



## SF Giants Press Clips

### Wednesday, September 5, 2018

**San Francisco Chronicle**  
**Giants call up just-acquired infield prospect Avelino**  
**Henry Schulman**

DENVER — Catcher Aramis Garcia provided a scouting report on the newest Giant, 23-year-old infielder Abiatal Avelino, who Garcia saw when the Giants' and Yankees' Double-A teams met earlier this season:

"He has a lot of quirks with his pre-at-bat routine, and he's pretty aggressive with that high leg kick," Garcia said. "You have to see it."

Oh yeah. Avelino can rake.

"We couldn't get him out," Garcia said. "Whatever we threw him, he was just on it. What really stood out was his bat. He was good at shortstop, too."

Avelino was one of two prospects the Giants acquired Thursday from the Yankees for outfielder Andrew McCutchen. Avelino was one of the Eastern League's top hitters during his second Double-A season before the Yankees promoted him to Triple-A, where his numbers tailed off. Still, he hit a combined 15 home runs.

The Giants brought Avelino to the majors Tuesday after he played three get-acquainted games at Triple-A Sacramento, where he was 2-for-13.

Manager Bruce Bochy plans to use him mostly as a pinch-hitter and pinch-runner, although he could get some starts. Brandon Crawford has been nicked up. While the Giants love Alen Hanson's defense at short, Hanson does not hit lefties well. Avelino is right-handed and could fill that void.

The other prospect who came to the Giants, 20-year-old right-hander Juan De Paula, made one start for the Giants' low Class A team in Augusta, Ga., before the minor-league season ended. It was impressive. He allowed two hits and a run over five innings, walked one and struck out nine.

**Samardzija update:** The Giants placed Jeff Samardzija on the 60-day disabled list to clear a 40-man spot for Avelino. Samardzija's injury-marred season is over after 10 starts, 442/3 innings, one win and a 6.25 ERA.

Samardzija is not even playing catch. He continues to strengthen the shoulder in the weight room and hopes to get an elusive consensus on the cause and potential treatments for his recurring injuries.

He is learning the hard way that two doctors can have differing opinions, neither of which is wrong.

"It's not like one is an idiot and one is a genius," Samardzija said, reiterating that surgery has been "ruled out."

**Briefly:** The Giants also recalled infielder Ryder Jones from Sacramento. No other minor-leaguers will be promoted. ... Steven Duggar underwent surgery to repair the torn labrum in his left shoulder, caused by the dislocation on a slide that ended his season. Bochy said the surgery yielded no surprises.

## **San Francisco Chronicle**

### **Giants squander another Rodriguez gem in fourth straight loss**

**Henry Schulman**

DENVER - Those who fancy Wins Above Replacement, which is all the rage these days, might be interested to know that the Giants' most valuable player under the Baseball-Reference formula is rookie pitcher Dereck Rodriguez.

That should surprise nobody who has watched more than a handful of games in 2018. Rodriguez not only has been the most successful Giant this season, his starts have become destination viewing.

Maybe not the way they were with Tim Lincecum back in the day, but hey. Rodriguez has the hair, and he's getting there.

Fans counting down the final days of what looks to be another losing season, further scarred by Tuesday night's 6-2 loss to the first-place Rockies, can only shut their eyes and imagine the damage that Rodriguez could do on a team that consistently hits and protects late leads.

The Giants have done neither well of late, especially at Coors Field, where they lost for the 17th time in their past 19 games despite Rodriguez holding Colorado to a David Dahl solo homer in six innings.

They took a 2-1 lead in the seventh on Gorkys Hernandez's 15th home run. The Rockies obliterated that lead in the bottom half, scoring five times, three on a Carlos Gonzalez triple against Ty Blach, who was brought in specifically to face him.

"It's a shame we can't hold onto these games, especially when he's pitching," Bochy said of Rodriguez.

The bullpen is having a hard time holding onto anything right now. The relievers were a strength for a good part of the season and seemed to find a rhythm.

But with Tony Watson giving away a hard-fought lead Monday night and Reyes Moronta allowing Ryan McMahon's tying homer in the seventh inning Tuesday, the Giants technically blew their 28th and 29th saves, worst in the majors.

Five walks, two intentional, punctuated the four-run Rockies seventh, which sealed the Giants' fourth straight loss.

They are 68-72. Even the modest goal of a .500 finish now looks like a long shot. The Giants need to go 14-8 to go home a "winning team."

"That's what we're looking for, a winning record, the managers, the coaches and the players," Hernandez said after catching Andrew McCutchen and Evan Longoria for the team lead in homers at 15.

Whatever the final record, the Giants' impotence at the plate (caused only partly by injuries), the months-long struggles of core players who are signed long-term and the fading bullpen should force team executives to ask themselves hard questions:

Are the Giants really a couple of trades and signings away from contending in 2019? Can they really turn this around long term without trading Madison Bumgarner, their best movable asset? Are Brandon Belt, Brandon Crawford, Joe Panik and Evan Longoria coincidentally struggling in a year in which most were hurt? Or is this the future?

The overriding question about Rodriguez is how good he can be. In his past 12 games he has a 1.72 ERA and he is showing no signs of wearing down in his first big-league season.

He is pitching with a confidence bordering on cocky - a good cocky. Some pitchers are afraid to throw curveballs at altitude. Not Rodriguez. He threw 18 of them, his best pitch as he returned to the park where he made his big-league debut May 29.

"I forgot how fun it is to pitch here," Rodriguez said, echoing comments said by no sane person ever. I just love the mound here.

