



MEDIA CLIPS – Dec. 22, 2018

Rockies, Daniel Murphy agree to 2-year deal **By Thomas Harding MLB.com @harding_at_mlb** **Dec. 21st, 2018**

DENVER -- Seeking a big-game-tested hitter, the Rockies reached agreement on a two-year, \$24 million contract with lefty-swinging veteran **Daniel Murphy** on Thursday, the club confirmed on Friday.

Murphy, who will be 34 on April 1, has spent the majority of his career at second base, but the Rockies are planning to play him at first base. It means **Ian Desmond**, who has played primarily at first in the first two seasons of his five-year, \$70 million contract, will move to the outfield -- most likely center, with **Charlie Blackmon** moving to left and **David Dahl** playing right.

Left-handed-hitting **Ryan McMahon**, who played primarily first base in his rookie season, is expected to move to second, where the Rockies also have **Garrett Hampson**. While the plan is to play Murphy at first and allow the younger players to handle second, there could be some occasional games at second for Murphy, with Desmond moving back to first.

The Rockies have made the postseason for two straight seasons (for the first time in their 26-season history) but offensive struggles led them to seek help at first base. The Rockies considered trading with the Blue Jays for first baseman **Justin Smoak**, but decided to go with Murphy -- a three-time All-Star (2014, '16 and '17) and the 2015 National League Championship Series MVP Award winner while with the Mets.

Murphy emerged as a Rockies candidate during last week's Winter Meetings after attempts to obtain **Carlos Santana** and **Edwin Encarnacion** never came to fruition. Murphy batted .299 with a .336 on-base percentage and .454

slugging percentage in 91 games split with the Nationals (56 games) and the Cubs (35) in 2018. He missed the first 65 games recovering from right knee surgery.

The Rockies actually had a shot to obtain Murphy last year. The Nationals placed him on waivers and the Rockies passed on claiming him. With **DJ LeMahieu** (now a free agent) playing second base and **Carlos Gonzalez** (also free) in right field, the Rockies did not have the positional flexibility to fit Murphy. Also, signing during the offseason gives Murphy time to prepare for first base, where he has played in 225 games, as opposed to 834 games at second base.

The Cubs instead claimed Murphy and made a trade with the Nationals. With the Cubs, he batted .297 with six homers and 13 RBIs, before the Rockies eliminated Chicago, 2-1, in 13 innings of the NL Wild Card Game. Murphy went 0-for-5 that night -- just his seventh hitless performance in 25 postseason games.

Murphy finished second in NL MVP Award voting in 2016 with the Nationals, when he led the league in slugging percentage (.595) and OPS (.985). He also led the NL in doubles in '16 (47) and '17 (43). In 1,280 career games over 10 seasons with the Mets (2008-09, 2011-15), Nationals (2016-18) and Cubs (2018), he is a .299 hitter with 122 home runs and 641 RBIs.

But other factors led the Rockies to pursue him.

Murphy is a .309 hitter with eight home runs and 19 RBIs in the 25 postseason games. In four games against the Cubs in the 2015 NLCS, he went 9-for-17 with four home runs and six RBIs. Those figures are important because the Rockies struggled in key late regular-season games and especially in the postseason -- just four runs, a .174 batting average and a .229 on-base percentage in their four postseason games.

Additionally, the Rockies' offense not only established franchise lows in 2018 for overall batting average (.256) and road batting average (.225), but hitters struck out 1,397 times in 163 games. That was an improvement over 1,408 strikeouts in 162 games in '17, but still more than manager Bud Black and general manager Jeff Bridich were comfortable with. Murphy has fanned at a rate of once every 7.7 at-bats -- the 13th-lowest such rate in the Majors. In '15, he led the Majors by striking out once every 13.1 at-bats.

Murphy should provide middle-of-the-order, left-handed protection for third baseman **Nolan Arenado**, who led the NL with 38 homers last season, and shortstop **Trevor Story**, who finished second with 37 homers.

However, should Black want to mix his order, Murphy has shown comfort at various spots. Last season, he hit leadoff 31 times (30 starts) and batted .317 with a .341 OBP and .516 slugging percentage, with six homers, seven doubles and 13 RBIs. The Rockies experimented at times with moving Blackmon, their primary leadoff hitter since 2014, down in the order to take advantage of his power.

Murphy praises Rockies' 'dangerous' lineup
New first baseman brings postseason experience
By Thomas Harding MLB.com @harding_at_mlb
Dec. 21st, 2018

DENVER -- **Daniel Murphy** took his family to a mall in Jacksonville, Fla., for a visit with Santa Claus. In Murphy's case, it was more of a thanks than a request.

"I sat in line for about an hour and a half for our family to get our pictures taken with Santa Claus," Murphy told Denver media in a conference call, after completing his **two-year, \$24 million contract** to become the Rockies' first baseman.

"I'm excited because we all had Rockies stuff on. We're all-in in the Murphy household right now. We're all flying the purple.

"Having played in the postseason for the last four seasons, one of the main things for my family and I was to identify a ballclub that we thought had a legitimate and a real shot at winning the World Series. The Rockies came up at the top of that list when we started identifying clubs."

The deal breaks down to salaries of \$10 million in 2019 and \$8 million in 2020; guaranteed, also, is a \$6 million buyout (on a \$12 million 2021 option) -- \$3 million of which is deferred without interest. The buyout increases to \$7 million if he reaches any award bonus, and there is a \$2 million fee if traded.

Murphy arrives in Denver as a career .299 hitter with 122 home runs and 641 RBIs in 10 seasons with the Mets (2008-09, 2011-15), Nationals (2016-18) and Cubs (2018). He also has batted .309 with eight home runs, three doubles and 19 RBIs in 25 postseason games -- all but seven of them with at least one hit.

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In '18, after recovering from right knee surgery, he played 91 games (56 with the Nats, 35 with the Cubs) and batted .299 with a .336 on-base percentage and .454 slugging percentage. Murphy said he "underestimated" the recovery time and how far he was behind after not participating in Spring Training, but felt better toward the end of the season and believes he will "look a little more like I did in 2017 going forward."

The Rockies have made the postseason the last two seasons, but have had baffling struggles offensively, at times, and found no success in the National League Division Series against the Brewers.

"He's able to control the barrel, he's able to utilize the whole field," Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich said of Murphy.

"I think his track record in the postseason speaks for itself, in terms of however you want to put it, either rising to the occasion or being a relaxed and confident player under stressful conditions.

"He's been able to perform really well in those situations, and we expect to continue to compete in the playoffs and go deeper than we have been the last couple of years."

Murphy, who turns 34 on April 1, is excited about a Rockies club that advanced to the NL Wild Card Game in 2017, and in 2018 won that game -- 2-1 in 13 innings over Murphy and the Cubs -- before bowing to the Brewers in a three-game sweep in the NLDS. Murphy noted that manager Bud Black's club had a rough travel week going into the Wild Card Game -- three games (including the Wild Card win) -- in three days in three time zones.

"It had a ton of resiliency -- it's a characteristic they get from Buddy and from Nolan [Arenado]," Murphy said. "Any time that you can run out a premier shortstop [**Trevor Story**], somebody like **Charlie Blackmon**. ... I thought the pitching staff last year made massive leaps forward.

"Hopefully, I can step in, fall into place and try to extend a lineup that is really potent and really dangerous."

Murphy also is not fazed by moving from second base, where he has played 834 games in his career, to first base, where he has played 225 (198 of them starts).

"Full disclosure, I'm a little bit more comfortable at first base than I am at second," Murphy said. "I enjoyed it when I played there in New York. I'm excited to get to work."

Marquez giving back to hometown in Venezuela
By Thomas Harding MLB.com @harding_at_mlb
Dec. 21st, 2018

DENVER -- Growing up in San Felix, Venezuela, Rockies right-hander **German Marquez** learned from his father that the best gifts aren't the ones you receive.

German Marquez Sr. works in an aluminum factory, and through the company he had his family would hand out toys to the children in town on Christmas Eve.

