VOTE: Arenado, CarGo seek Miami ASG trip

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com | @harding_at_mlb | May 1st, 2017

The Rockies' choices on the 2017 Esurance All-Star Game Ballot are posted, and included are a few familiar and deserving names.

The list on the ballot includes several who, if they go to the MLB All-Star Game presented by MasterCard at Marlins Park in Miami, will be in familiar territory. Right fielder Carlos Gonzalez has represented the Rockies three times, third baseman Nolan Arenado has been twice and center fielder Charlie Blackmon and second baseman DJ LeMahieu have made one appearance apiece.

Ian Desmond, who has represented the Nationals and the Rangers in past Midsummer Classics, also is listed with his new club at first base. He made his Rockies debut Sunday, after missing most of the first month with a broken left hand. Also representing the Rockies on the ballot are catcher Tony Wolters, shortstop Trevor Story and left fielder Gerardo Parra. Story was a candidate for the final NL roster spot last year as a rookie.

Fans may cast votes for starters at MLB.com and all 30 club sites -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online using the 2017 Esurance MLB All-Star Game Ballot until Thursday, June 29, at 11:59 p.m. ET. On smartphones and tablets, fans can also access the ballot via the MLB.com At Bat and MLB.com Ballpark mobile apps. Vote up to five times in any 24-hour period for a maximum of 35 ballots cast.

Following the announcement of the 2017 All-Star starters, reserves and pitchers, fans should return to MLB.com and cast their 2017 Esurance MLB All-Star Game Final Vote for the final player on each league's All-Star roster. Then on Tuesday, 1
July 11, while watching the 2017 All-Star Game presented by MasterCard live on FOX, fans may visit MLB.com to submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2017 MLB All-Star Game MVP Vote.

The 88th Midsummer Classic, at Marlins Park in Miami, will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 160 countries. ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage, while MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM will have comprehensive All-Star Week coverage. For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, please visit AllStarGame.com and follow @AllStarGame on social media.
SAN DIEGO -- Today’s Rockies Edward Jones Inbox starts with a guy in a bushy beard who had a huge first month.

Who has been the MVP so far this year? @Eroemersberger

A good argument exists for first baseman Mark Reynolds, since the way he stepped in for the injured Ian Desmond (who made his debut Sunday, in left field) exemplifies the way the Rockies have withstood multiple injuries and grabbed first place in the National League West through one month. Hey, that was my immediate thought when I sat down to write. But, put simply, center fielder and leadoff man Charlie Blackmon has been the best player at his job in the league.

Of the 10 NL players with 100 or more leadoff plate appearances, Blackmon is tops in OPS (.925), home runs (seven) and RBIs (24). He has a .290 average, but he has hit .330 since a 2-for-19 start. His OPS and his .589 slugging percentage are tops among center fielders, as well.

These stats are worth remembering when you cast your Esurance MLB All-Star Game Ballot.

This team has a different (positive) vibe this year in spite of some individual struggles. Is that because of Bud Black? -- @ginaindenver

It begins and usually ends with pitching. Poor starting pitching like the Rockies had last April leaves teams looking dispirited. Poor bullpen work, which is how the Rockies finished the year, leaves teams frustrated. There is talent in the rotation and experience in the bullpen. Even if a team’s offense is struggling, it realizes there is still a chance to win.

"As an offense we put pressure on ourselves because we want to do well -- hit the ball, score runs and do our jobs," third baseman Nolan Arenado said. "But there’s less anxiety and stress, knowing that we don’t have to score six or seven to win a ballgame like has happened in the past. There are times we need to do that, but for the most part this year we haven’t had to."

Black’s difference is his area of expertise, which allows him credibility to personally establish and uphold standards with pitching execution. That includes challenging a young catching staff, as well.

When do the Rockies start shopping CarGo for a starting pitcher? --@vegastbone
That's easy. They don't.

Trading right fielder Carlos Gonzalez is something they do if they fall hopelessly out of the race, and they don't plan on that. If they're trying to win, they don't trade someone who is just 31 (they're not the 2016 Yankees waiting for Mark Teixiera and Alex Rodriguez, who were considerably older, while the season fell apart) and capable of carrying the team for stretches.

Besides, dealing him at the end of an expensive contract won't bring much. Prospects bring more.

What position do you see Desmond starting at tomorrow and most of the time against right-handed pitchers?

Thanks. -- @grant_giroue

I love being stumped, and I am stumped here. But I would imagine this would cut some into the starts by Reynolds and left fielder Gerardo Parra, and would depend on matchup histories. Whomever doesn't start will be an asset off the bench.