"I felt like this was going to be a test for me today, facing the first-place team, here in Colorado, a big hitters' park. I put a challenge on myself and I executed."

## **San Jose Mercury News**

### **Giants call prospect acquired in McCutchen trade, Samardzija updates status Kerry Crowley**

DENVER — The Giants acquired two prospects from the New York Yankees for Andrew McCutchen, and one of those players is set to make his major league debut.

Prior to Tuesday's game in Denver, the Giants promoted infielder Abiatal Avelino, 23, from Triple-A Sacramento.

The Giants sent McCutchen and cash to the Yankees for Avelino and right-handed pitching prospect Juan De Paula, who started and threw five innings for Low-A Augusta on Sunday.

Avelino began the year at Double-A in the Yankees' system but was promoted to Triple-A after posting impressive offensive numbers. The Dominican Republic native had a .945 OPS at Double-A before his average and slugging percentage plummeted in Triple-A.

Giants general manager Bobby Evans indicated Friday that Avelino has better tools defensively

than offensively and the franchise can play him at a variety of positions around the infield.

“He’s been more of a defensive player with plus speed and arm strength and the ability to play in the middle of the field,” Evans said. “Offensively, really what he did in Double-A in 50 games or so was really the best he’s done.”

Avelino went 2 for 13 in three games with Triple-A Sacramento this weekend and could earn playing time at shortstop with the Giants in September. Brandon Crawford missed three games over the weekend with left knee soreness and as the season winds down, the Giants don’t need to continue grinding Crawford every day.

“Short, second, he’ll get most of the pregame work at shortstop but I’ll use him off the bench,” manager Bruce Bochy said. “He’ll pinch run, pinch hit, things like that.”

To clear a 40-man roster spot for Avelino, the Giants transferred starter Jeff Samardzija (shoulder inflammation) to the 60-day disabled list. Samardzija last pitched July 14 and Bochy said last week it’s “doubtful” Samardzija will pitch again for the Giants this season.

Samardzija said he has not discussed pitching again this season with the Giants’ training staff as doctors advised him to continue resting his shoulder. After receiving a second opinion last week that confirmed Samardzija won’t require surgery, the right-hander said he’ll continue to seek information from doctors.

“It doesn’t mean one guy is an idiot and one guy is a genius,” Samardzija said.

The veteran pitcher initially felt shoulder tightness toward the end of spring training and he lamented the timing of the injury.

“The timing of the injury was so unfortunate just because of the start of the season and there wasn’t really a decisive injury,” Samardzija said.

Aside from promoting Avelino, the Giants also recalled infielder Ryder Jones from Triple-A Sacramento. Bochy said Jones could spell Brandon Belt at first base and Evan Longoria at third base, but the Giants have no plans for Jones to start regularly.

Bochy said the Giants don’t expect to make any additional call-ups for a roster that now holds 32 players.

## San Jose Mercury News

### Giants collapse again at Coors, Rodríguez embraces pitching at altitude

Kerry Crowley

DENVER—It's been three long months since Dereck Rodríguez made his major league debut as a relief pitcher at Coors Field.

Though Rodríguez was the bridge from an injured Jeff Samardzija to a shaky bullpen in a blowout loss on May 29, he'll never forget the experience of arriving at the most hitter-friendly park in baseball.

"I forgot how fun it is pitching here," Rodríguez said Tuesday, after his bullpen spoiled another stellar outing for the rookie in a 6-2 defeat.

Rodríguez might be the only visiting pitcher in baseball who enjoys throwing in altitude and he's certainly the only starter on the Giants' staff who loves traveling to the Rocky Mountains. While the right-hander turned in six excellent innings of one-run ball, the rest of the Giants did little to help Rodríguez's cause as the club has now lost 17 of its last 19 at Coors Field.

"It's a shame we can't hold onto some of these games, especially when he's pitching," manager Bruce Bochy said. "You can't say enough about what he's doing. We want to take care of him."

While many starters shy away from throwing breaking balls in altitude in fear they won't bend, Rodríguez showed off his entire repertoire and set a season-high by inducing 15 swings and misses Tuesday. Rockies starter German Márquez was nearly as impressive in 6 2/3 innings against the Giants, but Rodríguez left in line for the win after Gorkys Hernández hit a tie-breaking homer off the Colorado right-hander in the top of the seventh.

The Giants received the quality start they needed, they found the timely hit that's evaded them, yet they still couldn't secure the type of victory that's proven impossible to lock up over the past two years at Coors Field.

Armed with a 2-1 lead, rookie reliever Reyes Moronta entered in the seventh and surrendered a game-tying home run to pinch hitter Ryan McMahon before loading the bases and exiting with the game on the line. Left-hander Ty Blach replaced Moronta, but Rockies right fielder Carlos Gonzalez slammed a bases-clearing triple to ruin Rodríguez's night and send the Giants to their fourth straight loss.

"Moronta, I don't ever feel bad bringing him in," Bochy said. "He was just off tonight. He's done a great job this year. You don't know what's going to happen when guys come in."

Moronta was charged with a season-high four earned runs as the Giants blew their major league-worst 30th save of the season. Their misery in Denver continued, but Rodríguez at least

possesses the talent and attitude to help the Giants reverse their luck when they return in 2019.

“Before the game, I felt this was going to be a test for me facing the first-place team,” Rodríguez said. “Here in Colorado, it’s a big hitters park and so it was quite a challenge for myself in the game and I executed and it went well.”