"On the 24th, we would be excited and be ready to go," said Marquez, who said his dad will soon retire from the aluminum factory. "I shared a lot of this with my family. A lot of the toys came from where he worked."

This Christmas, the 23-year-old Marquez, after establishing himself as one of the National League's top young pitchers in 2018, will keep the tradition going.

Working through his agent, Daniel Szew of L.A. Sports Management, and in conjunction with Timbuk Toys, Marquez is handing out toys in his hometown for the holiday. Timbuk Toys donated a number of toys and sold more at a 30 percent discount. A total of 310 toys were recently shipped to San Felix, according to Timbuk Toys owner, founder and president Sallie Kashiwa.

"I feel like it's important for kids to be looking forward to toys at Christmas time," Marquez said. "With the situation the country is going through, it's part of my obligation to give back to the community because I have the resources and ability to.

"It's difficult, like the rest of Venezuela, but people get up in the morning, they go to work, and they go out and fight just to get some food on the table daily."

Marquez went 14-11 with a 3.77 ERA that ranked eighth-lowest in club history for a starter who qualified for the league title. His .241 batting average against was sixth-lowest in team history. But he spent the year working on becoming more than a just a pitcher, but a force for good in his hometown.

About five months ago, he set up Team Marquez.

"It's not like a full-blown, registered foundation," Marquez said. "It's a group of family members that cook for people, go to hospitals in the area and help out where they can."

The Christmas toy distribution was Marquez's next step.

"I remember him handing out some toys last year, but it wasn't really through him but through one of his friends' foundations," said Szew, who translated for Marquez during the phone interview. "This year, we got to talking once he was a little more established. It was really his idea, and he was really on board."

Marquez is looking to do something similar in the Denver area during the season.

"We would use this as an opportunity to collect more donations from the customers who come to meet him, while creating a marketing opportunity for him and for Timbuk Toys," Kashiwa said.

**Murphy signing has widespread ripples for Rox
Colorado's defense will shift accordingly; key free agents are unlikely to return
By Thomas Harding MLB.com @harding_at_mlb
Dec. 21st, 2018**

DENVER -- Now that free agent **Daniel Murphy's** two-year, \$24 million contract to primarily play first base for the Rockies **has gone official**, he will impact several players in and (presumably) out of Purple Pinstripes.

Many of these impacts center on opportunity. But there are also specific, measurable ways that Murphy -- a self-professed geek about hitting -- can make a difference. Even in a short time with the Cubs after a trade from the Nationals in 2018, **Murphy had an influence**.

Let's look at how Murphy's arrival touches several players:

Star third baseman Nolan Arenado

Murphy's contract is short enough that it should not affect the Rockies' negotiations with Arenado, who is in his final arbitration year but is a candidate for a multi-year deal that would keep him away from free agency. **Early in the offseason**, signing versatile **Marwin Gonzalez** seemed like a good idea. But MLB Trade Rumors projects a four-year, \$36 million contract, which is likely higher than the Rockies would prefer to go for him.

Free agent DJ LeMahieu

The Rockies have spoken glowingly about LeMahieu's contributions on and off the field. But in developing multiple middle infielders, they've been preparing for his departure. Had the Rockies been more set at first base than in the middle infield, re-signing LeMahieu for a deal of more than two years would have been more viable. **More >>**

Ryan McMahon

The left-handed-hitting McMahon, who possesses power potential, is first in line to succeed LeMahieu at second base after an uneven rookie campaign in 2018. The athletic McMahon has a chance to have as much defensive impact as LeMahieu. At the plate, McMahon has an 88.9 mph average exit velocity. Could Murphy's influence help him reach an earlier contact point, which could translate into consistent power? **More >>**

Ian Desmond

He moves from first base to center field, where he played for the Rangers in 2016 after years at shortstop for the Nationals. Desmond's average exit velocity (89.9 mph) is greater than Murphy's (87.6 mph), which is an asset, but he led

the Majors last season in groundball rate (64.9 percent). Desmond, Murphy and new hitting coach Dave Magadan all live in Florida. Could there be collaboration? **More >>**

Garrett Hampson

Hampson impressed last season with his solid hitting approach at Double-A Hartford and Triple-A Albuquerque, and showed enough to earn a postseason roster spot. Second is his primary position, and his athletic ability allows him to play center field. How he performs overall could make him a viable option if someone else slips up.

Brendan Rodgers

Not re-signing LeMahieu means one less obstacle for Rodgers, a middle infielder who is the Rockies' **top prospect** according to MLB Pipeline.

Charlie Blackmon

When he signed his six-year deal last year, Blackmon knew a move from center would make sense. With **David Dahl** having shown well in right field last season, left makes sense for Blackmon. He'll still have to show range, since Coors Field has one of the most expansive left fields in the sport. **More >>**

Raimel Tapia

Tapia struggled when given a shot at center field last spring, but 2019 is a new chance. If he blossoms as a left-handed hitter, he can push for starts in center. Additionally, Tapia's early toe tap resembles Murphy's, but Murphy is more polished.

Carlos Gonzalez

With Dahl's emergence late last season and the availability of Desmond and Tapia in center, he isn't part of the answer to the plan to move Blackmon out of center. Gonzalez, then, is left to a difficult free-agent market.

David Dahl

His 13.8-degree launch angle is not far off Murphy's 16.3 degrees, and his average exit velocity (88.7 mph) is a tick above Murphy's. Already, Dahl has absorbed hitting tips from Blackmon, while also listening to Arenado's pointers to develop his power. Will Murphy be able to offer additional batting advice?

Rockies prospects Josh Fuentes, Brian Mundell and Tyler Nevin

Murphy's presence allows development time for Fuentes (No. 17 prospect, according to MLB Pipeline), who is on the Major League 40-man roster after earning Triple-A Pacific Coast League Most Valuable Player honors at Albuquerque; Mundell (No. 25), at Double-A Hartford in 2018; and Nevin (No. 11), who had a solid Arizona Fall League after a good year at Class A Advanced Lancaster.

Daniel Murphy signs two-year deal with Rockies with World Series on wish list

Ian Desmond will move from first base to the outfield

By PATRICK SAUNDERS | psaunders@denverpost.com | The Denver Post

PUBLISHED: December 21, 2018 at 6:57 pm | UPDATED: December 21, 2018 at 7:19 pm

Daniel Murphy spent his Friday afternoon at a mall in Jacksonville, Fla., with his wife, Tori, and their three children, Noah, Quinn and Drew. They stood in line for 1 ½ hours, wearing Rockies gear and waiting to get pictures with Santa Claus.

There's no report as to what was on his kids' gift list, but Murphy's Christmas wish has already been granted. The veteran infielder officially signed a two-year, \$24 million contract with the Rockies on Friday and will become their primary first baseman.

"Having played in the postseason for the last four seasons, one of the main things for my family and I was to identify a ball club that we thought had a legitimate and real shot at winning the World Series," Murphy said during a conference call.

"The Rockies came up at the top of that list when we started identifying clubs. I'm ecstatic that the Rockies' interest in me was as significant as mine in their ball club."

General manager Jeff Bridich sees Murphy as the missing piece to the offensive puzzle they've been trying to complete this offseason.

"He's been a professional hitter for a long period of time ... a very difficult at-bat," Bridich said. "He's able to control the barrel, he's able to utilize the whole field. I think his track record in the postseason speaks for itself, in terms of rising to the occasion or being a relaxed and confident player under stressful conditions."

Murphy, who turns 34 on April 1, certainly boasts impressive offensive credentials. In 2016, he finished second in National League MVP voting after batting .347 and hitting 25 home runs, 47 doubles, five triples and knocking in 104 runs. Since 2014, he ranks third among active players with a .308 batting average and is tied for seventh with 180 doubles.

In 25 career postseason games, Murphy has batted .309 with 21 runs scored, eight home runs, three doubles and 19 RBIs. He was named the 2015 National League Championship Series MVP after batting 6-for-17 (.529) with one double and four home runs in the Mets' four-game sweep of the Cubs.