What is it that Tyler Anderson needs to do to get the results he was getting last year? Is a trip to the Minors in order? -- @ATP303

With the Rockies trying to make sure that their No. 2 prospect, righty Jeff Hoffman, will come to the Majors and stick, there really isn't an alternative. But Black is calling for Anderson to correct his issues … like, now.

Director of pitching operations Mark Wiley said, "It's the consistency of the approach. He throws quality pitches, but then there's a little more effort to try to finish a guy and it's disruptive. Your mechanics sometimes change because of your mental approach to it and you try to do too much.

"He's a rhythm guy. One he locks in, he'll be fine."

Who seems like the most logical player to be added to the 40-man following infielder Cristhian Adames being designated for assignment? -- @RoxRake

This is a good way to explain a rule. To add a player to the 40-man Major League roster during the season, he has to be put on the 25-man active roster. So the Rockies will merely leave that spot open. They may need it after a trade or to add players when rosters expand in September.
Mark Reynolds got hung up in a free-agent market in which the supply of first basemen dwarfed the demand.

After turning down an early offer to re-sign with the Rockies, Reynolds found himself sitting at home at the end of January still waiting for a proposal other than the $3 million offer he received from a team in Korea.

"I have three little boys, and I'm not taking them all over the world," he said. "It's not all about the money. It's about being somewhere I'm comfortable, and being able to compete and win. As long as I had a chance to make [a big league] squad I was going to stay over here and work."

Finally, the offer came. Colorado, where he played last season, was one of a handful of teams to offer Reynolds a Minor League deal and an invite to camp.

Even though the Rockies already had signed versatile Ian Desmond to a five-year, $70 million deal, and made it clear he was going to move to first base, Reynolds decided to take a shot.

It paid off -- for Reynolds and Colorado.

OK, Reynolds is making $1.5 million, well below the deals that went to such players as Edwin Encarnacion (three years, $60 million from the Indians), Mark Trumbo (three years, $37.5 million from the Orioles) and Brandon Moss (two years, $12 million from the Royals), and even the one-year deals Mike Napoli signed with the Rangers ($8.5 million) and Chris Carter received from the Yankees ($3.5 million).

But Reynolds is not complaining. He got an opportunity -- Desmond sustained a broken hand during Spring Training and was on the disabled list until Sunday -- and he has taken advantage of it. Reynolds is a key part of the Rockies -- a team that entered May in first place in the National League West, having compiled the third best April record (16-10) in franchise history for a season unimpacted by a players' strike.

And Colorado isn't complaining.
Desmond came off the disabled list Sunday, and immediately got the call in left field, a position he learned to play a year ago with the Rangers. He will assuredly get some time at first base, a position he did spend the offseason and spring learning to play.

And Desmond would seem a cinch to get in some time at shortstop if for no reason other than to give Trevor Story a break from a first-month struggle that could be traced to self-created pressure to duplicate last year’s eye-opening big league debut.

The Rockies, after all, found Desmond the most attractive free-agent possibility at first base not because he was a prototypical first baseman. Just the opposite. They liked him because they saw his athletic versatility, felt it would give them roster flexibility over time, and envisioned him as a Ben Zobrist-type player with a high upside on the offensive side.

And Reynolds? Well, they knew from last year he was an upper-echelon defensive first baseman with legit power.

And Reynolds didn’t hide the fact that Desmond or not he wanted to return to Colorado, looking for some stability in a career that a year ago saw the Rockies become his seventh team in seven seasons.

"It had been a long time since I had been on the same team two years in a row," Reynolds said. "I wanted to be here. I know the guys in this clubhouse, the trainers, front-office people. When I got the chance it was up to me to make it tough for [manager] Buddy [Black] to get me out of the lineup."

So far Reynolds has been more than Colorado could have hoped.

Yes, there are five more months to the season, but in an opening month in which the Rockies’ offense never took hold, Reynolds was a much-needed lift. He hit .298, second among players on the team with at least 50 plate appearances to Tony Wolters (.360).

Reynolds also was second on Colorado and fifth in the NL with 23 RBIs, tops on the Rockies and tied for fifth in the NL with eight home runs, and second on the Rox, 17th in the NL with a .968 OPS.

Reynolds was confident about returning to Colorado, even if it was going to be in a part-time role.

"I felt I had a better chance making the string because I knew the people here, and they knew me," he said.
It's worked out even better. So much better that Reynolds, without hesitation, welcomed the activation of Desmond from the disabled list.

"Des is going to contribute to this team more than first base," Reynolds said. "He's an All-Star outfielder. He's an All-Star shortstop. It's tough to make All-Star teams at multiple positions, infield and outfield. He's done that because he is a good athlete."

