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## MEDIA CLIPS – Sept. 9, 2018

**Rox hold on vs. Dodgers to maintain grip on 1st**  
***Freeland strikes out eight in six innings; Iannetta, Blackmon homer***  
**Owen Perkins | MLB.com | Sep 8, 2018**

DENVER -- The Rockies offered a textbook lesson in the new formula for success at Coors Field Saturday night, authored by Denver native Kyle Freeland. Colorado combined excellent pitching with timely hitting and solid defense to secure a 4-2 victory over the Dodgers and even the series. The win extended the Rockies' lead over L.A. in the National League West to 1 1/2 games, and gave them a 2 1/2-game lead over the D-backs, who lost to Atlanta.

Freeland notched his team-best 14th win, holding the Dodgers to a lone run on four hits and two walks while striking out eight in his six innings. After losing the series opener Friday night, there may have been pressure on Freeland to turn the Rockies' fortunes around quickly, but as comfortable as he looked shutting down a powerhouse lineup, it was hard to apply the concept of "pressure" to the Colorado kid.

"Our group plays at a high level of intensity," Rockies manager Bud Black said, noting that his team approaches games the same way whether it's March, May or September. "They embrace -- your word -- pressure. They want to be in the situation. But we can't do anything different. We have to play at a nice even keel with intensity and fire and poise. Kyle did that. He kept his delivery. Made pitches with the fastball. Good slider. Mixed in some changeups to keep them off balance. He pitched outstanding."

Freeland avoided the first-inning pitfalls that have haunted Rockies starters throughout the season by being aggressive on the mound, throwing first-pitch strikes to 16 of the first 18 batters he faced, giving his purple-pinstriped teammates the chance to score first.

"You want to get ahead early and often," Freeland said. "It immediately puts them in a hole, and it makes them change their mentality. That's big as a pitcher, getting that first strike and getting it often."

Chris Iannetta cashed in on the opportunity Freeland provided, launching a leadoff solo shot in the third inning. David Dahl contributed to the run tally by hustling a base hit to right into a double in the fourth, then scoring from second on Ian Desmond's single to right in the next at-bat.

Freeland's only blemish was a leadoff homer to center from Chris Taylor in the fifth inning.

"We did a good job of keeping them off-balance and keeping them in the rocking chair," Freeland said. "Fastball and slider were very good, backdoor wasn't as great as it should be, but we were able to use the changeup and the curveball and keep them off-balance, using our entire arsenal. Having it all on was great. I only made one mistake, hanging a slider to Taylor."

The Rockies responded to Taylor's homer with a two-run rally in the bottom of the inning. Iannetta notched his second extra-base hit in as many at-bats with a double to left, then came home when Charlie Blackmon drove a towering two-run blast into the right-field seats.

After six innings and 100 pitches, Freeland gave way to Scott Oberg and Adam Ottavino, who entered from the bullpen to shut down the Dodgers for two innings. After yielding a two-out triple to center from Cody Bellinger and a double to right from Max Muncy, closer Wade Davis recorded his NL-best and career-high 39th save.

"You do expect to put up runs in this ballpark," said Dodgers manager Dave Roberts. "The way Kyle threw the ball, it doesn't matter where you're playing. He really has good command and confidence pitching here. We still have to get base runners to stress the pitcher and get that big hit."

Freeland become just the fourth Rockies pitcher ever to record 20 quality starts in a season, joining Ubaldo Jimenez, Jason Marquis and Jason Jennings. He improved to 8-2 at home and lowered his Coors Field ERA to 2.21.

"Being home amps me up," Freeland said of pitching in front of a big crowd in the city where he grew up. "It gets me real excited, because I want to make Denver proud. You can feel the fans are really getting into it, especially September baseball."

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Left out: After Freeland exited and the right-handed Oberg came on for the seventh, the Dodgers flipped their all-right-handed lineup and brought in four left-handed power hitters off the bench in Alex Verdugo, Bellinger, Muncy, and Joc Pederson. Oberg responded by striking out the side with a one-out walk to Bellinger mixed in to silence the big bats.

"We've seen that from Scotty since his return -- he's pitched with a lot of confidence," Black said. "Fastball has very good location. He got the slider down underneath Muncy for the strikeout also. The high fastball to Pederson. Scotty's pitched very well. He's an integral part of what we've got going on in the back end of the bullpen."

#### SOUND SMART

With his third inning solo homer, Iannetta became the first Rockies catcher with four seasons of 10 or more home runs. He hit 16 in 2008, 15 in '09, 14 in '11, and has 10 this season. Wilin Rosario had three seasons with 10 or more, including the best-ever mark for a Rockies catcher with 27 in '12.

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

DJ LeMahieu recorded his 1,000th career hit with a first inning single. All but 15 of his hits came as a Rockie, following his trade from the Cubs. There are seven players with more hits while playing for the Rockies, led by Todd Helton (2,519), Larry Walker, Carlos Gonzalez, Dante Bichette, Vinny Castilla, Troy Tulowitzki, and Blackmon, who got his 1,000th career hit in August.

#### UP NEXT

Left-hander Tyler Anderson gets the call for Sunday's series finale with the Dodgers, facing Rich Hill at 1:10 p.m. MT. Anderson rebounded from being knocked out in the first frame of his previous start to pitch 5 1/3 innings Monday against

the Giants, allowing three runs on six hits and no walks. He was crisp down in the zone with an especially effective changeup.

**Struggling Arenado out of lineup vs. Dodgers**  
*Third baseman has been dealing with right shoulder discomfort*  
Owen Perkins | MLB.com | Sep. 8th, 2018

DENVER -- Most Valuable Player candidate Nolan Arenado was out of the Rockies' lineup against the Dodgers on Saturday after dealing with a 10-game slump at the plate that has renewed concerns about a right shoulder injury that took him out of an Aug. 10 game and has left him with lingering pain.