Murphy has long been considered a disciplined hitter, something the Rockies need. However, Murphy's strikeout rate has jumped from 7.1 percent in his final year with the Mets in 2015 to 12.5 percent in his last two seasons with the Nationals and Cubs.

Last season, Murphy batted .299 with a .336 on-base percentage and .454 slugging percentage in 91 games split between the Nationals (56 games) and Cubs (35). He missed the first 65 games of 2018 recovering from microfracture surgery on his right knee. He admitted that recovery took longer than he anticipated, but said he's at full strength now.

"I think I probably underestimated the recovery time and underestimated coming back to the big leagues without a spring training," Murphy said. "I got chewed up and spit out for the first two or three weeks, but I felt like as the season went, and especially when I got to Chicago, I was able to move around a lot better. I felt a little bit more like myself."

Colorado is coming off back-to-back playoff appearances for the first time in its history, despite an offense that failed to meet expectations. Over the past two seasons, it ranked 25th in the majors in park-adjusted weighted runs created (wRC+). Colorado also set franchise lows in 2018 for overall batting average (.256) and road batting average (.225), while hitters struck out 1,397 times, eighth most in the National League.

All-star third baseman Nolan Arenado views the acquisition of Murphy as a big boost, at the plate and in the clubhouse.

"He's a great person," said Arenado, who played with Murphy for the United States during the 2017 World Baseball Classic, where they regularly shared Uber rides so they could get to the ballpark early and hit in the cage. "Daniel loves to talk hitting, so he's my type of guy. He can really hit, so he makes our team better."

Primarily a second baseman, Murphy has played 225 games at first during his 10-year career. He acknowledged that at this point in his career, first base is a better fit, also saying that he was "never elite" at second.

"Full disclosure, I'm probably more comfortable at first base than I am at second," Murphy said. "After speaking with (manager) Buddy (Black) and Jeff, it feels like that's where my best fit is going to be. I'm just here to fall in line with a ball club that is ready made, basically."

With Murphy taking over first base, the Rockies plan to switch Ian Desmond to the outfield, at least most of the time.

"We've had conversations with Ian dating back to the end of the season, last year, when he and Buddy initially started to chat about it," Bridich said. "Ian (has) been thinking about this potentially, at least, for months now."

"I think Ian can probably play both left and center. Center field is definitely a consideration for him."

Lowdown on Murphy

A snapshot of new Rockies first baseman Daniel Murphy:

Essentials: Age 33, 6-foot-1, 220 pounds

Nickname: "Murph"

By the numbers: Has batted .299 with 333 doubles, 28 triples, 122 home runs, 641 RBIs, 325 walks and 67 stolen bases in 1,280 career games for the Mets (2008-15), Nationals (2016-18) and Cubs.

By Position: Across parts of 10 seasons, has appeared in 834 games at second base, 225 games at first, 87 games at third and 60 games in the outfield.

Contract: According to Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic, Murphy will earn \$10 million in 2019 and \$8 million in 2020. He also has an option for 2021 worth \$12 million with a \$6 million buyout.

Rockies bring in Daniel Murphy to play 1st base

By PAT GRAHAM – yesterday | AP

DENVER (AP) — Daniel Murphy had no second thoughts about the Colorado Rockies bringing him in to play first base.

As for taking his kids to get a picture with Santa at the mall just days before the holiday? Hey, at least the whole family was wearing Rockies purple for the photo.

“Stood in line for an hour and a half,” Murphy cracked Friday in a teleconference call from Jacksonville, Florida. “I’m just excited it all went through.”

The 33-year-old Murphy signed a \$24 million, two-year deal that includes a mutual option in 2021. Although he’s played way more games at second base, the plan is for Murphy to take over at first. That means Ian Desmond will move to one of the outfield spots.

It’s another way to add a little more sizzle to the lineup after the Rockies batted a franchise-worst .256 in 2018. A lifetime .299 hitter, Murphy figures to raise that batting average.

“A professional hitter for a long period of time,” general manager Jeff Bridich said. “He has a lot of different skills as an offensive player that I think will complement the guys we theoretically have in our lineup.”

Murphy’s place in the batting order probably won’t be determined until manager Bud Black gets a feel for things in spring training. Murphy does have a preference, though — anywhere that helps.

“I like to fancy myself as pretty low maintenance,” Murphy said. “They’re going to construct a lineup each and every night they think is going to put us in the best position to win baseball games. Wherever my name ends up, that’s my favorite spot.”

This is how his deal breaks down: Murphy gets \$10 million in 2019 and \$8 million in 2020, and the deal includes a \$12 million mutual option for 2021 with a \$6 million buyout, of which half is deferred without interest to January 2022.

He can earn \$100,000 for Comeback Player of the Year, \$100,000 for World Series MVP, \$75,000 for League Championship Series MVP, \$50,000 for Silver Slugger, \$25,000 for Gold Glove, \$25,000 for All-Star, \$100,000 for league

MVP, and \$50,000 for finishing second through fifth in the MVP voting. If he earns any award bonus, the option buyout increases to \$7 million, of which \$4 million is deferred without interest to January 2022.

In addition, Murphy would get a \$2 million assignment bonus each time he is traded.

Murphy started slow last season as he recovered from right knee surgery. He said he underestimated just how long it would take to get back into the swing of things. He still hit .299 over 91 games with Washington and the Chicago Cubs, a team that traded for him in August.

“There were certain things that my body didn’t do that it did pre-surgery,” the three-time All-Star said. “But I think that was more a function of being that close to surgery. I’m hoping that an entire offseason to get healthy, to get strong, to get further away from surgery, I’ll look a little bit more like I did in 2017.”

Or 2016 for that matter, when he hit .347 and was second in the NL MVP voting. It wasn’t hard to sell him on joining the Rockies, given a lineup that boasts Nolan Arenado, Trevor Story, Desmond and Charlie Blackmon.

“Hopefully I can step in and fall into place and try to extend a lineup that is already really potent and really dangerous,” Murphy said.

Over his career, Murphy has appeared in more games at second base (834) than first (225). Still, he said he feels comfortable at first.

“I don’t think I’m breaking any new ground to say I was never probably an elite defender at second base,” Murphy said. “I’m probably a better defensive player at first. First base is going to be a place that I can best impact this ball club in a positive way.”

He brings leadership, too. He’s been a postseason regular in recent seasons, including the 2015 World Series while with the New York Mets.

The Rockies have been to the playoffs in back-to-back seasons for the first time in franchise history. They were eliminated by the Milwaukee Brewers in the NL divisional round in 2018 after knocking off Murphy and the Cubs in the wild-card game.

“His track record in the postseason speaks for itself, in terms of however you want to put it, either rising to the occasion or being a relaxed and confident player under stressful conditions,” Bridich said. “The expectation and the hope is his slow heartbeat and his experience can make our team better in those types of stressful situations.”

Is Daniel Murphy a cure-all for the Rockies' offense? Or will he be their first domino?

By Nick Groke Dec 20, 2018

Two years ago, as the Rockies played out the waning days of another lost season deep down in their division, then-Colorado manager Walt Weiss found a final reason to shine. He propped up second baseman DJ LeMahieu in his run to win the National League batting title by sitting him over the final two days.

The player who lost out in that race, Nationals then second baseman Daniel Murphy, fell short by one percentage point.

On Thursday, Murphy circled back to find some consolation, agreeing to a two-year contract with the Rockies to become their primary first baseman. The deal is worth \$24 million, sources told *The Athletic*, with a mutual option and buyout possibility, and is pending a physical. The Rockies have not yet confirmed the deal.

Murphy's addition is the opening move in Rockies general manager Jeff Bridich's attempt to boost a lagging offense. The past two seasons have not been kind to Colorado's lineup — they rank 25th in baseball in park-adjusted weighted runs created (wRC+), barely better than the rebuilding Royals and far behind the Dodgers.

"We'll likely be a little more focused on our offense this offseason," Bridich said last month in what can only be considered an understatement.