Hernández’s seventh home run of the season against the Rockies also tied him with former right fielder Andrew McCutchen and third baseman Evan Longoria for the team high with 15 homers. Two runs, however, is rarely enough in Colorado and after Moronta’s collapse in the seventh, the output wasn’t going to stand up against a hungry Rockies team that took over first place in the National League West Monday.

Rodríguez has recorded seven quality starts since the All-Star break and 12 this season, but the rookie’s record remained 6-2 as he’s earned the win in just two second half outings.

#### **MLB.com**

#### **Coors Field woes continue for Giants in loss**

**Jack Etkin**

DENVER -- Making life hard for contenders, far from an ideal goal, is more or less the Giants' lot in life this month. Dependable rookie **Dereck Rodriguez** did his part to give the Giants that modest pleasure Tuesday before a bullpen collapse in the seventh doomed San Francisco to a 6-2 loss to Colorado.

It was their seventh loss in eight games at Coors Field this season and their 17th in the past 19 games there. The Giants will conclude this season's play at Coors Field on Wednesday and try to avoid a second successive series sweep at the Rockies' home ballpark.

#### **View Full Game Coverage**

Rodriguez made his Major League debut at Coors Field in a relief appearance May 29 that lasted 3 1/3 innings and ended when he took an **Ian Desmond** liner off his right shin.

Making his first start at Coors Field on Tuesday, Rodriguez gave up one run on **David Dahl's** homer to open the second and six hits in six innings. It was the 11th time in 12 starts that Rodriguez has allowed two or fewer runs.

Any chance he had for the win quickly dissolved when the Rockies erupted for five runs in the

seventh. **Reyes Moronta** began the inning and yielded a one-out homer to pinch-hitter **Ryan McMahon** that tied the game at 2. Moronta had yielded just three homers in 60 2/3 innings prior to Tuesday.

**Charlie Blackmon** followed with a high-bounce infield single. **DJ LeMahieu** walked, and **Nolan Arenado** was intentionally walked to load the bases. **Carlos Gonzalez** cleared them with a triple to the gap in left-center field off left-hander **Ty Blach** that gave the Rockies a 5-2 lead.

The Rockies sent 11 batters to the plate against Moronta, Blach and **Sam Dyson** in the seventh and ended up scoring five runs in a rally that consisted of three hits and four walks, two of them intentional.

The Giants had taken a 2-1 lead in the top of the seventh when **Gorkys Hernandez** belted his 15th homer. It came off **German Marquez** and was just their third hit off him since the first inning when they scored a run on **Joe Panik**'s single. The hit scored **Gregor Blanco**, who led off the game with a single and stole second.

#### **MLB.com**

#### **Samardzija (shoulder) transferred to 60-day DL Jack Etkins**

DENVER -- Pitcher **Jeff Samardzija**, whose season was derailed by right shoulder inflammation that surfaced in Spring Training, said Tuesday he will continue to seek information from shoulder specialists as he plots an offseason rehabilitation program.

While surgery has been ruled out and an anti-inflammatory injection did not lead to a recovery, Samardzija, who made just 10 starts for the Giants this season, continues to do shoulder strengthening exercises but is not playing catch.

#### **View Full Game Coverage**

The Giants transferred Samardzija to the 60-day disabled list Tuesday to make room on the 40-man roster for newly acquired infielder **Abital Avelino**, who was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento.

Samardzija went 1-5 with a 6.25 ERA this season. He made eight starts from April 20 to May 4 and at times was able to increase his velocity as the game progressed. But after another stint on the 10-day disabled list, Samardzija made two starts on July 7 and 14, and in the latter



outing, his velocity was low from the start and didn't rise.

"It's kind of let's get it better and pitch-type mode and stay ready," Samardzija said, summarizing his approach out of Spring Training. "So right now, we're kind of taking a little bit of an adjustment and just kind of ensuring we're getting as much information to make the right decision."

Samardzija, who will spend the offseason rehabilitating in San Francisco, said his intent now is "just to get more of an exact plan of action going forward. It's been a couple different things [with the shoulder]. It just hasn't been one same thing, so therefore that makes me think we need to find out what those other things were or what came first, what came second, are we treating pain or are we treating the problem?"

Samardzija, 33, has two years remaining at \$18 million annually on the five-year, \$90 million deal he signed with the Giants as a free agent after the 2015 season.

### **New arrivals**

The Giants purchased the contract of Avelino from Sacramento and also recalled infielder **Ryder Jones** from that team. Manager Bruce Bochy said there would be no more September call-ups, and that Avelino -- acquired from the Yankees on Friday in the deal that sent right fielder **Andrew McCutchen** to New York -- would get some starts at shortstop but not in "important games" unless regular shortstop **Brandon Crawford**, who returned Monday after missing three days due to left knee soreness, needs rest.

That means Bochy is apt to start Avelino against teams not vying for the postseason. The only team on the Giants' schedule in that category is the Padres, and the teams play each other six more times this season.

Bochy said Avelino's pre-game work will be at shortstop but he could play second base as well and can come off the bench to pinch-hit or pinch-run. Avelino hit a combined .283 with a .767 OPS and 13 doubles, eight triples, 15 home runs and 27 stolen bases this season in 126 games between Double-A Trenton, Triple-A Scranton-Wilkes Barre and Sacramento.

Bochy said he spoke with Sacramento manager Dave Brundage, where Avelino played three games and received a good report.

"Stole a couple bases there," Bochy said. "Runs well, good actions at short. Really good arm. He looked comfortable there. So I have a guy I can use late in a game, pinch-run or pinch-hit. Got some pop. He's intriguing in the fact you can move him around similar to [**Alen Hanson**]."