With the Rockies protecting a half-game lead over the Dodgers in the National League West entering Saturday, manager Bud Black's decision to sit one of the best players in the game did not go over well with the highly competitive All-Star third baseman.

"I don't make those calls," Arenado said of the decision to rest him for a day. "I don't want it. But I'm not playing well. That's why I'm not playing today.

"It's obviously extremely disappointing. I don't make the lineup. I want to be out there. I voiced that. But at the same time, I'm not performing. It is what it is."

What it is is a .128 funk at the plate (5-for-39) for Arenado over the last 10 games and a .241 (21-for-87) stretch in 25 games dating back to Aug. 10. Before that game, Arenado was hitting .308; his average has slipped to .297 since then.

Arenado has maintained that the pain in his shoulder does not affect him at the plate.

"It doesn't hurt hitting," Arenado said of the shoulder pain. "Throwing, it does. It's not 100 percent throwing. It's not going to be good throwing probably until the year is over, until next season. But I have to deal with it. I can play through it, and I'm going to continue to play through it."

The effect in the field isn't easy to discern. After winning Gold Gloves in each of his first five big league seasons, the sixth-year Rockie has set the standard at third base. When a ball gets past him, it is a surprise, and when a throwing error led to a pair of unearned runs that made the difference in Friday's 4-2 loss to the Dodgers, it took replay officials an inordinately long period of time to determine whether Arenado's throw had caught the runner or not. The need for officials

to spend several minutes studying video replays to determine if he made a play reflects the fine shade of difference the injury may be making in the field.

"Overall, he's been really consistent," Black said, noting he does not see Arenado's struggles at the plate mirrored on the field. "He's played Gold Glove caliber defense all year."

But in a critical game with playoff implications, Arenado found himself on the bench for just the fourth time this season, not including his five-game suspension for his role in a dustup with the Padres in April.

If past is precedent, then Rockies fans have reason to be hopeful. When Arenado sat out his five-game suspension, he came back and went 9-for-16 with three homers and six RBIs in his first four games back, and after missing two starts following the shoulder injury, Arenado started an eight-game hitting streak, going 11-for-32 (.344) with a homer and five RBIs. In 20 games following a day off -- whether individual or a scheduled team off-day -- Arenado is hitting .329 (25-for-76) with nine homers and 15 RBIs.

"Obviously, I'm already working in the cage and I'm going to hit some BP today," Arenado said of the work he'll do to right his performance at the plate while sitting out of Saturday's starting lineup. "I'm going to get my same work in in case I have to come in later. Just try to prepare for the day, and then hopefully, if my name's called, I got to be ready to go."

**Lindor, Story closing in on shortstop history**  
**Matthew Leach | MLB.com | Sep. 8th, 2018**

Baseball fans of a certain age remember when the shortstop position changed. It may be happening again.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a power boom changed how the position was viewed. Yes, it was an offensive era all over baseball, but no position was more emblematic than shortstop. That faded for a bit over the past 10-15 years, but we may be entering another era of big-time offense at the infield's premier defensive position.

Trevor Story, Manny Machado, and Francisco Lindor have all hit 30 or more home runs this year, the first trio to do so in the same season since 2001 (Rich Aurilia, Miguel Tejada, Alex Rodriguez). And while Machado may be the position's glamor boy, it's Story and Lindor who are on the verge of making history in multiple ways.

On Tuesday, Lindor posted the sixth 30-homer, 40-double season by a shortstop (minimum: 75 percent of games played at SS) in Major League history. Oh, by the way, it was the second straight year he had done so, making him the first shortstop ever to do it twice. The only other players to do it once? Tejada, Nomar Garciaparra, Rodriguez, and Cal Ripken Jr. For now.

Because that small group is about to get more company. Story, who crushed three homers on Wednesday, now has 31 to go with 39 doubles. With his next double, he'll become the first shortstop ever to go 30-40 in the National League. It will also be the third such season in the past two years, after there were four in the history of the game through 2016.

As with their 1990s analogs, though, power is not all that Lindor and Story can do. They're both closing in on an even rarer feat. In fact, an unprecedented one.

Story has 25 stolen bases. Lindor has 22. With Story's next double, he'll become the first shortstop in history with 30 homers, 40 doubles, and 25 steals in the same season, unless Lindor beats him to it. With three steals, Lindor will join -- or create -- that exclusive club.

That's right. In the history of the game, it's never happened. By the end of the season, it will probably happen twice.

**Kyle Freeland took down the Dodgers, then the battle really began in the Rockies clubhouse**  
**Nick Groke | TheAthletic.com | Sep 9, 2018**

DENVER — On the ropes and reeling, Kyle Freeland was staring at a stinging defeat Saturday at Coors Field. And under the pressure of an amplified moment, the Rockies' 25-year-old left-hander, the pitcher who has carried them at nearly every turn, knuckled down.

Freeland fell behind with an opening set loss in a late-night table tennis doubles match inside a converted video scouting room across the hall from Colorado's clubhouse. He and his partner, Gerardo Parra, rallied in a second set to draw even with catcher Tony Wolters and assistant coach Vinnie Castilla. Game on.

About 30 minutes earlier, Colorado closer Wade Davis had stamped out a late Dodgers rally in the Rockies' 4-2 victory in front of a sellout crowd in LoDo, a win that pushed them back to a 1 1/2 game lead in the National League West, 2 1/2 over the third-place Diamondbacks.

Freeland's six innings of nearly-dominant work — he gave up just one run on four hits, with eight strikeouts — gave him 20 quality starts, the best run of pitching Colorado has seen since Ubaldo Jimenez's All-Star season in 2010, when the lanky right-hander finished third in NL Cy Young voting.