The Rockies, through last week at baseball's winter meetings, made a run at a list of big-ticket first basemen, including Paul Goldschmidt, Edwin Encarnación and Carlos Santana. All three changed teams, but none of them landed with Colorado.

So Bridich moved down the list and landed on Murphy, a 33-year-old, three-time NL all-star who will be entering his 11th season. Two years ago when he finished second to LeMahieu for the batting title, Murphy also finished second in NL MVP voting to Chicago's Kris Bryant.

Murphy's bona fides are secure. His career .803 OPS would have been fourth-best in the Rockies' lineup last season, behind only Nolan Arenado, Trevor Story and Charlie Blackmon. He is a contact hitter and a doubles machine, twice leading the league in doubles (in 2016 and '17). And in that stellar 2016 season, Murphy led the NL in slugging percentage and OPS with 25 home runs and 47 doubles.

On paper, Murphy is made for Coors Field and its vast greenbelt of an outfield. And between his time with the Mets, Nationals and Cubs, Murphy has played in 25 playoff games, a wealth of postseason experience that dwarfs any other hitter on the Rockies' roster.

In those playoff games, Murphy has a .309 batting average and a .986 OPS. The Rockies, by contrast, managed just two runs in a three-game sweep by the Brewers in a division series last season.

Murphy fits the profile of a player both Blackmon and new Colorado hitting coach Dave Magadan have said is crucial to the Rockies' chances next season, a high-leverage hitter who can attack situational at-bats.

"It's a different mentality," Blackmon said. "When you play that one-game playoff or get to the division series, every game is so important."

But for however well he might slot into Colorado's lineup, Murphy's addition carries a risk. The Rockies will field a first baseman whose natural position is not at first base for a third straight season.

Ian Desmond, a shortstop converted to an outfielder, often struggled defensively at first base since signing a five-year, \$70 million two years ago. And Rockies general manager Bud Black has already told Desmond to prepare for a utility role next season, primarily in the outfield.

Murphy is a natural second baseman, where he's played 834 career games. He has just 255 games under his belt at first base. Fangraphs lists Murphy as a sub-par defender at second base, with a career minus-83 mark (LeMahieu, by comparison, is plus-67). Murphy's time at first base was slightly more kind, where his career DRS is 18.

His move to first base likely makes Ryan McMahon, 23, the favorite to land a starting spot at second base on opening day. McMahon, too, is a natural third baseman who was converted to first base, then second. Garrett Hampson, 24, who debuted last season, will also be up for the job. Brendan Rodgers, 22, Colorado's top prospect, might also figure in. And Murphy's two-year deal appears to be a bridge to Rodgers' ascension.

The Rockies remain a curious offensive team, a high-scoring lineup with plenty of pop. They ranked seventh in baseball in runs scored and eighth in home runs last year. Their output, though, is skewed by the effects of Coors Field, a hitter-friendly park that leads to more trouble than relief.

So often over the past two years, they grew too comfortable with their home park and missed the ability to construct valuable at-bats in difficult situations. They twice reached the postseason on the backs of one of the best young pitching staffs in the league. Their offense was failing them. Their plus-35 run differential last season was, by far, the lowest among playoff teams.

Murphy's addition is the first move, Bridich hopes, in reversing that trend.

Daniel Murphy Finally Got to the Rockies **by Jeff Sullivan - December 20, 2018 | Fangraphs**

When last year's Nationals got around to giving in, one of the players they moved was **Daniel Murphy**. Near the end of August, Murphy was flipped to the Cubs, who'd put in a claim on Murphy off waivers. It made plenty of sense that the Cubs would've had interest. **It made less sense that the Rockies *didn't* have interest.** The Rockies were getting nothing from first base and left field, and compared to the Cubs, they had the higher waiver priority. But Murphy got by, and the rest was history. By which I mean, neither the Cubs nor the Rockies won the World Series. So it goes.

Just a few months ago, then, the Rockies decided Daniel Murphy wasn't their man. And yet in this month, the Rockies have changed their mind. Yes, I get that circumstances now are different. But anyway, the Rockies have agreed to terms with Murphy on a two-year contract worth \$24 million. Somewhat importantly, it sounds like Murphy is going to play first base, instead of second. **Ian Desmond** will get bumped to the outfield. Earlier, one could only dream of Murphy batting half the time in Coors. Now we'll all get to see it in reality.

The Rockies' reasoning isn't difficult to suss. In 2016, Murphy was an incredibly good hitter. In 2017, he was only a little bit worse. In 2018, he was considerably worse, but then, he got a late start to the year after major knee surgery. His numbers picked up down the stretch, as he got himself up to speed. And, all things considered, for the third year in a row, Murphy kept on hitting balls in the air. And he made contact with 88% of his swings, right in line with his previous averages. The Rockies figure Murphy has more gas in the tank. Even while diminished, he didn't lose his bat-to-ball skills, and now he'll have a normal offseason to rest.

As for the move to first, it's overdue. As a second baseman, Murphy never posted a positive DRS. Three years ago, he finished at -9. Two years ago, he finished at -15. This past year, he finished at -18, in half the innings. Murphy's mobility was never one of his strengths, and it's been compromised by age and injury. I don't know how much is going to come back. First basemen still need to be nimble, but it's a better positional fit, and Murphy does have substantial experience.

What I like is that Murphy still makes contact. I like that he still hits the ball in the air, and I like that the Rockies won't ask him to play the middle infield. Coors Field seems like a perfect environment, because there's all that extra territory for Murphy's many batted balls to find. On top of that, his middling power should be sufficient to drive the ball out of the yard. If Murphy is declining, Coors can help to hide it. But we should talk about that decline. This has all happened pretty fast.

All I can address is Murphy's hitting. It's reasonable to wonder about his defense, too. First basemen do need to move around, and Murphy has also never been known for his hands. There's far from any guarantee Murphy will look comfortable handling his new corner. Let's focus, though, on the bat. Let's look beyond just the extraordinary rate of contact.

It was in 2015 that Murphy began to change as a hitter. He began to better understand how he could tap into his pull-side power. Here are Murphy's year-to-year rates of air balls that he hit to right field:

- **2015:** 31% pulled air balls
- **2016:** 33%
- **2017:** 33%
- **2018:** 23%

Between the last two years, Murphy lost ten percentage points, and his rate didn't recover after the most recent All-Star break. Between 2015 – 2017, in terms of pulling air balls, Murphy ranked in the 70th percentile. This past year, he ranked in the 20th percentile. Murphy doesn't have enough power to punish the ball with regularity in other directions.

Now let's make some use of Statcast data from **Baseball Savant**. Here are simple year-to-year expected wOBAs:

- **2015:** .342 xwOBA
- **2016:** .399
- **2017:** .370
- **2018:** .344

Murphy fell back to where he was in 2015, and most of 2015 took place before Murphy's well-known metamorphosis. While Murphy's surface numbers picked up last year in the final few months, his pre-break xwOBA was actually a bit higher than his post-break xwOBA. I have no doubt that he felt better down the stretch, but he still didn't quite look like his peak self.

Speaking of peaks — here are Murphy's year-to-year single top exit velocities:

- **2015:** 113.3 miles per hour
- **2016:** 113.5
- **2017:** 108.4
- **2018:** 106.9

This isn't something we look at very often, because I'm not sure it's all that well understood, but just at first glance, those numbers are startling. And to increase the sizes of the samples a little bit, we can look at something similar. Here are Murphy's year-to-year top 5% of exit velocities:

- **2015:** 107.7 miles per hour
- **2016:** 108.1
- **2017:** 106.1
- **2018:** 103.5

Again, we see something, and the most recent season stands out. Looking at everything together, it would appear that, this past year, Daniel Murphy wasn't able to drive the ball the way he used to. It would make sense that would be related to his knee surgery during the offseason. An optimist might suggest that Murphy will recover what he lost after a healthy winter, but that's in no way a given. Murphy just might not be able to swing the same way, after what his body has been through. He can still get the bat to the ball, but he might not generate the same amount of bat speed.