Reynolds, however, isn't bad, either. He reaffirmed that in the opening month of the season.

And the Rockies aren't complaining. They were planning on Desmond becoming the versatile veteran on the roster at some point in his five-year contract. It just happened sooner than anticipated.
Rockies’ defense, paced by Nolan Arenado’s magic, becoming a team strength

Last season, the Rockies had a .982 fielding percentage and ranked 28th in the majors

By Patrick Saunders / Denver Post | May 1st, 2017

Nolan Arenado was ticked off. He had almost pulled off one of the greatest plays of his highlight-filled career.

In the third inning of Friday night’s Rockies game at Chase Field in Phoenix, Arizona’s A.J. Pollock hit a groundball down the third-base line. The baseball hit the bag and took a sudden left turn toward foul ground. In a nanosecond, Arenado reached out, caught the ball in his bare right hand and threw it to first base.

The throw didn’t have much juice as it skipped toward first baseman Mark Reynolds, and Pollock was safe with an infield single.

“Man, I just couldn’t get the right grip, so I had to kind of shot put it,” Arenado lamented. “I was ticked off, because I almost had him.”

Almost isn’t good enough for the Rockies’ four-time Gold Glove third baseman, and that feeling has spread throughout the team, which is off to a 16-10 start in large part because of its defense.

“We feel like we want to make every single play,” said shortstop Trevor Story. “We work hard at that in pregame. We practice it. We practice hard, even now, during the season, and I think it’s paying off.

“We want our pitchers to know we will make plays. We want them to have confidence so they don’t try to pitch too fine.”

Defense was not the Rockies’ forte last season. Their .982 fielding percentage ranked 28th in the majors, and their 110 errors tied with Pittsburgh for third most. Overall, the crispness and the big-moment plays that characterize winning teams were absent. For comparison, consider the 2007 World Series Rockies, who set a major-league record for team fielding percentage (.989) and committed only 68 errors, by far the fewest in franchise history.

These Rockies certainly aren’t those Rockies, but they’re making strides. While the rebuilt bullpen has clearly been the star of the show, the defense has been solid. The Rockies rank 11th in baseball with a .987 fielding percentage. Toss out two uncharacteristically ugly games against Washington in high-scoring affairs last week at Coors Field and the Rockies would rank much higher.

“Overall, our defense has been really good,” first-year manager Bud Black said, singling out outfielders Gerardo Parra, Charlie Blackmon and Carlos Gonzalez, along with Story, and, of course, Arenado.
“There were a couple of lapses against the Nationals, but those games got a little chaotic — for both sides,” Black said. “But for the most part, our defense has been solid.”

Black likes his team to be aggressive, on offense and defense. That’s why he was thrilled with Parra’s diving catch on Chris Owings’ sinking line drive in the ninth inning of Colorado’s 7-6, comeback win over the Diamondbacks on Saturday night.

“If you’re not hitting — I had a bad day today — I want to try to do something,” Parra said then. “This time, I wanted to catch everything in left field. That’s a great moment for the win.”

Reynolds has been the unsung hero. When Ian Desmond got hurt during spring training, Reynolds became the starting first baseman by default, but he has been excellent, having committed just two errors in 259 total chances and earning the trust of his fellow infielders.

“I have improved,” he said. “I know that I don’t want the guys in the infield to lose confidence in me. I want them to be able to make a spinning throw, or throw it in the dirt and know there’s a good chance I’m going to pick it up for them. I want those guys to have confidence in me.”

Looking Ahead …

**Rockies RHP Tyler Chatwood** (2-3, 4.88 ERA) at **Padres RHP Trevor Cahill** (1-2, 4.50), Tuesday 8:10 p.m., ROOT TV, 850 AM

We could dismiss Chatwood’s wild home-road splits as the product of a small sample size through five outings this season. Except it continues a trend from his full 2016 season. Chatwood continues to be outstanding away from Coors Field, with a 2.40 ERA (four runs allowed in 15 innings) in two road starts this year. At home, his ERA is 7.16 (13 runs in 16 1/3 innings). In 2016, he had a 1.69/6.12 ERA home-road split. Chatwood has been terrific at Petco Park in San Diego, with a 2.32 career ERA there over five games and 31 innings (he gave up just one run there in two games last season, over 14 2/3 innings). *Nick Groke, The Denver Post*