But Jimenez was not pitching with these September stakes. The Rockies that season moved as close as a game back in the West, but never higher than third place in their division down the stretch. Freeland is leading his team on a merry chase toward the postseason. They have not held a lead in the West this late in a season since 1995.

"Yeah, it's September baseball," Freeland said. "But at the same time, it's another game in our eyes. We're going to play our brand of baseball. We're not going to hype it up at all."

The ping-pong, though, was especially heated. At a set apiece, the Freeland-Parra duo were racing. A crowd gathered outside the doorway. Chad Bettis, Freeland said, is the team's ping-pong ringer, but Castilla, a veteran player and coach of each of Colorado's appearances in the postseason, remains among their most fierce ping-pong players.



Freeland and Parra moved ahead. Castilla and Wolters rallied. It was a lefty-dominated table, with Castilla the only outlier, and the game settled into more crafty attacks than power moves.

Against the Dodgers, Freeland forced his hand. He jumped on hitters early, winning an 0-1 count on 16 of 18 hitters over one stretch. He struck out the side in the third after Los Angeles' lineup turned over, whiffing Walker Buehler, Brian Dozier and Justin Turner, all swinging, on a mix of fastballs and sliders.

"I'm not looking to strike guys out," Freeland said. "Especially with runners on. I'm looking to get the ball on the ground and get two outs on one pitch. It's much easier that way." But if the bases are empty, he might as well strike them out.

Freeland dropped his ERA to 2.91 and upped his record to 14-7. His ERA at hitter-friendly Coors Field: 2.21.

Only Chris Taylor jumped on Freeland, with a home run to the trees in center field to lead off the fifth. The Rockies at that point had a 2-1 lead, after Chris Iannetta homered to lead off the third and Ian Desmond knocked in David Dahl in the fourth with a line drive to right.

Charlie Blackmon smacked a two-run homer to the second deck in right field in the fifth, his 24th homer, to extend their lead. Blackmon blows off steam after a game by lifting weights and batting in a netted cage. Freeland plays ping-pong.

"Me and GP have a good rivalry going as teammates," he said. "It's another way to compete."

The ping-pong game has become routine, a running contest after victories. And the Rockies have won six of their last seven on the field as they grabbed first place in the West.

Said Wolters: "Usually Vinnie and I win."

Said Parra: "Tony loses a lot. Me and Freeland win more. Everybody wins, really, except Tony."

After Freeland's exit, after he threw 100 pitches, the Rockies' bullpen fell into place. Scott Oberg handled the seventh. Dodgers manager Dave Roberts sent a parade of left-handed pinch-hitters to the plate trying to thwart him, but Oberg

struck out three of them. Adam Ottavino hit a batter, but never allowed a hit. Davis gave up a triple to Cody Bellinger and an RBI double to Max Muncy, but he struck out Yasmani Grandal looking to end the game.

Freeland and Parra, their backs against the wall on the far side of the ping-pong room, held a three-spot lead on Castilla and Wolters. Game point on the table fell to Freeland, like it did on the field earlier that night. Another post-victory victory.

“Whenever you’re pitching well and the team is winning and you have that feeling in the clubhouse,” Freeland said, “you’re going to walk onto the field with swagger and have a lot of confidence in yourself and your teammates behind you.”

**Behind Kyle Freeland, Rockies keep defying odds, defeat Dodgers 4-2**  
***Win extends Rockies' lead over Dodgers to 1½ games in NL West***  
**Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Sep. 8, 2018**

The wiseguys in Vegas and the so-called analytics experts around baseball have lately pegged the Rockies as a team with about a 50-50 shot of making the playoffs. Fangraphs, for example, gives them a 47-percent chance.

The Rockies aren't paying a lick of attention. And when left-hander Kyle Freeland takes the mound, they feel like they can go toe-to-toe with anyone, including the Dodgers, who have won five consecutive National League West titles.

A night after losing to Los Angeles, the Rockies rebounded with a 4-2 victory Saturday before a sellout crowd of 47,867 fans at Coors Field, getting home runs from Chris Iannetta and Charlie Blackmon off right-hander Walker Buehler.

Freeland, who's putting together one of the best pitching seasons in Rockies history, seems to be taking it all in stride. In fact, after the game he teamed up with outfielder Gerardo Parra to beat special assistant Vinny Castilla and catcher Tony Wolters in a game of doubles ping pong.

"Yeah, it's September baseball, but it's another game in our eyes and we are going to play our type of baseball," Freeland said. "We are not going to hype it up at all, we are going to keep doing what we've been doing."

The win extended the Rockies' lead over the Dodgers to 1½ games in the National League West. The two teams play the rubber game of the three-game series on Sunday afternoon. Third-place Arizona lost 5-4 to Atlanta in 10 innings, at home, falling 2 ½ games behind Colorado.

Asked about Freeland's ability to perform well under big-game pressure, manager Bud Black shot back: "I think you saw from Kyle tonight what we've seen all year. Pressure is what you make of it. I get it. But our group will play at a high level of intensity, and will continue to embrace — your word — pressure. It's great. Our guys want it, they want to be in this situation.

"But we can't do anything different. We have to play at a nice, even keel, with fire, intensity and poise. And Kyle did that, man. He did great tonight."

Freeland's high-altitude joy ride continued. The 25-year-old Denver native pitched six innings of four-hit ball, walking two and striking out eight. His one big mistake was an 86 mph slider he left over the plate for Chris Taylor, who sent it 440 feet for a solo home run in the fifth, cutting Colorado's lead to 2-1.

"We did a good job of keeping them off-balance and keeping them in a rocking chair," said Freeland, who threw a first-pitch strike to 16 of the 18 batters he faced. "The fastball and slider were very good. The backdoor (slider) wasn't as great as it should be, but we were able to use the changeup and the curveball and keep them off-balance."