The good news is that, if you have a contact hitter whose power is compromised, Colorado makes for a forgiving destination. I don't need to tell you the ball carries a little bit further, so at least half the time, even a diminished Daniel Murphy could stand as a dinger threat. He's a clear upgrade for the Rockies, and the chance that he bounces back isn't zero percent. Murphy might get his old swing back. You can understand if a recent knee-surgery patient might act a little tentative.

But even given what Murphy was in the recent past, this is still a gamble. He's not a very good runner. He's not a good defender, and he hasn't played first base regularly in a very long time. That's not an easy job. And the bat has trended in a worrying direction. It might not improve, and it could even get worse. Murphy is intriguing because of his peak, and

because of his rebound potential, but there exists a very good chance the Rockies have given \$24 million to an older, left-handed **Wilmer Flores**. Not that that wouldn't still be an upgrade for them, but they set the bar awfully low.

Colorado Rockies reportedly on the verge of upgrading first base
By Drew Creasman - Posted on December 20, 2018 | BSN Denver

Denver – The Colorado Rockies are close to signing infielder Daniel Murphy to a two-year deal, according to multiple reports.

All signs point to Murphy primarily playing first base though he has played second over the past several seasons with Washington and New York.

The deal is reportedly worth \$24 million.

Murphy, a three-time All-Star, has a career .299 batting average and .344 on-base percentage which should do well to improve the Rockies offensive consistency. While his power numbers aren't outstanding, he has hit over 20 home runs twice in his career and his raw numbers ought to be aided by Coors Field.

According to wRC+, Murphy has only been a below average hitter once and that was just barely (94) and in 2009.

If platooned in just the right way with Ian Desmond, who handled lefties well last season, those numbers might play up even more.

At 33-years-old, though, it remains to see how they will age.

This likely leaves the door open for a battle of youngsters to replace DJ LeMahieu at second base featuring Ryan McMahon, Garret Hampson, and eventually Brendan Rodgers.

Though, more moves could be in the works.

We will have more on those possibilities, Murphy, and how the roster looks in the coming days.

What the Colorado Rockies must do to get Larry Walker in the Hall of Fame
By Drew Creasman - Posted on December 20, 2018 | BSN Denver

DENVER — Sometimes in life, the simplest of questions result in the simplest of answers that lead to the simplest conclusion.

Our tale begins with a simple question I couldn't get out of my head: Why haven't the Colorado Rockies retired Larry Walker's No. 33?

Having made the case in various formats long ago, I haven't been at all surprised that as the more bright minds around baseball began to dig deeper into his career, the more momentum has built for Walker's Hall-of-Fame induction.

What did strike me as odd was that no paralleled momentum seemed to arise for the retiring of his number.

At first, it made sense to wait until after Helton had achieved the honor. For all the arguments that can be made about who was the better, or more valuable player in their prime, Helton was forever and always a Rockie. So, fair enough.

It still seemed likely that Walker's jersey retirement would soon follow, though, but it didn't. Or hasn't.

As I began to ask around to multiple people in and around the Rockies organization about why that was, something else peculiar emerged.

We can, and should, continue to point to the overwhelming statistical, empirical and circumstantial evidence that logically dictate Walker should make the Hall on merit, but the lack of national attention to this point is echoed on a local level to some degree and that *has* to be addressed.

Why it took so long to connect these dots, I cannot say, but it became clear that the question needed reframing. Why should a national audience accept Larry Walker as a true Hall-of-Famer if his own team — and by extension home state and fans — haven't proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that they believe he is?

It's true, Walker played for the Montreal Expos at the beginning and St. Louis Cardinals at the end of his career, but none of that was by choice. You can't pick who drafts you (especially if they don't quite yet exist) and he was famously emotional when traded away from Colorado despite joining a far more successful organization.

That Walker isn't seen as the face of the franchise may be one of the main barriers to his HOF case. But again, that was not his fault and evidence suggests he would have been more than happy to finish out his playing days in the Rocky Mountains. He is also clearly more tied to this place than any other and still had, statistically, the second-best career of anyone to ever don purple pinstripes. And it's a comfortable second place.

So why not retire the number? I couldn't stop asking.

While there are an abundance of rumors regarding the reasoning, one thing is clear, there is some disagreement between the two parties on this issue. In speaking with the Rockies, they insisted there is no rift between the team and Walker, but also declined to offer any reasoning as to why the number has not been retired. As for Walker, despite our best efforts, he could not be reached for comment.

Either way, the number ought to be retired with haste.

You could argue that doing this for Walker might open up the floodgates and have the fans of Vinny Castilla and Dante Bichette picketing for those numbers on the wall as well. Those camps should feel free to present their arguments, but there is a reason that the club itself has been pushing so hard for Walker's entry to the Hall and that logic ought to be cross-applied.

The Rockies must retire his number to create that final push that puts Larry Walker in the Hall-of-Fame... Where he belongs.

The reasons it has not yet been done, however justified on both ends, can be overlooked in acknowledgment of this truth and the prestige it would rightfully bring to both the man and the organization.

He recently attended a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the team and couldn't have been in a better mood. Though, he did make it abundantly clear that he had been enjoying his time away from the game. And the media. And perhaps the politics.

Meanwhile, the Rockies have a well-earned reputation for being a player-friendly organization and have done a phenomenal job celebrating their past in the last few years with numerous events and honors.

So, it's time to put any doubt to rest about how wholeheartedly the club supports Walker's Hall-of-Fame case.

If he falls short this go-round, and it appears he will, there will be just one more year to get him in on the traditional vote, an honor he deserves.

He also may get there without a new plaque on the wall at Coors, but he deserves that, too.

It is time, perhaps well past time, that Larry Walker and the Colorado Rockies publicly embrace each other in one ceremony so that they can attend another, finally hang a purple jersey in Cooperstown.

Together.

Murphy Addition Creates Opportunities for Rockies to Juggle Alignment **TRACY RINGOLSBY - DECEMBER 21, 2018 | InsideTheSeams.com**

With the signing of veteran infielder Daniel Murphy to a two-year, \$24 million deal, the Rockies may not have checked every box on their off-season-to-do list. General manager Jeff Bridich did, however, fill in a lot of the blanks with the one move.

The Rockies are coming off a season arguably the worst in franchise history. They hit .256, the lowest team average in the franchise's 26 years of existence. They had a .322 on-base percentage, second lowest in franchise history. And they scored 780 runs, ranking 15th in franchise history.

Oh, they have advanced to the post-season in back-to-back seasons for the first time in franchise history. That, however, merely whetted the franchise's appetite. A team that has advanced past the Division Series only once – losing in the World Series in 2007 – is looking for bigger and better things, and the addition of Murphy is believed to be a step in that direction.

So, does Murphy.

“Having played in the post-season the last four seasons, one of the main things my family and I was to identify a ballclub that we thought had a legitimate shot at winning the World Series,” said Murphy. “The Rockies came up at the top of that list when we started identifying clubs. I’m ecstatic that the Rockies’ interest in me was as significant as mine in the ballclub.”

And the Rockies felt the same about Murphy.

“He has been a professional hitter for a long period of time,” said Bridich. “He has a lot of different skills as an offensive player that I think complement the guys we theoretically have in our lineup. ... He’s able to control the barrel. He’s able to utilize the whole field. ... The expectation and the hope are his slow heartbeat and his experience can make our team better in those type of stressful situations.”

The numbers reflect well on Murphy.

In the last four seasons, he leads the major leagues with a composite .357 with runners on base, and his .348 average with runners in scoring position is third best in MLB, 11 points behind leader Nolan Arenado. And he is a .330 career hitter at Coors Field.

But that's not all.

He can step in a first base, which sets off a series of moves the Rockies were hoping they could make in 2019.

While the bulk of his big-league playing time has come at second base, Murphy isn't kidding anybody. He battled to do the job in the middle infield.

"In speaking with Mr. Bridich, the organization (feels) it seems like (first base) is the best fit for me," he said. "I'm excited about it. I've done it before. And full disclosure, I'm more comfortable at first base than I am at second."