Jones played one game with the Giants when they called him up in July. In 116 games with Sacramento, he hit .274 with a .746 OPS and 22 doubles, four triples, 11 homers and 59 RBIs.

#### **Worth noting**

- Center fielder **Steven Duggar** underwent successful surgery Tuesday morning to have a labrum tear in his left (non-throwing) shoulder repaired. The operation was performed in the Phoenix area by Dr. Gary Waslewski.

#### **MLB.com**

#### **Posey nominated for Clemente Award**

#### **Daniel Kramer**

Throughout his distinguished Hall of Fame career, Roberto Clemente was perhaps just as known for his prowess on the baseball diamond as he was for his philanthropical efforts off it. And today, the award recognizing the player who best represents the game through extraordinary character, community involvement, philanthropy and positive contributions bears Clemente's name.

Every year, each club nominates a player to be considered for the Roberto Clemente Award, and the 30 nominees were announced by Major League Baseball on Tuesday. Many of this year's nominees have been actively involved in their local community and abroad with initiatives that have focused on awareness and fundraising for the fight against childhood cancer and other illnesses, education for young people and Hurricane Maria relief among other efforts.

#### **• All-time winners**

Each of the 30 nominees will be honored by their respective clubs, including many on Wednesday as part of Roberto Clemente Day ceremonies, a league-wide initiative that has been in place since 2002. As part of the celebrations, the Roberto Clemente Day logo will appear on the bases and official dugout lineup cards, and a special tribute video will play. Clubs that are on the road will recognize their nominee on a subsequent homestand. The league-wide winner of the Clemente Award will be announced during the World Series.

Here are the 30 nominees:

Arizona Diamondbacks -- **Paul Goldschmidt**

Atlanta Braves -- **Kurt Suzuki**  
Baltimore Orioles -- **Chris Davis**  
Boston Red Sox -- **Brock Holt**  
Chicago Cubs -- **Jon Lester**  
Chicago White Sox -- **Jose Abreu**  
Cincinnati Reds -- **Tucker Barnhart**  
Cleveland Indians -- **Carlos Carrasco**  
Colorado Rockies -- **Ian Desmond**  
Detroit Tigers -- **Michael Fulmer**  
Houston Astros -- **Charlie Morton**  
Kansas City Royals -- **Danny Duffy**  
Los Angeles Angels -- **Andrew Heaney**  
Los Angeles Dodgers -- **Justin Turner**  
Miami Marlins -- **Martin Prado**  
Milwaukee Brewers -- **Corey Knebel**  
Minnesota Twins -- **Joe Mauer**  
New York Mets -- **Steven Matz**  
New York Yankees -- **CC Sabathia**  
Oakland Athletics -- **Chad Pinder**  
Philadelphia Phillies -- **Rhys Hoskins**  
Pittsburgh Pirates -- **Jameson Taillon**  
St. Louis Cardinals -- **Yadier Molina**  
San Diego Padres -- **Clayton Richard**  
San Francisco Giants -- **Buster Posey**  
Seattle Mariners -- **Nelson Cruz**  
Tampa Bay Rays -- **Malle Smith**  
Texas Rangers -- **Cole Hamels\***  
Toronto Blue Jays -- **Kevin Pillar**  
Washington Nationals -- **Ryan Zimmerman**

The league-wide winner of the Clemente Award will be selected by a blue ribbon panel that includes Commissioner Rob Manfred, Clemente's late wife and current MLB Goodwill Ambassador, Vera Clemente, as well as representatives from MLB-affiliated networks and MLB.com. Fans can also vote for the winner at [mlb.com/clemente21](http://mlb.com/clemente21), with the winner of that tally counting as one vote among those cast by the blue-ribbon panel.

"I am very proud of the great philanthropic efforts of our players," Manfred said in a statement. "Through wide-ranging work and actions, these 30 nominees honor Roberto Clemente's legacy of being exemplary community ambassadors. Roberto's unwavering humanitarian spirit

continues to inspire our players and fans and serves as a positive example for future generations."

The Clemente Award was renamed in 1973 to honor the 15-time All-Star shortly after his tragic death on New Year's Eve months prior during a plane crash while attempting to deliver supplies to earthquake victims in Nicaragua. The award was previously called the "Commissioner's Award" and was established in 1971.

## **The Athletic**

### **Coors Field has become a nightmare for the Giants, with two surprising exceptions Andrew Baggarly**

DENVER — You'll hear Giants manager Bruce Bochy speak some version of this statement every year: Sure, teams that win their divisions are talented and play the game the right way, but they also usually get a pleasant surprise or two.

How are these for pleasant surprises?

Gorkys Hernandez hit zero home runs last year. Nobody in the major leagues had more plate appearances (348) without going deep.

Hernandez hit his 15th home run Tuesday night.

Dereck Rodriguez was a converted outfielder in the Twins system who hadn't pitched above Double-A last year. He arrived in Giants camp this spring as a non-roster invitee.

Rodriguez threw his 12th quality start in 15 outings Tuesday night. The only major league pitchers who have a higher quality start percentage are Jacob deGrom and Max Scherzer.

The complicating factor, of course, is that those pleasant surprises are supposed to come from complementary players. They aren't supposed to be the best pitcher or hitter on your team.

So the most notable part of Hernandez's solo home run in the seventh inning at Coors Field wasn't that it gave the Giants a momentary lead. The notable part is that Hernandez is now tied for the team home run lead with Evan Longoria and the departed Andrew McCutchen.

No disrespect intended to Hernandez, but if he is leading your team in home runs, that is a symptom and not a cure.