Freeland's overall ERA dipped to 2.91 and his record improved to 14-7. His Coors Field tally: 8-2 with a 2.21 ERA.

Saturday marked Freeland's 20th quality start, making him just the fourth pitcher in Rockies history with 20 or more quality starts in a single season. (Jason Jennings had 20 in 2006; Jason Marquis had 21 in 2009; and Ubaldo Jimenez had 24 in 2009 and 25 in 2010.)

A trio of three right-handers — Scott Oberg, Adam Ottavino and closer Wade Davis — put the game to rest, but not before the Dodgers put a scare into Davis. Cody Bellinger ripped a two-out triple to left-center and scored on Max Muncy's double down the right-field line. With the big crowd roaring, Davis struck out pinch hitter Yasmani Grandal looking at a 3-2, 89 mph cutter.

Blackmon's two-run home run in the fifth was so loud, so high and so majestic, it even caught the attention of the party-goers hanging out on The Rooftop above right field. Blackmon's 24th home run of the season — but his first homer in 52 at-bats — scored Iannetta, who led off with a double.

Iannetta put the Rockies on the board with a leadoff home run off Buehler in the second. The stocky catcher, nicknamed "Sponge" (after Sponge Bob Squarepants), drove a first-pitch, 95 mph fastball the opposite way, just over the manual scoreboard in right field.

"(Buehler) just made a mistake and left (the pitch) in the middle third of the plate," Iannetta said of the home run. "Last time I faced him, I think every pitch was like an inch off the black and just a perfect pitch. He made a mistake on two pitches tonight and I was able to get the barrel to it. So I was happy about that."

It was Iannetta's 10th home run this season, making him the first catcher in Rockies history with four seasons of 10 or more home runs. Wilin Rosario did it three times.

Hustle and execution put Colorado ahead 2-0 in the fourth. David Dahl lashed a double to right, just beating Matt Kemp's throw to the bag. Dahl raced home on Ian Desmond's single to right. Desmond is batting just .230, but he's driven in 78 runs.

Entering Saturday, Buehler had allowed only four runs and one home run over his last 30 innings. The Rockies tagged him for four runs on six hits, including the two longballs.

**Rockies' Nolan Arenado not happy about being held out of starting lineup for Saturday's key game against the Dodgers**

***The third baseman is hitting .200 with one homer, 14 strikeouts in his last 15 games, including 0-for-4 in the series opener***

**Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Sep. 8, 2018**

It's September and the Rockies lead the Dodgers by a half-game in the National League West, but slumping all-star third baseman Nolan Arenado was not in the starting lineup for Saturday night's key game against the Dodgers at Coors Field.

Arenado was not happy about it, but manager Bud Black stood by his decision.

"It's obviously extremely disappointing," Arenado said. "I don't make the lineup. I want to be out there. I voiced that. At the same time, I'm not performing. It is what it is. I don't know what to say about it."

Black said he told Arenado about his decision after the Dodgers beat the Rockies 4-2 Friday night when Arenado went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts, including whiffing for the game's final out.

"In this case we felt that giving Nolan this start off might help him moving forward," Black said. "Offensively, he just doesn't feel right. The timing is off and there are a lot of things going on."

Black said a number of star players get select days off over the course of a 162-game season, but added: "In this case it's magnified, because it's September. But it's the right thing to do."

The third baseman is hitting just .200 with one home run and 14 strikeouts in his last 15 games. Ryan McMahon is starting at third base in Arenado's place and batting seventh.

For the season, Arenado, a hot MVP candidate only a few weeks ago, is batting .297 with 31 home runs, 93 RBIs and a .548 slugging percentage.

Following Friday's loss, Black acknowledged that Arenado was slumping but didn't believe his recent hitting struggles have anything to do with the tendinitis in his right throwing shoulder.

“He’s in a bit of a funk with his hitting mechanics, but I don’t think it’s anything physical (with the shoulder),” Black said.

The injury forced Arenado out of a game against Los Angeles on Aug. 10, and limited him to pinch-hit and designated-hitter duties until he returned to the field on Aug. 16 against the Braves.

Arenado has repeatedly insisted that his sore shoulder does not affect him at the plate, but also said the shoulder will like bother him for the rest of the season. He also made it clear Saturday that he’s tired of answering questions about the topic.

“It doesn’t hurt hitting. Throwing, it does,” he said. “It’s not 100 percent throwing and it’s not going to be. It’s not going to be good, throwing, probably until the year is over. Probably not until next year. Those questions ... hopefully we can stop with those ones. I have to deal with it. I can play through it and I’ll continue to play through it.”

Arenado made a costly throwing error in the fifth inning of Friday night’s game, but Black said he doesn’t think Arenado’s injury is hurting his defense.

“I think, overall, he’s been pretty consistent,” Black said. “I think he’s played Gold Glove-caliber defense all year.”

**Saunders: Rockies need 92 wins to capture NL West; plus thoughts on CarGo, DJ LeMahieu and Kyle Freeland**  
**Patrick Saunders | DenverPost.com | Sep. 8, 2018**

Entering the weekend the Rockies were 77-62, held first place in the National League West, sitting 1 ½ games in front of the Dodgers and 2 ½ games in front of Arizona. Here are a dozen things to ponder as the pennant-race plot thickens:

Plenty can happen over the final three weeks but the Rockies' clearest path to the postseason is to win the NL West. To win the division, I think the Rockies must finish 92-70, meaning they must go 15-8 down the stretch.

The Dodgers are without All-Star closer Kenley Jansen this weekend, a huge blow for the Boys in Blue. On Tuesday, Jansen was advised by his cardiologist to skip traveling to Denver for the three-game weekend series after he was hospitalized with an irregular heartbeat during his last visit here on Aug. 10.