That allows the Rockies to move Ian Desmond back to the outfield.

"We have had conversations with Ian dating back to the end of the season last year, when he and Buddy (Black, manager) initially chatted about it," said Bridich. "Initially we've also had conversations with Charlie Blackmon about a likely shift to one of the corner spots. I think Ian can probably play left and center."

And with the idea of moving Blackmon to left, and putting Desmond in center, it leaves the Rockies in position to keep David Dahl in right field.

The addition of Murphy also adds to the options at second base, considering the loss of DJ LeMahieu to free agency. Garrett Hampson seemed the leading candidate for the job – at least until No. 1-ranked prospect Brendan Rodgers gets some quality time at Triple-A Albuquerque – but now comes the thought of platooning Hampson, a right-handed hitter, and Ryan McMahon, a left-handed hitter, at second base. And Bridich isn't writing off Pat Valaika, who struggled in a bench role last season.

"A lot of things can happen between now and the start of Spring Training, but we're really, really excited that we have legitimate guys who can fit in," said Bridich. "You named a few, and Pat Valaika is in Mexico trying to prepare himself for Spring Training, and to have a better season in 2019 than he has in 2018."

“Hopefully he will be in there, and we have some kids underneath those three guys who should be able to come (to spring training) and compete. Again, I use the phrase, ‘That’s a good problem for us, multiple guys who we think can help us at that position, and we will see what happens throughout the rest of the season.’”

And with the start of spring training two months away, it’s not like the Rockies are running out of time to make another move or two.

“We definitely are going to stay involved and invested in the off-season,” said Bridich. “It’s not like we are going to shut things down. ... Obviously we are not going to be looking for a first baseman. ... We’ll probably be a little bit patient and see some of the things that happen.”

THE MURPHY FILES

Men On (2015-18)	AB	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	AVG
Daniel Murphy	804	287	60	6	29	267	.357
Jose Altuve	948	316	68	3	27	255	.333
Andrew Benintendi	548	182	42	5	14	167	.332
Charlie Blackmon	741	246	37	15	29	231	.332
Corey Seager	557	182	29	3	25	150	.327
Jose Martinez	380	124	25	1	15	114	.326
Joey Votto	878	286	49	4	53	291	.326
Nolan Arenado	1098	357	81	8	83	428	.325
Mookie Betts	878	285	76	8	38	305	.325
Dustin Pedroia	598	193	38	0	16	160	.323
RISP (2015-18)	AB	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	AVG
Nolan Arenado	594	213	47	8	50	344	.359
Yuli Gurriel	293	104	20	0	16	148	.355
Daniel Murphy	422	147	29	4	13	216	.348
Mookie Betts	473	163	42	6	21	256	.345
Andrew Benintendi	299	103	23	5	8	149	.344
Joe Mauer	434	149	24	4	8	192	.343
Joey Votto	446	151	25	3	29	232	.339
Alex Bregman	323	109	27	7	15	144	.337
Mike Trout	356	119	20	3	29	197	.334

Men On (2015-18)	AB	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	AVG
Freddie Freeman	443	147	39	1	22	212	.332
Stephen Piscotty	400	132	30	2	14	182	.330
Charlie Blackmon	425	140	26	6	18	197	.329

BELOW AVERAGE

-	Men On	AVG	Rockies	-	RISP	AVG
1	1996	.313		1	1996	.311
2	2000	.310		2	2000	.309
3	1997	.297		3	1998	.301
4	1999	.296		4	1999	.296
5	2001	.295		5	1997	.295
6	1998	.294		6	2001	.292
7	2014	.292		7	2016	.287
8	2007	.289		8	2002	.286
9	1993	.288		9	2017	.285
10	2012	.286		10	1993	.283
23	2018	.263		23	2018	.259
24	2008	.261		24	2009	.259
25	2011	.260		25	2008	.256
26	2009	.259		26	2011	.245

Murphy Set to Sign with Rockies, Allows Desmond to Return to Outfield **TRACY RINGOLSBY - DECEMBER 20, 2018 | InsideTheSeams.com**

The Rockies have addressed their primary off-season goals in one move.

Daniel Murphy reportedly has agreed to a two-year, \$24 million deal with the Rockies, a possibility that was first reported last week by Thomas Harding of MLB.com. Murphy must undergo a physical before the deal can be finalized.

In signing Murphy, they added a veteran, proven big-league bat who can step in at first base, which allows the Rockies to look at a possible platoon at second of prospects Garrett Hampson, a right-handed hitter, and Ryan McMahon, a left-handed hitter.

It also means that Ian Desmond can return to the outfield, giving the Rockies a right-handed-hitting outfielder. A year ago, the Rockies top four outfielders were all left-handed hitters, and so were the outfield prospects at Triple-A Albuquerque.

A key factor in signing Murphy is the length of his contract will not interfere with efforts for the Rockies to make a strong effort to sign Nolan Arenado to a long-term deal in advance of him becoming a free agent next fall.

And Murphy has had success at Coors Field, where he has three home runs and 19 RBI in 112 career at-bats. His .894 OPS at Coors Field is his fifth highest in current NL parks, and his .536 slugging percentage is his third best in an NL park. He has a career .333 average, sixth among NL parks, and .358 in on-base percentage, ninth best.

With the contract for only two years it also should make Murphy marketable if the Rockies eventually decided to move McMahon to first base once top-rated prospect Brendan Rodgers is ready for the big leagues. Rodgers is expected to open the 2019 season at Albuquerque.

Murphy has primarily played second base in his 10-year career, appearing in 834 games at second, but is considered only average at the position. He has played 225 games at first base and played third base in 87 games and left field in 60 games, possessing the versatility the Rockies stress from rookie ball to the big leagues. He has a career .993 fielding percentage at first base compared to .983 at second base, .982 in left field and .956 at third base.

He has been involved in the post-season each of the last four seasons – with the Mets in 2015, the Nationals in 2016-17, and the Cubs in 2018. A career .309 hitter with eight home runs and 19 RBI in 113 post-season at-bats, Murphy was MVP of 2015 NLCS for the Cubs against the Dodgers, going 9-for-17 with four home runs.

THE MURPHY FILES

at Stadium	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS
Great American	.382	.427	.652	1.079
PNC Park	.370	.406	.480	.886
Chase Field	.366	.398	.524	.922
Wrigley Field	.360	.395	.584	.979
Coors Field	.330	.358	.536	.894
Busch Stadium	.337	.391	.465	.856
Citizens Bank Park	.302	.361	.481	.842
Marlins Park	.316	.360	.479	.839
Nationals Park	.315	.357	.477	.834
Miller Park	.302	.367	.466	.833
PETCO Park	.291	.333	.453	.787
AT&T Park	.289	.343	.411	.755
Citi Field	.283	.325	.429	.754
Dodger Stadium	.268	.298	.340	.638
SunTrust Park	.188	.257	.438	.695

Colorado Rockies: What the Daniel Murphy signing could mean in 2019

by Kevin Henry - 15 hours ago | RoxPile

New Colorado Rockies infielder Daniel Murphy was introduced to Rox Pile and other members of the media in a Friday afternoon conference call.

Calling himself “a purist” in wanting to continue to play in the National League, the 33-year-old Murphy will now bring his 10-year career, spanning stops with the New York Mets, Washington Nationals and Chicago Cubs, to the **Colorado Rockies**. His contract is **reportedly two years and \$24 million, with an option for 2021**.

“I love National League baseball,” Murphy said. “The opportunity to play in Colorado was something that my family and I were ecstatic to have.”

He will likely play first base for the Rockies, a position where he has seen action in 225 of his career 1,206 games. The prospect of playing first was exciting, Murphy said.

“In speaking with Mr. Bridich (Colorado general manager Jeff Bridich) and also with Buddy (Colorado manager **Bud Black**), it seems the best fit for me is first base,” Murphy said. “I’m excited about it because I’ve done it before. Full disclosure, I’m probably a little more comfortable at first base than I am second base. I played there in New York (starting a career-high 97 games there in 2009). I’m excited to get to work.