**Wednesday:** RHP Antonio Senzatela (3-1, 2.81) at Padres RHP Jared Weaver (0-2, 4.71), 8:10 p.m., ROOT

**Thursday:** Rockies LHP Kyle Freeland at Padres RHP Luis Perdomo (0-0, 4.96), 1:40 p.m., ROOT

**Friday:** Diamondbacks TBA at Rockies LHP Tyler Anderson (1-3, 7.71), 6:40 p.m., ROOT
Rockies prospect Ryan Castellani struggling so far for Double-A Hartford

Weekly updates, quotes, news, and notes from the Hartford Yard Goats, the Double-A Eastern League affiliate of the Colorado Rockies from April 25 to May 1

By Adam Peterson / Purple Row | @playerTBNL | May 2, 2017, 10:00am MDT

The Hartford Yard Goats (8-13) were foiled by rain twice last week, but the days off didn’t seem to help their fledgling bats. The team scored just six runs in the four games they did play to fall into last place in the Eastern League Eastern Division with the worst record in the league.

As a team the Yard Goats are hanging out at the bottom of the offensive leaderboards: they are last in batting average (.224) and on-base percentage (.298), second to last in runs per game (3.71) and on-base-plus-slugging percentage (.653), and have struck out more than any other team in the league (195). If you’re looking for bright spots, they do lead the league in triples and stolen bases.

News and Notes, April 25 - May 7

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There are a few Yard Goats who are hitting and Ryan McMahon (no. 7 PuRP) is one of them. Fresh off his Player of the Week honors last week, McMahon finished April hitting .375/.422/.675 with four home runs to go along with eight doubles and two triples. His strikeout-to-walk ratio is an acceptable 14:8 and he appears well on his way to making up for his struggles in Double-A last season.

Another week, another impressive outing from Yency Almonte (no. 12 PuRP). “Showtime” allowed one run on five hits in six innings on Friday and still looks like one of the best pitchers in the Eastern League.

Dom Nuñez (no. 14 PuRP) made three starts last week, due to the rain, and went 3-for-10 with a walk and a stolen base. That nearly doubled his hit total on the season and now owns a .163/.308/.302 batting line.
Sam Howard (no. 20 PuRP) started the year with Triple-A Albuquerque but has made his previous two starts with Harford. His last one, on Sunday against Richmond, Howard went just four innings throwing 70 pitches, so it’s possible that he’s still being stretched out to being able to pitch full games. He allowed two runs on two hits and two walks with two strikeouts.

Parker French (no. 26 PuRP) was blown up a bit in his last start, lasting just four innings as he allowed five earned runs on seven hits and three walks. He now has the same number of strikeouts (9) as walks on the season.

Honorable mention PuRP Jack Wynkoop had his turn in the rotation skipped due to all the rainouts. He is scheduled to start again on May 2.

New Rockies relief prospect James Farris earned a save in the lone Yard Goats win last week, pitching a clean ninth with one strikeout. Max White may be slowing down, as he had just two hits (both doubles) in Hartford’s four games last week. He’s now hitting .300/.375/.529 in 20 games this season.

**Spotlight On: Ryan Castellani’s rough day**

Ryan Castellani (no. 9 PuRP) made one start this week and it did not end well. Going into the sixth inning he had scattered four hits (including a home run) with three strikeouts. It came apart with one out in the sixth, though, as the Portland Sea Dogs went single, single, walk, double, walk. He was then removed with the bases loaded for Steve Ascher—who promptly allowed a bases clearing double. His final line (5½ IP, 7 H, 6 R/ER, 2 BB, 3 K), therefore, looks quite a bit uglier than it would have had Ascher been able to get the final out.

Castellani’s ERA now sits at a gruesome 5.88 due to some tough luck, even if that’s no the whole story. He’s still striking out more than a batter per inning and walking just over three per nine innings, but he needs to limit hits more to turn around the results.

**Looking Ahead**

The Yard Goats will finish up their homestand against the second place Portland Sea Dogs (11-8) before heading out to Pennsylvania to take on the Harrisburg Senators (10-12) for four games before hosting the New Hampshire FisherCats for four games.
For more Yard Goats news, links, coverage and Twitter, check out the links below. The Bleating Hartford blog is looking for a new hosting site, so stay tuned to that for the time being.

If you have any questions or requests of what you'd like to see in this column, drop me a line in the comments, on Twitter (@playerTBNL), or via email (adamedpeterson@gmail.com).

#EatItUp
Colorado Rockies: Who should really replace Jon Gray? Bullpen or rookie?

By Quinn Ritzdorf / Rox Pile | May 2, 2017, 10:00am MDT

Jon Gray was diagnosed with a stress fracture in his left foot on April 14. He is expected to miss at least the next two weeks before being further evaluated.