We could be watching DJ LeMahieu, Adam Ottavino, Carlos Gonzalez and Gerardo Parra in their final games in a Rockies uniform. That's a pretty fabulous foursome. From what I've been told, the Rockies have not talked to any of them about returning next season. That could change, but I wouldn't count on it.

LeMahieu is one of my favorite Rockies of all time, and one of the most underappreciated players in baseball, at least from a national perspective. Said manager Bud Black: "DJ is a winner, and people who know baseball know that about DJ."

The two most-quotable players I've covered in professional sports are Hall of Fame tight end Shannon Sharpe and Gonzalez. Consider CarGo's quote late Wednesday night after Trevor Story hit three home runs, including a 505-foot monster blast: "As soon as it came off the bat, I said, 'Oh man, that's going to hit the scoreboard and it's going to go straight to my Lamborghini in the parking lot.' "

Fans have been gnashing their teeth over Nolan Arenado's perplexing slump, in which he's hit .131 (5-for-38) with no home runs over his last 10 games and saw his average dip from .311 to .297. Unless Arenado has an injury he's not revealing — he's told me his sore right shoulder does not affect his hitting — I fully expect him to rebound and finish with a .300-plus batting average and more than 35 home runs.



The dark-horse hero down the stretch for the Rockies could be right-handed reliever Scott Oberg, who's stepped up as Bryan Shaw faltered.

Story has 31 home runs and stolen 25 bases. He needs five thefts to become the Rockies' first 30-30 player since Gonzalez in 2010. Story will make it.

Even though closer Wade Davis has a troubling 4.55 ERA, he has posted 38 saves and lately has looked to be back to top form. I trust Davis much more than I trusted closer Greg Holland late last season.

I think it's a safe bet that we will see David Dahl in center field next season and Charlie Blackmon in left.

If I had to pick one pitcher in all of baseball to win one game at Coors Field, I would take Rockies left-hander Kyle Freeland. He entered the weekend 7-2 with a 2.27 ERA, 1.155 WHIP and a .219 batting average against at Coors. That's remarkable.

**Story of His Life: Three home runs and jumping into the MVP conversation**  
**Patrick Lyons | BSNDenver.com | Sep. 9, 2018**

DENVER – The first words out of Bud Black’s mouth Wednesday night summing up Trevor Story’ record-setting three home-run game:

“That was awesome, wasn’t it?”

The trio of home runs marked only the seventeenth time a Rockies player had accomplished such a feat.

Immediately after the game, Carlos Gonzalez wanted to mark the occasion with a celebratory beverage and made sure he was the first one to greet Story in the clubhouse.

“I was just waiting in the hallway with two beers,” he said. “Just waiting for my guy after a thousand interviews he just did.”

Every home run by the first-time All-Star was even more impressive than the last. Each one either tied the game or put the club ahead by a run during this most critical point of the season.

But, to Trevor Story, it was just game 139.

“I’m honestly more excited by the win at this point. Every win from here on out is huge.”

Story entered the game batting .295 with 28 home runs and 92 runs batted in. His twenty-five stolen bases placed him tenth best in all of baseball and within striking distance of becoming the first player to join the 30/30 club this season.

Tied with Nolan Arenado for runs batted in, but behind in average and home runs to start the final game of the Giants series, Story moved ahead in two categories (batting average and runs batted in), while tying for a third (home runs) after the offensive explosion.

He also moved ahead of Arenado in Wins Above Replacement and may have even pulled ahead of his teammate in the MVP debate.

According to Gonzalez, a strong argument should be made for Story earning the league's top honor:

"He's definitely getting better and he's in the MVP conversation. He's carrying the team, playing tremendous defense. He can do it all on the field."

### The First Home Run

Story stepped to the plate with two outs and nobody on in the bottom of the first inning against Giants starting pitcher Albert Suarez. The score was tied 1-1 after Arenado's sacrifice fly scored DJ LeMahieu during the previous plate appearance.

Suarez worked down-and-away against Story and quickly got ahead 0-2. Story laid off two four-seam fastballs destined for the inner part of the plate to draw the count at 2-2.

Pitch number five was an 87-mph slider thrown inside that lacked enough movement to creep over the outer edge of the plate, but Story offered with a swing to protect himself from a called third strike.

Story's hands moved so quick that lost balanced and stumbled to the ground, sending his bat flying from his left hand. By the time he got to his feet, the ball was traveling over the left-field bleachers 459-feet for his 29th homer of the season.

Gonzalez recognized the type of athleticism required to not only hit this pitch but to do so for a homer.

"That ball was on the way to hitting his back foot and still pulled his hands in to drive it over the fence for 450 feet."

Hit with an exit velocity of 110.0-mph and a launch angle of 28 degrees, the home run landed on the concourse and bounced out of the stadium on one hop into the employee parking lot.

After the game, he discussed the awkwardness of the swing.

“I had never fallen down like that. On a swing and miss? For sure. It was a two-strike count. I wasn’t trying to hit a home run. I was just trying to hit something hard.”

In delivering such a memorable stroke, the Irving, Texas native resembled another notable slugger from the Lone Star State.

“I guess it was cool because (Adrian) Beltre was one of my guys growing up and that’s kind of his thing. Mine wasn’t as smooth because I pretty much fell on my face. But that was special,” he said.

### The Second Home Run

With the Rockies trailing 3-2 in the bottom of the fourth, Story came to the plate with the bases clear again.

He fouled back the first pitch before taking a fastball down for ball one. On the third pitch, Suarez decided to throw down-and-in once more, albeit, with his four-seam fastball. The Giants hurler turned it up to 92-mph, his fastest pitch since the first inning, and placed the pitch in nearly the same spot as the one Story deposited into the parking lot during the first at-bat.