“My numbers probably bear out that I’m a better defender at first base,” he continued. “First base is going to be the place I can best impact this ball club in a positive way.”

Bridich added that Murphy’s signing would likely cause a domino effect defensively for the Rockies. **Ian Desmond**, signed to be the team’s primary first baseman before the 2017 season began, will likely shift to the outfield. That could mean a spot in center field, pushing **Charlie Blackmon** to a corner spot.

“We’ve had conversations with Ian dating back to the end of the season. Ian has been thinking about this at least potentially for months now,” Bridich said. “We’ve also had a conversation with Charlie Blackmon about a likely shift to a corner shift. I think Ian can play both left and center. Center field is definitely a consideration.”

A career .299 hitter, Murphy has posted a .330 average in 26 career games at Coors Field. He also watched from the Cubs dugout as the Rockies ended their season in the National League Wild Card Game.

The game made an impact on him with where the Rockies could head in the postseason.

“Having played in the postseason the last four seasons, the main thing for my family and me was to identify a ball club that we thought had a legitimate and a real shot at winning the World Series,” Murphy said. “The Rockies came up at the top of that list when we started identifying clubs.”

When asked about the rest of the offseason, Bridich hinted that he would keep his eyes open for potential fits but also mentioned the word “patient” as part of that plan.

“We definitely are going to stay involved and invested in the offseason,” Bridich said. “It’s not like we’re going to shut things down.”

“Obviously we’re not going to be looking for a first baseman. Our attention will be elsewhere potentially. Probably be a little patient and see some of the things that happen and see if there’s a guy or two who might make sense and be an obvious fit on the club.”

Colorado Rockies: Can a new TV deal keep Nolan Arenado long-term?

by Jake Shapiro - 1 day ago | RoxPile

The Colorado Rockies have arguably the worst television deal in baseball. Not only have the fans been shortchanged by the second-fewest televised games in the show, but the club itself has seen less money than just about everyone else.

The current deal (which expires in 2020) will have amassed the **Colorado Rockies** \$200 million over a 10-year period to televise 150 of their games a season on what is now AT&T Sports Network. This contract was signed right before baseball saw an explosion in regional sports network TV deals, led by the Los Angeles Dodgers' 25-year \$8.35-billion **deal signed in 2014**.

Only the Tampa Bay Rays and Miami Marlins had deals that were as lowly grossing as the Rockies, paying just \$20 million a year. The Marlins' deal ends the same year as Colorado's and it's unclear if they can sustain in South Florida so it's hard to compare. However, the Rays' deal expired with season's end and may hint at what Colorado could see.

According to Sports Business Daily, as of the last update, Tampa Bay is expected to be re-upping with Fox Sports Network on a \$1.23 billion deal over 15 years (\$82 million per season.) Tampa is also a solid comparison in terms of TV market size, being **somewhat sneakily the 11th biggest** market in the country to Denver's 17th.

But the differences stop there, with the Rockies' ratings shooting up the past two seasons on the heels of their consecutive playoff appearances. **Denver is nearly doubling Tampa's** baseball viewership in primetime, thanks to an 11 percent ratings increase just in the last year.

Still there needs to be some context other than the Rockies are overdue for a payday in which could see more than seven times what they're getting year over year on their current TV deal.

The television industry is more or less falling apart with the **ever-increasing audience on streaming services**. Cord-cutters have led to falling subscription numbers across the board with not even live sports being immune though it has seen less impact than most other programming.

Disney's purchase of Fox's assets included the sale of the Fox's nearly two dozen regional sports networks (RSNs) to Disney. But as a **stipulation to prevent monopolization**, Disney has to sell those RSNs and is **having trouble doing**

so. One bidder that has emerged is the Sinclair Broadcast Group, who is getting into the **RSN game in partnership with the Cubs.**

Going back to Disney, their accelerated purchase as the majority stakeholder of BAMTech (Major League Baseball Advanced Media's technology to stream live events), now 60 percent ownership of Hulu and **planned streaming service** hints that they are interested in sports assets yet see the future in streaming.

The bad news for Disney and many fans is that baseball has **continued to struggle to workout in-market streaming deals** with baseball asking RSNs to pony up even more money for streaming rights. MLB's current agreements have expired and the only streaming for baseball in 2019 (as of now) will be MLB.tv, which does not allow for in-market streaming. Many markets like Denver have had little to no access to streaming.

The Dodgers have made a lot of money owning their own TV station but it has caused a **nightmare for many fans blacked out** from games. A **similar situation in Houston** led many to believe that the RSN-MLB mega-money bubble may be popping. This seems to be the general read of the situation so the Rays and Reds getting billion-dollar deals is really good news.

Because the Rockies deal expires within the next two years, Colorado now has to view this in the horizon and as an opportunity to cash in. While some of it may look bleak right now given the upheaval of cable TV, the streaming world will look more clear a few years from now.

The Rockies have already started to plan for the money that could come along with a massive TV deal but have yet to lock anything in. The extension of **Charlie Blackmon** that will see him make over \$20 million a year into 2022, contracts of relievers **Wade Davis, Bryan Shaw** and **Jake McGee**, along with a year and a mutual option on **Ian Desmond** are the only dollars committed that long-term.

With **Nolan Arenado** set to become a free agent following the 2019 season and their terrific pitching staff all to be arbitration-eligible, many fans have looked at this possible new TV deal as a godsend.

Experts believe Arenado could get a deal worth \$250 million for nearly a decade. In other words, essentially 15 to 25 percent of the Rockies new TV deal could go straight to Arenado. This isn't unheard of either, many look at **Albert Pujols'** \$254-million contract and see it as a mistake but the **Angels got their \$1.5-billion TV deal in part thanks to his signing.** And Arenado isn't nearly close to the cliff Pujols fell off of.

“You can (plan for the TV deal) to a certain to degree, you can’t lock anything in,” Rockies GM Jeff Bridich told Rox Pile at the Winter Meetings. “I’m not personally responsible so I can’t speak to the specifics but I know there’s a lot of research that goes into that behind the scenes. I think everyone is hopeful our next TV deal is a good one as our last have been. We’re still aways from that.”

The Rockies have continued to talk about responsible growth and have even backed that by stating an Arenado extension can fit that plan. Their playoff success has helped them in positioning for a TV deal, short-term budget and convincing Arenado of a commitment to winning.

“The plans about growth of our payroll doesn’t happen in a year to year vacuum. We try to do it more broadly than that,” Bridich said. “The postseason and the things that come along with it; Our great fan support, welcoming north of three million fans into the ballpark and what that means to us and our players certainly help. We have plans in place and we can message our plans in the short to mid-term based on those factors like success. The nice thing is that all those things point up.”

There also is more money coming in nationally as MLB’s deal with Fox is **getting a billion-dollar increase** through 2028. MLB’s media rights deals with Facebook, ESPN (\$5.6 billion) and Turner Sports (\$2.6 billion) expire following the 2021 season. That will spell even more money, though it’s evenly distributed among franchises so the Rockies will see no advantage over their rivals.

Denver already features two RSNs in Altitude and AT&T Sports and it’s doubtful the Rockies have the resources to go at it completely alone. Altitude is owned by Kroenke Sports and Entertainment, which also owns the Avalanche, Rapids, Nuggets and a new FM radio station. Could they make a play?

The Rockies’ media rights could impact their ability to sign Nolan Arenado long-term. If the two do part ways, however, Colorado should have similar capital to their competition to position themselves for sustained success. This is so long as the mega TV deals fall in line with what we’ve seen.

Daniel Murphy signed with Rockies because they have “Real shot at winning World Series”
By Aniello Piro - December 21, 2018 | Mile High Sports

Daniel Murphy put a strong emphasis on wanting to play for a contender when deciding where to sign as a free agent this winter. Murphy believes the Colorado Rockies can compete for a World Series with their young, budding nucleus and opted to sign with the club on a two-year, \$24 million contract with a mutual option for the 2021 season.