Hernandez's shot was his seventh against the Rockies this season, and it cleared the fence just in time to make a well-deserved winner of Rodriguez. The right-hander was steady and composed yet again while holding the Rockies to a run on six hits in six innings.

Who thought this could be possible back on May 29, when Rodriguez made his big league debut in this ballpark with 3 1/3 innings in place of an ailing Jeff Samardzija?

Rodriguez's 2.41 ERA ranks as the fifth lowest among NL pitchers with at least 90 innings. He has thrown at least six innings and allowed two runs or fewer in 10 of his last 11 starts. The interruption came in his previous outing last Wednesday at home against the Arizona Diamondbacks. Asked about the end of that streak, he shrugged and said he wouldn't let one night with a wild fastball derail what he had done over the previous two months.

He was right.

Other than David Dahl's home run to start the second inning, the Rockies could not crack Rodriguez even when they put him in the stretch. He had too many wrinkles in his game, too much confidence in his breaking pitches to shy away from them, and plenty of octane on his high fastball. He struck out six and walked one.

His postgame comments were as exemplary as his performance.

"Yeah, man," he said. "I forgot how fun it is pitching here."

Say what?

"I just really like the mound for some reason," he said. "I don't know if it's because it was the first big league mound I've ever stood on, or what. I just feel confident."

Rodriguez has looked and acted confident on every big league mound this season. Bochy has run out of superlatives for the 26-year-old rookie but said it will be a priority to preserve him down the stretch as he pitches deep into September for the first time. There was no chance of pushing him past six innings and 93 pitches.

Rodriguez's decision slipped away in the seventh when Reyes Moronta gave up a pinch homer to Ryan McMahon, and the rest of the night followed it down the drain. Moronta loaded the bases on a hit, a walk and a wild pitch that opened up first base and made an intentional walk to Nolan Arenado an obvious move. Then Colorado native Ty Blach entered and gave up a three-run triple to Carlos Gonzalez.

The Giants lost for the seventh time in eight games at Coors Field and they are 2-16 here dating back to the start of last season. They'll line 'em up one last time behind Andrew Suarez before leaving the Mile High City behind until their first visit in 2019. Between now and then, they'll have to figure out how to compete in this ballpark again.

They won't do it by loading up on the least valuable component of the three true outcomes. In the series thus far, the Giants have 24 strikeouts and two walks. When you tack on last weekend's three games against the Mets, it becomes 63 strikeouts and seven walks.

But enough about that. By now, you understand that the Giants are a flawed and beaten up offensive group. No need to further enumerate that.

So instead, I'll use the rest of this space to empty the head and the notebook of some recent observations:

—The Giants did well to get two useful players from the Yankees for a one-month rental of Andrew McCutchen. Understand, though, that the trade worked from the Yankees' perspective, too. That's because both infielder Abiatal Avelino and right-hander Juan De Palma must be added to the 40-man roster after this season or they would be exposed to the Rule 5 draft.

The Yankees have a loaded system, and they probably expected to lose one or both players anyway. So they turned them into a former NL MVP outfielder who might help carry them through October. And the Giants benefited by essentially getting an early jump on two extra Rule 5 picks, without the roster restrictions for keeping them next year.

— Avelino received a call-up Tuesday along with first baseman Ryder Jones in what was expected to be the final roster additions in September. Avelino is 23 and has a mature build. He took grounders at short and showed off nice hands and what I would describe as plus arm strength. He'll be used as an extra guy off the bench and get an occasional start in the middle infield, Bochy said.

Even if Avelino never profiles as any more of an impact player than, say, Ehire Adrianza, he still gives the Giants an asset that they didn't have in the upper levels of their system: a true shortstop who can provide depth in case something were to befall Brandon Crawford, their most irreplaceable player on the field. It's also going to serve the Giants well to have a shortstop who can replace Crawford in the late innings of lopsided games. Nobody has grinded it out more than Crawford or quietly played through more nagging injuries, and he isn't getting any younger. It'll be important to pace him better next year. If Avelino can help to any extent, he'll bring value.

— The rest of this month will be about developing young players like Chris Shaw, and that means there will be yelps of protest from some corners of the internet when Hunter Pence gets a start against left-handers. But keep in mind that starting Pence can be part of that development process, too. You want to shield young players and put them in the best position to succeed, and Shaw hit .208 against lefties at Triple-A. That doesn't mean the Giants see Shaw's potential limited to a platoon role in the big leagues. It just means for now, they don't want to throw him to the wolves.

— Left-hander Steven Okert looks to be in better shape and he is throwing with more velocity. It's funny to think that his scoreless inning Monday was his season debut. I had forgotten that he didn't get into a game when he was on the roster earlier this season. Okert pitched well enough to deserve a call-up, and this will be an important month as the Giants evaluate the best use of their 40-man roster spaces after the season. On the flipside, right-hander Derek Law is not back with the Giants because he has a high ankle sprain, according to Bruce Bochy.

— The Giants have six games remaining with the San Diego Padres, and although they won't have any bearing on the NL playoff picture, they could be six of the more intriguing games that remain on the schedule. The Padres called up Francisco Mejia, the offensive catcher they picked up from the Indians in the Brad Hand trade, after he hit .328 with seven homers in 31 games for Triple-A El Paso. They also promoted pure-hitting second baseman Luis Urias last week.

They'll no doubt wait until next season to call up Fernando Tatis Jr., just as the White Sox waited with Eloy Jimenez and the Blue Jays waited with Vladimir Guerrero Jr. Perhaps the Giants will be in a similar position with Joey Bart, but not until the end of next season. For now, it'll be fun to watch the Padres as this wellspring of young talent begins to bubble up to the majors. It came together more rapidly than expected for the Braves. Let's see if the Padres will be capable of making a move on the NL West as early as next season.