Once again, Story launched the offering into the cool, Denver atmosphere to tie the score at three with his second home run of the game and the tenth multi-homer game of his young career.

Statcast calculated the ball traveled 505-feet, making his 30th homer of the season the longest one in the majors since the institution of the technology in all thirty stadiums in 2015.

Story wasn’t even aware of his record-breaking distance until the postgame press conference, but he acknowledged the special group to which he suddenly was a member.

“A lot of big home runs (have been hit) here. A lot of big power guys. I’ll take it, I guess,” he said.

Black was particularly taken aback by Story’s prodigious power during those early at-bats.

“The first two were majestic. Those were two of the longest ones I’ve seen here. They were up on the concourse. I haven’t seen the replays of those. Just from our dugout and from where those landed, those were bombs.”

As Gonzalez held court with reporters in front of his locker after the game, he continued to rave about the recording-breaking homer.

“As soon as it came off the bat, I was like, ‘Oh my God. That’s going to hit the scoreboard. That’s going to go straight to my Lamborghini in the parking lot!’ It was awesome. I can’t be more proud of him,” Gonzalez said.

### The Third Home Run

The crowd came alive to greet Story at the plate for his third at-bat in the sixth inning, with a sense that something even more memorable was coming.

With an opportunity to become the first Rockies player to hit three home runs in a game since Nolan Arenado on July 19, 2017, Story swung at the first pitch, an 86-mph changeup from Suarez, to give the Rockies a 4-3 lead.

Story did his best to summarize this third at-bat:

“When you have a night like tonight, it’s hard to explain. You kind of get these feelings and intuitions. You just try to act on them and not try to outthink yourself. For me, I was just trying to keep it simple. Just trying to go up there and see something up. I think it was a changeup that was a little bit up in the zone and just try to hit a line drive and it went out, thankfully.”

The Coors Field faithful, numbering 24,790 on a cool night near the end of summer, would not stop cheering their shortstop even after he had made his way into the dugout. The cheering wouldn’t stop until he made a curtain call.

Story’s achievement in and of itself is impressive and jaw-dropping, but considering the fashion in which he accomplished such an impressive feat and the time of year in which it came, it’s all the more remarkable.

Possibly the most notable quote of the night came from Black, who added one last thought about his shortstop:

“He might do this again. He’s capable. He’s that good of a player.”

If the Rockies are going to keep the Dodgers and Diamondbacks at bay to win their first NL West division crown, Trevor Story just may need to make history again.

**Freeland dominates, Rockies hold onto division lead with win over Dodgers**  
**Drew Creasman | BSNDenver.com | Sep. 8, 2018**

DENVER – The questions have been arising in the past few days about what it is going to take for the Colorado Rockies to emerge from this season with their first ever NL West division title.

While one can certainly look to individuals like Trevor Story or a possible late resurgence from Nolan Arenado, or even the young man who took the mound in the second game against the Los Angeles Dodgers, but their 4-2 victory on Saturday night at Coors Field showed that it is going to take everyone on the roster to get the job done in front of a sellout crowd.

A smattering of contributions from veterans backed up another quality outing from their young starter whose name should be creeping into Cy Young conversations. On a day when Arenado did not start and Story and Carlos Gonzalez went a combined 0-for-8, this was the definition of a team win.

Kyle Freeland continues to dominate Coors Field. The Dodgers remained patient as they often do, driving up his pitch count, but he fought through six innings, holding one of the most dangerous lineups in baseball to one run on four hits while striking out eight. He lowered his ERA on the season to 2.91.

The scoreless tie was broken up on the first pitch of the bottom of the third, a fastball on the outer half that Chris Iannetta pummeled into the seats above the high scoreboard in right field.

They added another in the fourth when David Dahl came up with a one-out hustle double. The Dodgers were playing him deep and he took advantage on a sinking liner to right by turning on the jets and sprinting to second. That paid off when Ian Desmond singled through the right side in the next at-bat, scoring Dahl from second. Desmond was thrown out on the play trying to move up a base, the Dodgers electing to get him out rather than try for a play at the plate.

Chris Taylor answered by getting the Dodgers on the board in the top of the fifth. He fell behind Freeland 0-2 but took a ball before hammering a hanging slider deep over the wall in center for his 15th home run of the season. The Rockies lefty bounced back to retire the next three in quick succession.

Iannetta was at it again, leading off the bottom of the fifth by ripping a hanging curveball down the left-field line for a double. Freeland was unable to move him up, striking out on a fouled-off bunt attempt, but Charlie Blackmon came through by launching one deep into the Denver night and into the second deck in right-field for his 24th home run of the season, extending Colorado's advantage to 4-1.

Freeland was cruising, throwing a first-pitch strike in 16 of the first 18 encounters of the game. With his pitch count climbing toward the mid-90s, he walked Manny Machado with one out in the sixth then misfired on his first pitch to Matt Kemp. That prompted Iannetta to come out for a quick mound visit. Freeland then struck out Kemp on three straight strikes and got David Freese swinging after a four-pitch at-bat.

That was it for Freeland's night as Scott Oberg came on to face four straight left-handed pinch-hitters in the seventh. He struck out Alex Verdugo then couldn't locate a 3-2 pitch to Cody Bellinger, issuing the walk. He then got Max Muncy on a check-swing strike three call.

The fourth power lefty off the bench for the Dodgers was Joc Pederson and Oberg got him on a check-swing as well, making it a strikeout of the side.

It was Adam Ottavino's turn in the eighth. Los Angeles went to their fifth-straight lefty pinch-hitter, Chase Utley. Otto worked ahead 1-2 but a slider just kept spinning inside, plunking the former Phillie great. He then missed on his first two pitches to Justin Turner but came back to get the swinging strikeout while Utley stole second without a throw. He got Machado to fly out to shallow right then Matt Kemp to ground out to short, stranding the runner at second.