“One of the main things for my family and I was to identify a ball club we thought had a legitimate and a real shot at winning the World Series, and the Rockies came up at the top of that list when we started identifying clubs,” Murphy said on a conference call from his hometown of Jacksonville, FL.

“A talented group with a great manager and an awesome front office and ownership group. That’s what the Rockies are,” he continued.

Murphy will primarily play first base for Colorado and fills arguably the club’s biggest need this offseason. Despite playing most of his career at second base (834 games), Murphy says he is more comfortable playing the corner infield position and has logged over 225 games there.

“In speaking with Mr. Bridich, the organization and Buddy as well, it seems like the best fit for me is first base,” Murphy said. “I’m excited about it because I have done it before. Full disclosure: I am probably a little bit more comfortable at first base than I am at second. It seems like that is where my best fit on this club is going to be. I’m just here to fall in line on a ballclub that’s ready-made, basically.”

Subsequently, the Rockies addition of Murphy will likely end the experiment of Ian Desmond playing first base. Rockies General Manager Jeff Bridich said the club has had discussions with Desmond about potentially seeing more time in the outfield this coming season.

The addition of Murphy will help stabilize the Rockies lineup and give protection to Nolan Arenado and Trevor Story. Murphy can be placed anywhere in the batting order but has primarily hit between the 2-5 spots, owning a career .299 batting average. The 33 year old has a career .306 batting average when hitting second, and a mark of .329 as a cleanup hitter.

“My favorite spot to hit in the lineup will be wherever Buddy puts me that evening,” Murphy said. “I like to fancy myself pretty low maintenance. Wherever my name ends up, that’s my favorite spot.”

The Rockies have solidified first base and now will be patient when it comes to making any additional moves this offseason, according to Bridich.

How the Daniel Murphy signing affects the Rockies roster

Who knew adding a 34-year-old first baseman would give the Rockies more options

By Adam Peterson@playerTBNL - Dec 21, 2018, 11:53am MST | Purple Row

On Thursday afternoon, **reports emerged** that the **Rockies** were about to sign free agent infielder **Daniel Murphy** to a two-year, \$24 million contract, which may include an option for a third year. The Rockies have yet to confirm this signing, but there's enough evidence to ask the question about the impact Daniel Murphy would have on the Rockies payroll and roster.

Before the winter meetings started, we made the conservative estimate that the Rockies would have around \$10-12 million to spend to upgrade the roster. **According to Ken Rosenthal**, Murphy will be getting \$10 million in 2019, \$8 million in 2020, and a mutual option for 2021 worth \$12 million, or a \$6 million buyout, \$3 million of which would be deferred. So, functionally, it's a two year, \$18 million deal with \$6 million guaranteed after that. That leaves about \$2-4 million left in our hypothetical Rockies offseason budget. So far there are no indications that the Rockies are done making moves this offseason (and **Nick Groke suggests more may be coming**), but it's hard to know how much the Monforts will be willing to increase payroll for 2019.

As for the roster, **reports indicate** that the Rockies would be signing Murphy to play first base. This is undoubtedly a good thing, since the Rockies are packed with options to play second base (**Ryan McMahon** seems to be the leader in that competition), and the best thing you can say about Murphy's defense at second is that he wasn't terrible in 2017. Also, Murphy would be an instant upgrade at first, since his 110 wRC+ last year (his worst in four years) would be better than **Ian Desmond's** four-year best of 103 wRC+. This would move Ian to the outfield.

Thomas Harding suggests that Desmond would move to centerfield with **Charlie Blackmon** in left field and **David Dahl** in right. At first glance that seems like a horrendous move, but the logic isn't too difficult to discern. Dahl has a history of injuries and the wear and tear of centerfield would likely take a toll. Charlie has lost a step in center and isn't getting any younger. Moving both to the corners is by no means illogical, but moving Desmond, entering his age-33 season and only one year of regular outfield time under his belt, isn't the most comforting option.

Of course, if the whispers are true that Bud Black is interested in having Desmond play a super utility role *a la Ben Zobrist*, he could provide the Rockies with a lot of different lineup options mid-game, since he could spell any of Murphy,

McMahon, **Blackmon**, or Dahl. Factor in the versatility of **Garrett Hampson** and **Tony Wolters**, and the Rockies have a viable bench.

Here's what the depth chart looks like with the Murphy signing (depending on what the actual status of **Tom Murphy's** last option)

Colorado Rockies 40-man roster

Pitchers	Hitters
<p>Starters</p> <p>1: Kyle Freeland (L) 2: German Marquez (R) 3: Tyler Anderson (L) 4: Jon Gray (R) 5: Antonio Senzatela (R) AAA: <i>Ryan Castellani (R)</i> AAA: <i>Jeff Hoffman (R)</i> AAA: <i>Jesus Tinoco (R)</i></p> <p>Relievers</p> <p>CL: Wade Davis (R) SU: Seunghwan Oh (R) SU: Scott Oberg (R) SU: Jake McGee (L) MI: Mike Dunn (L) MI: Chris Rusin (L) MI: Bryan Shaw (R) LNG: Chad Bettis (R) AAA: <i>Yency Almonte (R)</i> AAA: <i>DJ Johnson (R)</i> AAA: <i>Carlos Estevez (R)</i> AAA: <i>Harrison Musgrave (L)</i> AA: <i>Justin Lawrence (R)</i> AA: <i>Rayan Gonzalez (R)</i></p>	<p>Catchers</p> <p>1: Chris Iannetta (R) 2: Tony Wolters (L) AAA: <i>Tom Murphy (R)</i></p> <p>Infielders</p> <p>1B: Daniel Murphy (L) 2B: Ryan McMahon (L) SS: Trevor Story (R) 3B: Nolan Arenado (R) UTIL: Garrett Hampson (R) AAA: <i>Josh Fuentes (R)</i> AAA: <i>Pat Valaika (R)</i></p> <p>Outfielders</p> <p>RF: David Dahl (L) CF: Ian Desmond (R) LF: Charlie Blackmon (L) OF4: Raimel Tapia (L) OF5: Noel Cuevas (R) AAA: <i>Mike Tauchman (L)</i> AAA: <i>Yonathan Daza (R)</i> AAA: <i>Sam Hilliard (L)</i></p>

Because of the number of players with positional flexibility on the roster, bringing on Daniel Murphy to play first gives the Rockies depth. If Murphy's age or knee catches up with him, Ryan McMahon can slide over to first base. A vacancy at shortstop or second means **Hampson**, or even Brendan Rodgers, can take over. Hampson could even fill in for any outfield injuries if it came to that.

It also provides Bud Black with a lot of platoon options. If he believes Murphy to be more like 2018 Daniel Murphy (51 wRC+ against lefties, 130 wRC+ against righties), then he can platoon with Desmond at first. If he believes in the return of 2017 Daniel Murphy (111 wRC+ against lefties, 143 wRC+ against righties), he could make him an everyday player, and we could see lineups like these:

Rockies Lineups with Daniel Murphy

..	v. RHP	v. LHP
1	Dahl (L) - RF	Dahl (L) - RF
2	Arenado - 3B	Arenado - 3B
3	Blackmon (L) - LF	Blackmon (L) - LF
4	Story - SS	Story - SS
5	Murphy (L) - 1B	Murphy (L) - 1B
6	McMahon (L) - 2B	Desmond - CF
7	Wolters (L) - C	Iannetta - C
8	Tapia (L) - CF	Hampson - 2B
9	(Pitcher)	(Pitcher)

Your mileage may vary depending on how much you see a straightforward platoon happening in center field, second base, and catcher, but it paints the picture of a lineup that has plenty of room to flex based on the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing pitcher.

Adding Murphy to play first base represents the quickest way the Rockies could improve the offense due in part to the flexibility the team has. Considering the Rockies have more or less front loaded his deal, it also represents a relatively inexpensive way to do it as well.

There is still room to improve the lineup, thought options (and money) are getting scarce. Still, it looks like the Rockies will be better with Daniel Murphy than they were without him.