

## Never short on bats..... just quality arms to get outs at Coors



**5. Colorado Rockies:** There's been one constant besides from losing with the Colorado Rockies. Todd Helton is the constant. Helton has always played in a Rockies uniform and been steadily good year in and year out. Until the middle of last season there was another constant for about five or six seasons - Larry Walker. The St. Louis Cardinals made a trade with Colorado to acquire Walker, who would later help them reach the World Series and was probably the lone bat that hit vs. Boston.

Because Coors Field is such a slugger's park, Helton does not get the attention say of a Barry Bonds, Alex Rodriguez or very elite hitter. But make no mistake about it, Helton is one of the elite players in the game today.

Colorado's pitching has always been bad whether it be in the rotation, bullpen or both. There have been a few guys here and there that have gone on to do well in other places like Mike Hampton, the best active hitting pitcher in the game, for example. However, no superstar wants to go to and pitch there, period. They're definitely keeping their fingers crossed that Jason Jennings, the second best hitting pitcher in the game next to Hampton, can return to his initial form when he was a ROY candidate there. Furthermore, Clint Hurdle would like to see Shawn Chacon's return to the rotation pay dividends. Chacon does not have a library of pitches considering all he really throws is a sinking fastball and a curve toss. His big problems deal more with control than velocity. People like rookie Jeff Francis and his long-term potential. Startling: that's the first word that came to mind when I saw Francis' 388 to 82 strikeout/walk ratio in the minors. Definitely a candidate to be the best rookie pitcher in the National League this season. Nonetheless, potential is potential, and that means you haven't done anything yet.

**Ideal #2 Starter: Joe Kennedy - Kennedy, a lefty, remarkably kept his ERA under four playing in Colorado. In addition, the soon-to-be 26-year-old held the opposition to a .222 BA with runners aboard.**

There are some auspiciously encouraging prospects in the Rockies organization. Leadoff hitter/second baseman Aaron Miles was tops in runs and hits among all Major League rookies in '04. Batting behind him is one of the PCL's (Pacific Coast League) best players from a year ago - shortstop Clint Barnes, who hit .328 down there. Barnes also had 16 homers, 51 RBI and 20SB in AAA Colorado Springs. Garrett Atkins' .366 BA was best for minor league hitters, and Ian Stewart is another good third baseman in the making. Their depth in the infield is pretty good, but they want more consistency from Alfredo Amézaga and Desi Relaford (15-day DL due to cartilage damage in his left knee), both of which are defensive oriented players. That means Luis Gonzalez could see a lot of time in spot duty. The outfield is not the greatest in Colorado's short history. Losing Jeromy Burnitz and Walker hurt them, and it will continue to plague them if Preston Wilson cannot stay on the field. Matt Holiday (.290 14HR 57RBI) could be headed for a sophomore slump if he has to bat real high in the lineup. Dustan Mohr might end up being the team's most productive outfielder with the bat and glove. Says one former GM regarding Mohr, "He's one of my favorite players in the game because of

the way he plays the game.” Their bullpen is nothing to write home about, and it does not say much when your best reliever at the end of the year – LH Javier Lopez – had a season ERA of 7.52 with a record of 1-2.



**Rockies first baseman Todd Helton, the man with the highest batting average in baseball since 2000 (.349).**

**Bottom Line:** The Rockies play at Coors Field and because they play there they will not have one of the National League’s best team ERA’s. What they will be able to do is score runs, most coming from the bat of Helton. This is a division with a lot of question marks from the Dodgers and D-Backs, to how good the Padres offense can be to the Giants with Bonds’ health. For Col. to be a pleasant surprise they must perform well in the pre/early summer months (i.e. June and July).

**Projected Order:** 2B Aaron Miles  
SS Clint Barnes  
1B Todd Helton  
CF Preston Wilson  
LF Matt Holliday  
3B Garrett Atkins  
RF Dustan Mohr  
C J.D. Closser

**Projected Staff:** R Jason Jennings  
L Joe Kennedy  
R Shawn Chacon  
L Jeff Francis/R Aaron Cook (Injured)  
R Jamey Wright

*Pick: 5<sup>th</sup> in the NL West; finish 6-8 games back of LA for fourth place*