Wade Davis came on for the ninth and got himself another pinch-hitter, this time in the form of Yasiel Puig. They traded strikes and balls to bring the count full. Davis challenged Puig with a fastball and located it well on the outside black. The slugger went with the pitch and drove it to right but it fell into Gonzalez' glove on the warning track.

The Rockies closer then struck out Verdugo but left a fastball over the plate for Bellingers who laced it into the left-center field gap for a triple. In the following at-bat, Muncy got ahold of a slider that got just a bit too much of the strike zone, pulling a line drive over Desmond's head at first for an RBI double.



With chants of "Let's Go Rockies" thundering throughout the ballpark, Davis finally got the final out of the game, striking out Grandal looking on a cutter that appeared just a bit outside.

Colorado improves to 78-63 and remain in first place in the NL West, now 1.5 games ahead of the Dodgers.

#### FINAL STATS:

Kyle Freeland: 6 IP, 4 H, 1 ER, 2 BB, 8 K

Scott Oberg: 1 IP, 0 H, 0 ER, 1 BB, 3 K

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

Wade Davis: 1 IP, 2 H, 1 ER, 0 BB, 2 K (S: 39)

Chris Iannetta: 2-for-3, 2 R, 1 RBI (HR: 10)

Charlie Blackmon: 1-for-4, 1 R, 2 RBI (HR: 24)

DJ LeMahieu: 2-for-3

David Dahl: 1-for-3, 1 R

#### WHAT'S NEXT:

The final game of the series is set for Sunday afternoon. It will be a battle of lefties as Tyler Anderson takes on Rich Hill.

First pitch at 1:10 Mountain Time. To the winner goes the series and a big advantage in the race for the NL West crown.

**Freeland lifts Rockies over Dodgers in battle for 1st place**  
**Associated Press | ESPN.com | Sep. 8, 2018**

DENVER -- Kyle Freeland was a 14-year-old Rockies fan when Colorado made its improbable run to the 2007 World Series.

Eleven years later, he has gone from fanatical follower to a reason the franchise is in the hunt for its first division title.

Freeland pitched six strong innings, Wade Davis worked out of a ninth-inning jam and the Rockies beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 4-2 on Saturday night to remain atop the NL West.

The Rockies are 6-1 in September, evoking memories of Rocktober 11 years ago when Freeland, born and raised in Denver, was in middle school.

"I remember it like it was yesterday. I think about it quite a bit, something that was very special to me," he said. "Even though I wasn't part of the organization, I was part of the city and it holds a special place in my heart, being here and being a part of this team that has a chance to do something special like that again."

Chris Iannetta and Charlie Blackmon homered for Colorado, and Davis allowed a run before striking out Yasmani Grandal with a man aboard to finish his 39th save.

Colorado moved 1 1/2 games ahead the second-place Dodgers. The Rockies are alone in first place after August for the first time since 1995 and have never won a division title.

Chris Taylor homered for Los Angeles, which made it interesting in the ninth. Max Muncy hit an RBI double with two outs before Davis struck out Grandal looking.

The Dodgers have scored three or fewer runs in seven of their last nine games.

"Offensively, we just can't get synced up," manager Dave Roberts said. "I think the at-bats are there. It's just the results aren't there."

Freeland (14-7) had something to do with that in his career-high 28th start. He lowered his ERA to 2.91 with another strong outing against a lineup of all right-handed hitters. He allowed one run and four hits and struck out eight for his seventh consecutive quality start and 20th of the season.

With three weeks left in the season, he has a chance to record the best ERA ever by a Rockies starter. Ubaldo Jimenez's 2.88 ERA in 2010 is the lowest in franchise history.

Freeland has a 2.99 career ERA at Coors Field, the lowest in the park's history among pitchers with 50 innings.

"I think you saw what we've seen from Kyle all year," manager Bud Black said. "He pitched outstanding."

Iannetta gave Colorado a 1-0 lead with his 10th homer leading off the second against Walker Buehler (6-5). Ian Desmond drove in David Dahl with a single in the third and Blackmon hit a two-run shot in the fifth to make it 4-1.

Taylor homered off Freeland in the top of the fifth for Los Angeles' first run.

"He's got really good stuff and you try to take advantage when he makes a mistake and leaves it out over the plate,"

Taylor said.

## RESTLESS NIGHT OFF

Colorado third baseman Nolan Arenado understood why he wasn't in the starting lineup, but he wasn't happy with sitting. The All-Star and five-time Gold Glove Award winner is 5 of 39 at the plate in his last 10 games, which has dropped his average below .300. He hasn't hit a home run since Aug. 24 and has gone deep only three times since the end of July.

Despite the prolonged power outage, he wanted to play.

"I don't make those calls," he said. "I don't want it, but there's no beating around it, I'm not play well. That's why I'm not playing today."

Arenado has been battling a sore right shoulder that bothers him when he throws but not his swing. Manager Bud Black said a night off might help.

"Offensively, it just doesn't feel right," he said. "His timing's off, there's some other things going on."

#### EXTRA! EXTRA!

With Taylor's home run, the Dodgers now have seven players with at least 15 homers and 15 doubles in a season for the first time in franchise history.

Los Angeles had six players reach those marks in two previous seasons (1949 and 2017).

#### GRAND MILESTONE

Rockies second baseman DJ LeMahieu's single in the first inning was the 1,000th hit of his career. He added another single in the eighth inning.

#### UP NEXT

It will be a battle of lefties in the finale of the three-game series on Sunday. The Dodgers will send Rich Hill (7-5, 3.73) to the mound and the Rockies will counter with Tyler Anderson (6-7, 4.80).