**NBCsportsbayarea.com**

**Giants rookie Dereck Rodriguez has another strong start at Coors Field**  
**Alex Pavlovic**

DENVER — The Giants **lost 6-2 on Tuesday night**. Their bullpen imploded at Coors Field. Their lineup did not do what you're supposed to do at Coors Field. They have lost 17 of their last 19 games here, which is a problem since, you know, the Rockies are in the division and the Giants have to travel here three times a year.

Now that we got all that out of the way, there was a positive. A big one.

If the Giants ever turn it around on their trips to Denver, they'll need a better lineup, yes, but also pitchers capable of surviving the thin air and endless outfield alleys. On Tuesday night, Dereck Rodriguez thrived. He gave up one run — a solo homer in six innings, and in two appearances here he has allowed just two runs in 9 1/3 innings.

"I forgot how much fun it is to pitch here," Rodriguez said afterward.

Excuse me?

"I love this mound here," he continued. "It's just really fun pitching here. I just really like the mound for some reason."

Rodriguez admitted that the reason might be a simple one. This is where he made his **big-league debut back in May**, and this park will always hold special meaning to him because of that. But it's still not a place pitchers are supposed to enjoy, especially when the Rockies are rolling. Rodriguez took the field Tuesday night, thought about all that, and decided that, well, he wasn't too impressed.

"Before the game today I felt this would be a test facing the first-place team here in Colorado. I put a challenge for myself," he said. "I executed and it went well."

Rodriguez dominated by doing something so few pitchers can do at Coors. He pitched like he normally would, throwing all four pitches and mixing it up. He was not worried about flat cutters or hanging curveballs. He simply attacked as he always does.

Rodriguez threw 18 curveballs, getting five of his 15 swinging strikes with the pitch. He went to it for a particularly nasty sequence in the third. Nolan Arenado buckled on an 0-2 curve and made a face as he walked out of the batter's box. Carlos Gonzalez, who later would break the game open with a bases-loaded triple, worked a 3-2 count and then swung over the top of a bender that dipped toward Gonzalez's back foot.

The one blip on Rodriguez's line was a solo homer from David Dahl in the second. Rodriguez struck him out in the fourth and then froze him with a high curveball with a runner on in the sixth.

Rodriguez said he wasn't thinking about what the Colorado air might do to his curveball.

"I was just going out there and throwing like it's any other field," he said. "That's what helped me. There were a couple pitches that didn't move, but I didn't give up on it."

The rookie made it all sound easy, but there was a complication Tuesday night. This was just his second professional game in September, and the Giants are well aware that he's pushing new limits as a young starter. Rodriguez was pulled at 93 pitches, and manager Bruce Bochy later said he has to take care of Rodriguez this month.

"These guys are not used to pitching in September," he said, also referencing Wednesday starter Andrew Suarez. "We want to take care of him. He was around 100 pitches and his spot was coming up."

The game blew up once Rodriguez took a seat. Reyes Moronta, so dominant for most of the year, was charged with four earned. For the fifth time since the All-Star break, Rodriguez gave up two-or-fewer runs and took a no-decision. But the Giants know you can't look at wins and losses with a pitcher who has thrown like vintage Matt Cain and now apparently will get his results, too.

"This guy has done a really amazing job every time out," Bochy said. "He's done a terrific job keeping us not just in the game, but (pitching) better than a quality start. He comes in here and gives us another one."



**NBCsportsbayarea.com**

**Giants bullpen falls apart in second straight loss to Rockies**

**Alex Pavlovic**

DENVER — A 2-1 win at Coors Field felt too good to be true. It was.

The Giants held that slim advantage after six strong from Dereck Rodriguez and a go-ahead bomb from Gorkys Hernandez in the seventh, but the bullpen melted down in the bottom of that inning, giving up five runs en route to a 6-2 loss.

The Giants have dropped 17 of their last 19 games at Coors Field. The decisive shot in this one was a three-run triple by Carlos Gonzalez off Ty Blach, cashing in Reyes Moronta's runners.

Here's what else you need to know...

— Rodriguez apparently likes Coors Field, **where he made his big league debut May 29**. He gave up one run in six innings, striking out six and walking one. The Rockies scattered six hits and never really had Rodriguez in trouble. In two career appearances here, he has allowed two runs in 9 1/3 innings. This was the fifth time in the second half that Rodriguez allowed two-or-fewer runs and got a no-decision.

— Hernandez has 13 hits in 52 at-bats against the Rockies this season. Seven of them have been home runs. He's like the Bizarro Nolan Arenado.

— Moronta was charged with four earned in 1/3 of an inning. His ERA jumped from 2.08 to 2.66. Coors Field comes at you fast.

— Chris Shaw passed his first significant test in left. DJ LeMahieu hit a liner to deep left with a runner on in the second and Shaw snagged it right before he crashed into the wall. The Rockies would not score in the inning. At the plate, Shaw grounded out to second and struck out twice.

— German Marquez has nasty stuff, and back-to-back gems. After striking out 13 Padres in his previous start, the right-hander got 11 Giants in 6 2/3 innings.

**NBCsportsbayarea.com**

**Bruce Bochy says Giants prospect from Andrew McCutchen trade could start soon**  
**Alex Pavlovic**

DENVER -- The general consensus last week was that the Giants did pretty well in **getting two solid prospects back in exchange for one month of Andrew McCutchen**. They're wasting no time taking a look at the more advanced one.