Gray originally injured his foot during Spring Training. However, he aggravated it against the San Francisco Giants on April 13 as he jumped up to try to field a bouncing ground ball.

Gray was able to finish the inning, but never came back to pitch in the fourth.

This was and is a major blow to the Rockies starting rotation. Gray was supposed to be the ace of the rotation, but who knows how this injury will affect the Rockies (and more importantly Gray) when he returns.

However, we can only worry about the present. So my question is, who should replace Jon Gray until he returns from the disabled list?

You may think you already know the answer to that question, but let’s look at some possibilities. Stay open-minded as we run through some of the choices.

Personally, my first choice is Chris Rusin. After Gray left the game against the Giants following the third inning, Rusin came in and only gave up two hits and one run in 3.1 innings.

Rusin has experience as a starter. In the 83 games he has pitched in, 49 of them have come as a starter. Granted he did struggle as a starter, going 10-23 with a 5.19 ERA in his career.

I do think that he would be able to fill in that role until Gray returns. He has had good production as a reliever, going 5-1 with a 3.38 ERA in his career. He would just have to learn to continue that production into six or seven innings rather than three or four.

Another possible candidate that could come out of the bullpen to fill Gray’s spot in the starting rotation is Jordan Lyles.

Unlike Rusin, Lyles has struggled to begin the 2017 season. Heading into Sunday, he had pitched 10.2 innings and has given up 16 hits and 11 runs with a 9.28 ERA. Unfortunately, we all know what happened when Lyles entered the game in Arizona on Sunday.
However, he has 102 games of pitching experience as a starter. As a starter, his production is very similar to Rusin’s going 24-39 with a 5.15 ERA.

Neither Rusin or Lyles are ideal in this situation, then again when is it ever ideal to find a replacement for your ace? If the Rockies want to stay with their current roster, those two guys are their best options.

Colorado has already seemingly filled Gray’s absence with German Marquez. In two starts since bringing him up from Triple-A Albuquerque, Marquez is 0-1 with a 7.20 ERA. The verdict has been split so far. He looked shaky giving up eight runs in four innings against Washington but looked solid with six shutout innings against Arizona on Sunday.

**MORE FROM ROX PILE**

It follows a trend from last season where Marquez had looked good in two starts but blew up in a third. Consistency has been a trouble spot for the young right-hander.

Personally, I don’t agree with Colorado’s decision of bringing Marquez up. I believe they should have stayed with their current roster rather than throwing Marquez into the fire, even though he has shown promise in Triple-A.

Marquez will get another chance to prove himself when the Rockies return home this weekend to face the Arizona Diamondbacks.

If things don’t go well again for him, I think the Rockies will have to look at other options. What about Jeff Hoffman, who has shown flashes of brilliance in Triple-A? Could Rusin be given a chance to hold the position until Gray returns?

Another possibility is letting Rusin start while sliding Marquez over into Rusin’s spot in the bullpen as a long reliever.

There are many options the Rockies can play with until Gray’s return. The Rockies just need to find a way to survive the next couple of weeks with their ace out of the lineup, whether that’s a young star trying to prove himself or a couple of starters turned relievers looking for a second chance.
The Colorado Rockies have opened the 2017 season as hot as just about any team in baseball. With a record of 16-10, the Rockies sit atop the National League West after one month of play.

In the offseason, the Rockies added manager Bud Black, first basemen Ian Desmond, and relief pitchers Mike Dunn and Greg Holland. So far, the Rockies additions have put them in solid standing out of the gate in 2017 despite injuries to Desmond and Dunn during the season’s first month.

As it stands, the Rockies’ offense and defense rank among the NL’s best. Collectively, the Rockies sit top-five in runs, hits and home runs in the NL, per usual. They rank sixth in fielding percentage and would rank higher were it not for a two-game stretch against Washington that produced five of their 13 errors.

The offense got off to a slow start, but what’s been most surprising this year has been the pitching. With an average age of 24.8 on Opening Day, the Rockies owned the NL’s youngest pitching staff. With the loss of Jon Gray, the NL’s youngest got even younger in April; however, so far both Colorado’s starting rotation and bullpen have held their own. As a whole, the Rockies staff ranked among the top of the NL rankings in wins and innings pitched, boasting durability and production for the developing staff.

While April was certainly impressive, the outlook for the team’s future this season should have people excited. As it stands, the Rockies sit six games above .500. That said, they have missed key pieces Jon Gray and Ian Desmond for much of the early part of the season. Now though, the Rockies are coming around collectively. As a unit, Colorado is starting to fire on all cylinders which have them in a good standing moving forward this season.