**Colorado Rockies: The offense will be the deciding factor**  
**Aaron Hurt | RoxPile.com | Sep. 9, 2018**

To put it simply, the Colorado Rockies will go as far as its offense will take them. For 141 games, we have been told that this team is going break out and hit. With the most important stretch of the season upon us, it's time to get it going. Believe it or not the pitching staff has kept the Colorado Rockies in games. Yes, they have been ridiculously bad in the first inning and the bullpen is shaky at best but, for the most part, they have kept them in ballgames.

It's the offense that must hold up its end of the bargain for the Rockies to make the playoffs.

Friday and Saturday night's games against the Los Angeles Dodgers are prime examples of just that. On Friday, the offense didn't show up when needed and they lost the game. Yes, they were facing future Hall of Famer Clayton Kershaw, but he wasn't the same three-time Cy Young Award winner that everyone has learned to fear over the years. The Rockies had multiple opportunities to take control of that game but failed to do so scoring only two runs in six innings off Kershaw. Add hitting 1-for-9 with runners in scoring position and leaving 10 on base for the game and that's a recipe for a loss.

In Saturday's win, the offense may not have been as productive against rookie phenom Walker Buehler, but it got the big hits that the previous night was lacking. The Rockies ended up batting 2-for-3 with runners in scoring position and only left three runners on base.

We all know the struggles of the offense, but it is unimaginable to think that a Rockies team, who is leading the NL West, would be having their worst statistical year in franchise history. This club may be in the top third of the majors in most offensive categories this year but, historically, they rank dead last in batting average at .254 and second to last in on base percentage at .319. When they have gotten on base, they are hitting .255 with runners in scoring position. It's not a horrible number ... but it is not what we have come to expect around Colorado.

If this team is going to make the playoffs, it obviously starts with getting Nolan Arenado back to being Nolan Arenado. His slump hasn't hurt this team badly yet as the they are 6-1 this month, but they will need him to get hot and win them a few games down the stretch.

If anything, Arenado has hurt Matt Holliday's production. Since joining the team on August 23, Holliday is 11-for-27 (.407) with two home runs but only three RBI. The lack of traffic on the bases in front of Holliday is keeping important runs off the scoreboard.

There has been a playoff atmosphere already with three weeks to play in the season. The Rockies bats have to deliver in order to win their first-ever NL West title.

**Colorado Rockies morning after: Pressure is what you make of it**  
**Kevin Henry | RoxPile.com | Sep. 8, 2018**

Pressure? What pressure? Sure, the Colorado Rockies are in the driver's seat to grab the franchise's first-ever National League West title, but don't even suggest to manager Bud Black or anyone else in the clubhouse that these are pressure-packed games.

Sure, to me and you, they are. When Colorado Rockies closer Wade Davis was facing the tying run in the top of the ninth of Saturday's 4-2 win over the Los Angeles Dodgers at Coors Field, yes, there was pressure. I felt it. How about you?

Many of you on Twitter certainly did.

Davis did his job, however, recording his league-leading 39th save of the season and nailing down the win for Kyle Freeland, who moved to 14-7 on the campaign with his 20th quality start of the season. Scattering four hits over six innings and giving up just a solo home run to Chris Taylor in the fifth inning, Freeland once again showed why he should absolutely be in the conversation for Cy Young voting.

A 2.91 ERA has earned him that right. A 2.47 ERA has earned Scott Oberg the confidence of Black to come in and get three huge strikeouts in the seventh inning. A 1.93 ERA is just another part of what has been a fantastic season for Adam Ottavino.

And, by the way, if Freeland deserves some Cy Young chatter, doesn't Ottavino deserve some Comeback Player of the Year buzz after not even making the Wild Card roster last season with a 5.06 ERA? Just saying.

Entering the game with just a half-game lead over the Dodgers in the division and less than 24 hours after an emotionally charged loss to Los Angeles, Colorado's clubhouse was loose before the game.

After the game? Freeland took a few minutes before addressing the media because he needed to finish a huge ping pong matchup, teaming with Gerardo Parra for the win.

If the pressure is rising at 20th and Blake, it doesn't seem that way. With 21 games left in the season, Black is preaching the same message he was when I first interviewed him in March in Arizona. Be ready for anything ... and that includes being right in the middle of a three-team jockey match for a guaranteed spot in the postseason.

"Whether it's a spring training game, whether it's a game in May, whether it's a game in the dog days of August or September, we have to play the same game," Black emphatically told Rox Pile and other members of the media after Saturday's victory. "Pressure is what you make of it. I get it. Our group will play at a high level of intensity and continue to embrace, in your word (addressing Patrick Saunders of The Denver Post, who asked the question), pressure.

"It's great. Our guys want it. They want to be in this situation. But we can't do anything different. We have to play even keel with intensity and fire and poise. And Kyle did that, man. He did great."

Kyle did do that, striking out the side in the third as part of a stretch of retiring seven of eight batters prior to Taylor's solo shot. He also did it in the first inning when Justin Turner laced a one-out single to get on base. However, the next batter, Manny Machado, dribbled one back to Freeland, who started the double play to end the frame.

In arguably what could have been his most pressure-packed start of his career, Freeland shrugged his shoulders and made his pitches when he needed to ... just like he has in so many games this season.

"It's another game, in my eyes. It's another game in the team's eyes," Freeland told Rox Pile and other reporters after the game.

Sunday will be the same, when the Dodgers try to win the series. Monday through Thursday will be the same as well, when Arizona comes to town to try to knock the Rockies out of first place. The final nine games of the NL West slate will be as well ... all on the road and against the Giants, Dodgers and Diamondbacks.

The pressure is there, but the Rockies don't seem to be fazed by it. They expect to win ... and that's just what they're doing.