Abiatal Avelino, a 23-year-old middle infielder, **joined the big league roster Tuesday** after spending the final three days of the minor league season with Triple-A Sacramento. Ryder Jones was also added in the final round of September additions.

Avelino is considered more advanced with the glove than with the bat and could see some time at shortstop this month as the Giants rest Brandon Crawford, who has been banged-up for much of the second half. He also will be used as a pinch-runner and potentially a pinch-hitter.

"He runs well. He has good actions at shortstop, a really good arm," manager Bruce Bochy said. "He looks comfortable out there. I have a guy I can use late in games to pinch-run or pinch-hit. He's got some pop. He's intriguing in that you can move him around similar to (Alen) Hanson."

Giants coaches kept a close eye on Avelino during batting practice and liked what they saw. He has a strong build for a middle infielder and showed off a very strong arm while doing drills at shortstop. There's also some flair to his game. He asked for backhanded plays to end his time at short and jumped and pumped his fist after making a play from deep in the hole. Bochy said there's a chance Avelino could make a start in Milwaukee this weekend.

Avelino will end up playing for four different teams at three levels this season. He broke out with 10 homers and a .945 OPS for Double-A Trenton this season but had a .663 OPS after his promotion to the Yankees' Triple-A squad. In three games for the River Cats, Avelino was 2-for-13 and stole two bases. Overall, he had a .767 OPS in the minors this season, with 15 homers, eight triples and 13 doubles. Avelino stole 27 bases in 33 attempts.

As for Jones, the Giants know quite a bit about him after he played down the stretch last year, and he showed his power by homering in his only game up this season. For the next 23 games he'll serve as a backup at third and Brandon Belt's primary backup at first. With Belt battling a sore knee, Jones could see a few starts over the next month.

**KNBR.com**

**Giants drop another to Rockies after bullpen disaster wastes quality Rodriguez start  
Jacob Hutchinson**

Yesterday, the Giants and Colorado Rockies combined for 17 runs. Today, the Rockies kept scoring, while the Giants' bats fell asleep. Dereck Rodriguez and German Marquez had lights-out starts on either side, but the Rockies broke through to beat the Giants 6-2 once the bullpen took over in disastrous fashion.

Rodriguez was pulled after six innings of one-run, five-strikeout baseball for Reyes Moronta in for the seventh. He struck out the pinch-hitting Gerardo Parra to open the inning, but the next pinch-hitter caused serious damage and started a nightmarish chain of events for the Giants' bullpen.

First, the 23-year-old Ryan McMahon torched a ball over the center field fence to tie the game at 2-2. Then Charlie Blackmon chopped a ball high off the ground in front of home plate to reach first base on an odd infield single. Moronta walked DJ LeMahieu before throwing a wild pitch to Nolan Arenado. He then intentionally walked Arenado and was pulled for Ty Blach.

With the bases loaded, Blach left a ball low to the low-ball hitting and free-swinging Carlos Gonzalez, who hit a bases-clearing triple. Blach intentionally walked Trevor Story before striking out David Dahl, but at that point, his night was over and the Giants trailed by three.

Sam Dyson came in to face Ian Desmond and walked him on six pitches. Then, Dyson committed one of the most embarrassing acts a pitcher can commit, walking Parra on five pitches to give away a run and put the Rockies up 6-2.

That bullpen implosion wasted both Rodriguez's start and the early lead the Giants created in the first inning. Gregor Blanco led the game off with a single and a stolen base. Joe Panik followed suit with a single, scoring Blanco from second to put the Giants up 1-0. It seemed primed for a high-run affair like last night, but the game progressed in stark contrast from last night's hitting onslaught.

While not the six home run explosion from last night's game, Coors Field maintained its reputation for being a hitters' park, with three home runs coming tonight. The first homer for the Rockies was picked up in the second inning. To lead it off, Dahl took Rodriguez over the wall in right-center field, tying the game at 1-1.

Marquez was nearly unhittable, striking out 11 Giants batters. It's the third time in the last four games the Giants have been struck out 11 times by a starter after Steven Matz and Noah Syndergaard of the New York Mets did it on back-to-back days this weekend. After Nick Hundley singled and was caught stealing and Marquez struck out Chris Shaw, it seemed like the Giants were about to put up another scoreless inning.

But Gorkys Hernandez struck the Rockies again, picking up his (tied for) team-leading 15th home run of the year, and his second homer in back-to-back days. It gave the Giants a 2-1 lead and a potential win for Rodriguez, but that dream of a win was shattered almost immediately after Rodriguez was pulled.

Gorky's gives the Giants the lead [pic.twitter.com/z1YoByZVle](https://pic.twitter.com/z1YoByZVle)

— SF Giants on NBCS (@NBCSGiants) September 5, 2018

The newly-promoted Ryder Jones pinch-hit for Rodriguez in the top of the seventh. Gregor Blanco followed the single with a walk, ending Marquez's night after 6 2/3 innings. Chris Rusin relieved Marquez to get out Panik, who, despite stepping in 2-for-3 on the day, grounded softly to first to end the inning.

While the Rockies teed off on the Giants' bullpen, the Giants (68-72) were silenced after the seventh, falling four games below .500.

## **ESPN.com**

### **Real or Not? Ozuna, Cain turn up the heat in NL Central race**

**David Schoenfield**

Two of my favorite moves of the offseason were the Milwaukee Brewers signing free agent Lorenzo Cain and the St. Louis Cardinals acquiring Marcell Ozuna from the Marlins. Both were instrumental in wins on Tuesday.