Colorado may be off to a good start out of the gate in 2017, but consistency is key in the big leagues. If the Rockies want to sustain this level of play, they will need the offense and the starters to continue handing the bullpen a lead and limiting its workload. The month of April was certainly a huge success in a season suddenly full of expectations for Colorado.

Maintaining those expectations in May will be no small order as they open with a pair of series against division rivals San Diego and Arizona before hosting the World Champion Chicago Cubs. A visit from Los Angeles doesn’t make things any easier to follow.
After an off day Monday, they turn the page to May on Tuesday in San Diego hoping for an equally strong second month of the season.
DENVER — The Rockies are off to one of their hottest starts ever, finishing April with a 16-10 record and sitting, to the surprise of many, in first place in the NL West. But with the first month of play behind them, there is one common caution being shared by Denver fans: “Don’t get excited yet, the Rockies are always good in April.”

Yes, in the past few seasons the Rockies have regularly posted a winning record through their first month. In 2016 they went 11-12, the first season since 2010 they posted a record below .500 in April.

There has already been a feast of articles about why this season’s team is not like the April Rockies of years past. But here’s the point: there is little correlation between any of the team’s April performances. Each featured different rosters, different dynamics, different levels of opposition within the division. Just about the only thing they have in common is the word “April.”

Beyond the observable fact that the Rockies have had more winning records than losing in April in recent years, there is nothing to take away from pointing out that the Rockies are “good” in this one particular month.

But in the same way people often extrapolate a lot of information from small sample sizes through the early part of the season, April is the only time where anyone looks at a team’s record in a given month as an indicator of future performance.

April does stand as the team’s best performing month historically, with a lifetime winning percentage of .502. But that’s not far off from their record in September of .497, and in both months they have posted winning records in nine out of the team’s 24 seasons (of course, the 1994 strike meant a short August ’95 season and no games played in September of ’94).

But when September rolls around and the Rockies are (hopefully) in the playoff race, nobody will be arguing for optimism because “the Rockies are always pretty good in September.” By then, with a full almost season of games and data behind us, that argument would just sound silly. It sounds just as silly in April.
It’s also worth noting that the idea that the Rockies are good in April is a somewhat recent development. In 2005, and running up until about 2011, the narrative was that fans should overlook the team’s April performances in searching for optimism because the team was “always” bad in April. In that span, they posted a winning record in only 2007.

The Rockies could run into trouble in May, sure. Or in June, July or any other month, and for a variety of reasons: injuries, the starting rotation’s performance declines, some of last year’s culprits in the bullpen struggle again. But it won’t be because it’s not April anymore.

There are only two members of the 2013 opening day roster who are also members of this current team. Carlos Gonzalez and Adam Ottavino. The clothes don’t have special powers.

The Rockies were good in April because the Rockies of 2017 are a good team, and they will probably continue to be a good team. But for those still attached to the month-by-month analysis, this month should be very telling — May is historically the team’s worst performing month (with a winning percentage of .434). So if the Rockies struggle, we can all comfort ourselves by remembering that the Rockies are always bad in May.
What can we conclude so far about Rockies bats?

By Ben Karp / BSN Denver | May 2, 2017

Wow. Just…. wow. I mean, I know the Rockies have historically been successful in April, but leading the NL at month’s end is something else. We are still only a month into the baseball season, however. Besides some trivial factoids to describe what has occurred thus far, what can we really conclude about this team’s performance thus far?

In answering such a question, we must be mindful of one very important aspect—sample sizes. We must first establish a threshold for sample size of each metric. Any samples greater than that of the established threshold can be used for meaningful analysis.

I’m not going to try and run the numbers on my own for this. There is plenty of precedent on the subject, beginning with Russell Carleton’s work all the way back in 2007 (Carleton used the alias ‘Pizza Cutter’ online prior to joining Baseball Prospectus).

Carleton established a simple method for establishing the necessary threshold for each individual metric, placing it at the point where the r value of the sample and it’s set of expected values equals 0.7. This means that Carleton believes a metric is reliable to use once the actual data and predicted data are at least 70% correlated. Carleton’s explains:

“In social science, we look for a magic number…and usually, the gold standard for reliability is .70…. Why am I obsessed with .70? Because a correlation of .70 means an R-squared of 49%. Anything north of .70 means that a majority of the variance (> 50%) is stable.”

In layman’s terms, a correlational value greater than 0.7 suggests at least half the variation in the data can explained by player performance. It is approximately the point where we can trust that the data is a greater result of skill than noise.

