortly after the report by Passan, MLB.com and Rockies.com writer Thomas Harding conveyed the record-breaking details of Davis' deal with Colorado.

[Thomas Harding](#)

MLB source: Closer Wade Davis' contract with [#Rockies](#): \$16 MM in 2018, \$18 MM in 2019, \$17 MM in 2020, \$1 MM buyout on \$15 million vesting player option for 2021. Club has not announced the deal

[9:19 AM - Dec 29, 2017](#)

Davis' guaranteed average of \$17.33 million is the highest per-year salary for a relief pitcher, shattering the record held by Yankees closer Aroldis Chapman, who signed for an average of \$15 million per year, and setting a new bar for closers in free agency. The Rockies will owe the Cubs a draft pick as compensation for the qualifying offer that the Cubs gave to Davis before he declined.

The 32-year-old right hander has 79 saves over the past four seasons including a career-high 32 in 2017 with the Chicago Cubs. Davis won a World Series with the Royals in 2015. His full stats are below, courtesy of Baseball Reference.

For data table: <https://milehighsports.com/report-rockies-have-agreed-to-terms-with-all-star-closer-wade-davis/>
Data courtesy [Baseball-Reference.com](#).

Davis will presumably fill the closer's role in Bud Black's bullpen, a spot occupied by Greg Holland in 2017. Holland earned numerous accolades with Colorado last season, including National League Reliever of the Month for April and May and NL Comeback Player of the Year. He tied the Rockies' single-season record for saves (41) and earned an All-Star bid himself. Holland is a free agent, and now that the Cubs have lost Davis to the Rockies, don't be surprised if Holland becomes their top target.

Holland and Davis pitched together in Kansas City as part of the world championship team, with Davis serving primarily as the setup man for Holland. He assumed the closing duties in 2016 when Holland missed the season due to Tommy John surgery.

The move is the second major bullpen acquisition by Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich this offseason. He added Bryan Shaw, formerly of the Cleveland Indians, officially on Dec. 12.

The back-end of the Rockies' bullpen — on paper, at least — looks to be the best on team history by a wide margin; Davis and set-up man Jake McGee have been All-Stars and Shaw could easily have been one over his last two seasons in Cleveland. If the trio performs as expected, the Rockies' ability to effectively shorten the game could prove extremely beneficial to their young starters as they mature.

Law: Rockies pay a steep price for Wade Davis in latest pen investment

By Keith Law / ESPN.com | December 30, 2017

The Colorado Rockies' forays into free agency the last few years have gone poorly, including the Ian Desmond contract (minus-1.1 WAR last year, the first of a five-year, \$70 million deal), but they've been more aggressive than ever this winter. The latest move has them signing Wade Davis to one of the largest contracts ever given to a relief pitcher, three years and \$52 million, a transaction that wouldn't make sense for most teams but makes especially little sense for Colorado.

This feels like an enormous bet on Davis returning to his form of 2014-15, even though there isn't really any concrete reason to believe that he will do so. In the last two years, Davis has been hurt and/or wild, and only playing in front of a great Cubs defense last season kept his ERA below 3.00. His FIP of 3.38 was probably more reflective of how well he pitched, and his value based on WAR was just 1.1 (via FanGraphs), which would make this \$17 million average annual value (AAV) a serious overpay. Either the Rockies think his ninth-inning experience has real value, or they believe he's going to improve his underlying performance substantially by reducing his walks or somehow maintaining a well-below-average BABIP.

Who's available on the Hot Stove?

The history of long-term deals for relievers is poor anyway. The Rockies just finished paying Boone Logan \$16.5 million over three years (2014-16) for 106 innings of below-average production, and they still have two years left on a deal with Mike Dunn, who produced 0.2 WAR last year, for \$19 million total.

Davis missed about a quarter of 2016 with a flexor strain (slight damage to the muscle) near his right elbow and hasn't reached 60 innings in either of the last two seasons. He also had the worst strike percentage of his career in 2017, throwing 61.8 percent of his pitches for strikes, the third straight year his strike percentage has dropped. That could indicate that his elbow is still bothering him, or just that he's not the control specialist he appeared to be in 2014 and 2015. Either way, he's not someone you want to sign for a guaranteed three years, even less so for this kind of money, where the Rockies are unlikely to see anything close to a reasonable return on their investment.

The Rockies' bullpen looks improved on paper, with the additions of Davis and Bryan Shaw as well as the retention of Jake McGee, the best reliever available on the market. All three signed three-year deals, with the total of their AAVs

over \$35 million. Adding Dunn pushes that to nearly \$42 million, or about 30 percent of the team's total expected payroll for 2018, with another 15 percent or so going to Desmond, who was below replacement level last year.

MLB offseason

We have seen teams win with great bullpens in recent years, but they've rarely done so with this kind of expenditure. Instead, they've comprised home-grown relievers or cast-offs who thrived in a new role or for a new team, sometimes supplemented by one high-dollar reliever brought in from outside the organization -- Andrew Miller for the Indians, Aroldis Chapman for the Cubs and then the Yankees. Davis and McGee were both starting-pitching prospects for Tampa Bay who didn't work out in the rotation but had success in the bullpen; would the Rockies be better served converting one of their current starters to the bullpen, even as a short-term answer, rather than paying Davis \$17 million a year for what might be less than 1.5 WAR over 60 innings? Is there really \$17 million of difference between what they'll get from Davis - - assuming his elbow doesn't break -- or what they'd get from Jeff Hoffman in the same role, without the three-year commitment? I don't believe there is, but the size and length of these contracts threatens to limit the Rockies' ability to address other needs and get more reliable results for their money.

Reliever Wade Davis agrees to 3-year deal with Rockies

By Jesse Rogers / ESPN.com | December 29, 2017

Right-handed reliever Wade Davis, who saved 32 games for the Chicago Cubs last season, has agreed to a three-year deal with the Colorado Rockies, the team announced Friday.

Davis' agreement is for \$52 million, a source told ESPN's Jerry Crasnick. The contract includes a vesting player option that can increase the value to four years and \$66 million if Davis finishes 30 games in 2020 and picks up his option, a source said.

Sources said the Cubs were willing to go only two years in a deal to bring back Davis, who had a near-perfect season as a closer in 2017, blowing a save opportunity for the first time late in September. He set a career high in saves while sporting a 2.30 ERA.

Davis is the third significant free-agent bullpen signing this winter for the Rockies, who previously added Bryan Shaw and Jake McGee on three-year, \$27 million contracts. Greg Holland, who saved 41 games this season, declined a \$15 million option in November and became a free agent.

Rockies manager Bud Black and pitching coach Steve Foster played a significant role in recruiting Davis to Colorado, a source said. Foster was a coach in the Kansas City Royals organization when Davis joined the Royals in 2013, and he has since moved on to become Colorado's pitching coach.

Davis, 32, reached free agency after three solid years as a closer, two with Kansas City and the last with the Cubs. The former starter is often credited with still pitching with a starter's mentality, as he'll use his breaking stuff to set up his fastball as much as the other way around.

Like many closers, he often walked a tightrope but rarely gave in. Also, like many top closers, he proved capable of going multiple innings in a playoff situation, though sometimes with mixed results.

Davis' agreement with the Rockies was first reported by Yahoo! Sports.