The Brewers, a day after Chicago Cubs lefty Cole Hamels criticized their fans, embarrassed the Cubs 11-1. Cain went 1-for-1 and drew four walks, pushing his season OBP to .404. The Cubs played a terrible game. Their pitchers walked nine batters. They made three errors. The Brewers scored on a passed ball, wild pitch and bases-loaded hit batter, the first time a team has done that since 2006. The Cubs managed just three hits off Wade Miley in six innings. The Cubs' lead in the National League Central is suddenly down to three games. The Brewers go for the sweep on Wednesday. Things are suddenly a little sticky in ChiTown.

In Washington, Ozuna hit two home runs in an 11-8 Cardinals win. The game turned in the sixth inning. Tied 4-4, the Nationals brought in Austen Williams for his second major league

appearance. The 25-year-old right-hander didn't allow a home run in 68 innings in the minors. Ozuna, Paul DeJong and Patrick Wisdom promptly went yard in the space of four batters. Yadier Molina added a grand slam in the ninth, which turned out to be important as the Nationals scored three runs in the bottom of the inning and brought the tying run to the plate before Jordan Hicks finally came on to get the final out. Cain has played like an MVP candidate, although nobody talks about him as an MVP candidate even though he entered Tuesday leading NL position players in Baseball-Reference WAR and ranking fourth in FanGraphs WAR. I get *why* he's not getting much vocal support: He has just 110 runs plus RBIs, well below the totals of the other candidates. Here, those totals plus each player's Baseball-Reference WAR before Tuesday's games:

## EDITOR'S PICKS

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Our experts weigh in on the playoff races, awards contenders, storylines to follow and J.D. Martinez's Triple Crown bid.

Cain: 110 (5.8 WAR)

Javier Baez: 186 (5.6 WAR)

Matt Carpenter: 166 (5.2 WAR)

Freddie Freeman: 166 (5.2 WAR)

Christian Yelich: 181 (5.1 WAR)

Paul Goldschmidt: 163 (5.1 WAR)

Nolan Arenado: 180 (4.8 WAR)

(And, no, you don't do that thing where you subtract home runs. Each run -- for the most part -- consists of two parts: the run and the RBI. Subtracting home runs only gives the home run hitter half his credit.)

Anyway, runs plus RBIs is hardly the best way to measure offensive value, but that production -- or lack of it -- is why Cain seems to rank behind the other candidates. The low RBI total is partially a result of opportunity, of course, as he's hit leadoff much of the season. He's hit .338 with runners in scoring position and .333 with runners on. But he's also hit nine of his 10 home runs with the bases empty and hasn't had many extra-base hits with runners on. Part of Cain's value also comes from his excellent defensive metrics (plus-14 defensive runs saved), and voters should consider that part of his game.

The point: In an offseason in which most of the free agents flopped, Cain has been the big success story (along with J.D. Martinez). Along with Christian Yelich, the Brewers' two best players were acquired via shrewd transactions by GM David Stearns and the front office, so you can argue that the Brewers had the best offseason of any team. Miley has also been a godsend with a 2.12 ERA in 12 starts, although given that he had 5.61 ERA for the Orioles, that's as much about good fortune as front-office genius.

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Ozuna hasn't had the same impact, hitting .272/.316/.414 and he's up to 18 home runs after clocking 37 for the Marlins. His numbers have picked up since the end of July, however, which just may be some luck balancing out. When you dig into the Statcast numbers, his results are actually pretty similar to last year. In fact, his average exit velocity is up from 90.7 mph to 91.4 mph and his average launch angle is 9.9 degrees compared to 10.1. His expected slugging last year was .510 and it's .502 this year. Last year, a few extra balls cleared the fence and this year they fell a little short. **The cardiac Rockies:** The Giants led the Colorado Rockies 2-1 in the bottom of the seventh. Dereck Rodriguez was pulled after six strong innings and 93 pitches ... and the Rockies promptly put up five runs and won, 6-2. It was their 40th come-from-behind win of the season, third-most in the majors behind the Cubs' 43 and the Red Sox's 42.

Ryan McMahon hit the game-tying pinch-hit home run and then Charlie Blackmon's infield single got the rest of the rally going. Giants manager Bruce Bochy's intentional walk strategy backfired as he put on Nolan Arenado and Ian Desmond in the frame, which were followed by a Carlos Gonzalez triple and then a bases-loaded walk. Giving a team free baserunners at Coors Field is never a good idea.

**Because any Shohei Ohtani highlight is a good highlight:** Ohtani hit his first home run off a left-hander... Ohtani has averaged a home run every 15.2 at-bats -- the same as Bryce Harper and better than Arenado or Giancarlo Stanton or Manny Machado. It seems like we kind of forgot about Ohtani after he landed on the DL (other than when he returned to pitch the other night), but his two-way success is still an amazing accomplishment, even if he's only been a part-time performer in both regards. It will be fascinating to see how the Angels deploy him next season, given what he's done at the plate and the uncertain health of his elbow.

**A Ray of hope:** I think I wrote somewhere recently that Robbie Ray would be one of the key performers down the stretch, that he has time to put a disappointing season behind and help the Diamondbacks win the division. In his last start, he allowed one run in 5 ½ innings in a 3-1 win over the Dodgers and on Tuesday he threw 6 ⅓ scoreless innings with 10 strikeouts in a 6-0 win over the Padres as the Diamondbacks snapped a four-game losing skid.

**Photo of the night:** "Seinfeld" fans will love this:

Now, are there any minor leagues named Costanza?