Sounds like a good threshold, right? Fangraphs seems to think so. They display Carleton’s updated values on their own site.

There are plenty of detractors, however. Harry Pavlidis uses an r threshold of 0.5 in his own research. At Tom Tango’s suggestion, Derek Carty does the same. Tango himself has long argued for the use of 0.5. In Tango’s own words:
“Basically, Pizza sets the threshold at \( r = 0.70 \), whereas I set the threshold at \( r = 0.50 \). Why do I prefer mine? Because with my threshold, I can tell you exactly how much to regress the stats. It gives you extra information. In addition, I can explain it in English. If I set the OBP threshold at PA-210, then I can say: ‘If the player has 210 plate appearances, then his OBP is half real and half noise. Regress his OBP by 50% toward the mean.’”

This reasoning seems more like a convenience than actual evidence of Tango’s theory being better than Carleton’s. At the end of the day, these values are still semi-arbitrary. Considering both likely contain merit, let’s take a look at the hitter metric thresholds for both models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>( r=0.5 )</th>
<th>( r=0.7 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K%</td>
<td>30 PA</td>
<td>60 PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB%</td>
<td>75 PA</td>
<td>120 PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBP%</td>
<td>275 PA</td>
<td>240 PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B%</td>
<td>285 PA</td>
<td>290 PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XBH%</td>
<td>620 PA</td>
<td>1610 PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR%</td>
<td>565 PA</td>
<td>170 PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVG</td>
<td>270 AB</td>
<td>910 AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBP</td>
<td>230 PA</td>
<td>460 PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLG</td>
<td>235 AB</td>
<td>320 AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>270 AB</td>
<td>160 AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB%</td>
<td>30 BIP</td>
<td>80 BIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB%</td>
<td>30 BIP</td>
<td>80 BIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD%</td>
<td>280 BIP</td>
<td>600 BIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR/FB</td>
<td>170 FBs</td>
<td>50 FBs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BABIP</td>
<td>855 BIP</td>
<td>820 BIP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By Tango’s model, we can begin to analyze the Rockies from both a true outcomes perspective and a batted-ball profile perspective. However, I am going to play it safe (and lazy), and only analyze what Carleton’s model tells us we can conclude. At this point in the season, the only metric that seems to be usable is K%. Let’s dig deeper into the Rockies performance in that regard.
In aggregate, we see an ever so slight increase in K% from Rockies hitters that have achieved the 60 PA threshold compared to 2016. But the difference may not be of statistical significance. Of greater significance is the concerted efforts this team in improving contact rate over each player’s respective career.

More specifically, I would like to point out two prime examples–DJ LeMahieu and Mark Reynolds. Both seem to have undergone a large change in approach prior to 2016. LeMahieu seems to have found a way to improve contact and power simultaneously. Reynolds, on the other hand, has been in the league for quite some time now. It’s amazing how he made a living as the single-season strikeout champ, only to reinvent himself for greater production at Coors Field.
DENVER (AP) — Greg Holland still laments the save that slipped away last summer while he was recovering from Tommy John surgery.

The situation: His kayak/canoe hybrid capsized on a North Carolina river, sending him into the water and a few of his high-priced fishing poles drifting away in the current. He just couldn't hang on to them.

Holland's been flawless in the saving-things department ever since.

In his first season back following elbow reconstructive surgery, the closer is 11 for 11 in save chances. He's also helped the Colorado Rockies finish the first month of the season atop the NL West (16-10).

"The ball, for the most part, it's been spinning true out of my hand," said Holland, who's allowed two runs in 12 innings while striking out 13. "As long as I'm doing my job and getting people out, that's all I'm concerned with."

His fastball is touching 96 mph again. His pitches are filled with extreme movement again. This version of Holland resembles the one that became a two-time All-Star with Kansas City, before he underwent surgery in October 2015 just as the Royals were rolling toward a World Series title.

He spent a year out of baseball — and without a team — as he went through rehab. But he's not looking back, only thinking about arm angle, pitch location and getting the job done.

Holland's 11 saves in April tied Brian Fuentes (May 2007) and Huston Street (June 2009) for the most in a month in team history. The dependability of the 31-year-old Holland has provided an instant shot in the arm to a once-maligned bullpen. Colorado's relievers had a big league-worst 5.13 ERA last year and 28 blown saves.

Now, they're holding opponents to a .229 batting average and boast an 8-0 mark in one-run games.

"We want to be a strength of the team," reliever Adam Ottavino said. "We take that to heart."

It's been a trying road back for Holland, who became a free agent in December 2015 when Kansas City failed to offer a 2016 contract. There have been some moments where he wasn't sure when he would see a big-league mound again.

"I don't know if anxiety is the right word, but a little bit of doubt creeps in," said Holland, who was taken by the Royals in the 10th round of the 2007 first-year player draft out of Western Carolina. "You have to play the waiting game."

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While he was away from baseball, he hung out with his wife and his young son, played some golf — once the elbow was up for it — and squeezed in some hunting and fishing. He has a whopper of a fishing tale, too: Losing his rods when his kayak/canoe went sideways through a current and sent him into the waist-deep water. His brother tried to paddle over to help and flipped as well.

"No one was hurt," Holland said. "But me and my brother lost four rods — that was kind of (lousy)."

In early November at a workout, there were reports Holland was throwing in the vicinity of 89-91 mph. It was a considerable gap from his customary 96-mph heater.

That didn't deter the Rockies, especially with pitching coach Steve Foster once serving as Holland's coach in Kansas City and bullpen coach Darren Holmes living down the road from him in Asheville, North Carolina.

"Found out a lot about him, even before I shook his hand," Rockies manager Bud Black said. "The thing that stood out for me with this guy, and you find this in most great players ... his preparation is top-notch."

The Rockies officially signed Holland on Jan. 28. His fastball has rapidly picked up steam — from the 91 mph range in early March to 96 while earning his 11th save at Arizona on Saturday.

This could turn out to be quite a lucrative deal for him.

Holland is scheduled to make $6 million this year in a deal that includes plenty of incentives. The contract also has a $15 million conditional player option for 2018 that Holland could exercise if he has at least 50 pitching appearances or 30 games finished this year. If he fails to reach either of those, there would be a $10 million mutual option with a $1 million buyout if Holland declines to exercise it.

There's also this: $100,000 for Comeback Player of the Year.

"Right now, this early in the season, I'm in a good spot," Holland said. "I'm not worried about what I looked like two or three years ago. I'm worried about being the best version of me, right now, that I can be."
On Tap: 3 Games in San Diego

By Tracy Ringolsby / Inside the Seams | May 1, 2017

Tyler Chatwood has become baseball’s road warrior, and he gets a chance to add to the reputation in Tuesday’s opening game of the Rockies three-game visit to Petco Park.

Since the start of last season, Chatwood is 9-2 with a 1.80 ERA in 15 road starts, the best road mark in baseball. He also has the lowest average allowed (.188) and slugging percentage (.285) among pitchers with a minimum 75 innings on the road.

He also has had his success at Petco Park, where he is 3-0 with a 2.32 ERA in five career starts.

THE PADRES did win two of three from the Rockies at Coors Field April 10-12. The Rockies were only 2-for-32 with runners on base and 1-for-13 with runners in scoring position during those games.

Wil Myers

Wil Myers was 7-for-10 with three RBI with two doubles, two home runs, two triples, a hit by pitch and a sacrifice fly. Myers comes into the series hitting .310 this year with seven home runs, seven doubles, two triples and 20 RBI.

Myers is a career .343 hitter against the Rockies with 10 doubles, three triples, nine home runs and 32 RBI, and it’s not all a Coors Field creation. He has hit .308 with five doubles, a triple, three home runs and 13 RBI in 65 at-bats at Petco Park.

Myers did drive in 20 runs in April, the most for a Padres player since Adrian Gonzalez drove in 20 in April of 2009.

Mike Dunn

IAN DESMOND came off the disabled list on Sunday, and there was speculation last week that if all went well for Mike Dunn in an extended spring game in Arizona on Monday he could be activated Wednesday.

The left-handed Dunn, a key factor in the Rockies late-inning bullpen success, has been sidelined with back spasms.

THE PADRES have a 20-9 edge on the Rockies at Petco Park since the start of 2014, the fifth best winning percentage by an NL team vs. a divisional opponent during that stretch.
The Nationals are 24-6 at home against the Braves, and the Dodgers have the next three edges, 24-8 against the Diamondbacks, 23-8 against the Rockies and 23-10 against the Padres.

Charlie Blackmon and Mark Reynolds

DID YOU KNOW that Charlie Blackmon (24) and Mark Reynolds (23) combined RBI total of 47 in April is the sixth best total of Rockies teammates in April, according to Stats, Inc.

Andres Galarraga (30) and Dante Bichette (24) set the franchise record of 54 in 1994 and in 2007 it was matched by Larry Walker (29) and Vinny Castilla (25). Walker (29) and Todd Helton (23) combined for 53 RBI in 2001; Helton (27) and Preston Wilson (24) 51 in 2003, and Castilla (28) and Bichette (21) 49 in 1998.