

## **Brewers Dominate the Rockies in a 3-Game NLDS Sweep, Advance to the NLCS for Third Time**



Russell Lansford/USA Today Sports

Milwaukee Brewers catcher Erik Kratz celebrates with relief pitcher Josh Hader as the Brewers clinch the NLDS in a 3-game sweep of the Colorado Rockies.

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In a must-win game for the Colorado Rockies, the Wild Card winners came up short against the Milwaukee Brewers, losing Game 3 of the NLDS. The Rockies could not muster the momentum or the runs needed to keep their postseason chances alive. Instead they were shut out for the second game in a row, falling 6-0 to the Brewers, who swept the series. Twenty-three-year-old German Marquez got the start for the Rockies, while recent AA call-up Wade Miley—who had to reinvent himself to stay in the game—was on the rubber for the Brewers.

The Brewers quickly jumped out on top in the first inning after Marquez surrendered a lead-off walk to outfielder Christian Yelich,—whose hot bat has him in the hunt for the National League MVP title—followed by back-to-back singles to plate the first run. The Rockies showed some promise in the bottom of the second when shortstop Trevor Story hit a line drive to left field for a lead-off single and advanced to second on a Carlos Gonzalez walk. The Rockies had two on and one out, but Miley coaxed a fly out from first baseman Ian Desmond and a ground out from catcher Tony Wolters to end the inning. Miley's addition of a cutter to his pitching repertoire, along with several change of speed pitches, induced a lot of soft contact and playable hits from the batters, stymieing the Rockies.

First baseman Jesus Aguilar tacked on another Brewer run in the top of the fourth when he belted a slider over the outfield fence for a solo homerun, making it a 2-0 game. The Rockies escaped a tough inning in the fifth when center fielder Lorenzo Cain, who has been hitless in the series, singled to right, but was thrown out at second on a fielder's choice after third baseman Nolan Arenado made a nice play on a difficult chopper from Yelich. Yelich stole second and left fielder Ryan Braun sent a ground ball up the middle to place runners at the corners. Second baseman Travis Shaw sent a sharp ball up the right side, which seemed destined for the outfield, but the baseball got tangled up in Braun's feet as he ran to second for the automatic out. Marquez and the Rockies knew they'd caught a lucky break, but that's where their good fortune ended and the game started to unravel.

Rockies coach Bud Black made a pitching change in the top of the sixth, signaling the right-handed Scott Oberg to come on. Oberg got Aguilar on a called third strike for the first out. Then Moustakas hit a blooper into left field for a single, followed by a double off the right field wall by Erick Kratz, who had his third hit of the night. Kratz was picked up midway through the year as a backup catcher for the Brewers, but grabbed the starting position and has been making an impact in the series. The Brewers had runners at

second and third with one out. Shortstop Orlando Arcia struck out, but then Oberg was called for a balk by the second base umpire when he tried to flip the ball in his glove and dropped it with his foot still on the rubber. Third baseman Mike Moustakas scored and Kratz advanced to third. The balk was followed by a wild pitch, plating Kratz. The Brewers now led 4-0, scoring two runs without a hit. Pinch hitter Curtis Granderson struck out to end the inning. The Brewers tacked on two more scores off pitcher Wade Davis in the top of the ninth, with back-to-back home runs from Arcia and pinch hitter Keon Broxton.

With 12 different pitchers making an appearance in the game—six for each team—the fans got a glimpse of the depth of the Brewers bullpen, including the speed of reliever Josh Hader, the fastball phenom, who came in to close out the game.

Not much went right for the Rockies on the chilly Colorado night, but third baseman Nolan Arenado, made a couple of key plays during crucial moments to keep the Rockies in the game in the early innings. “I wanted this, so I was willing to do whatever it took to get the job done. But we just didn’t do that today,” says Arenado. “We’ve struggled during this entire series. We were chasing balls outside the zone and couldn’t get anything going offensively.” The Rockies were 1 for 15 in the NLDS with runners in scoring position, batted a combined .146 and scored a mere two runs in 31 innings during the series.

In the other dugout, 38-year-old Erik Kratz was telling a very different story, tallying a total of five hits and two runs in the series. “I’m still shaking my head. I’ve just been firing on all cylinders,” says Kratz. If there ever was a time to do that, this was it. Kratz went 5 for 8 over the final two games, including a two-run single in Game 2, and a double and a run scored in Sunday’s series-clinching victory for the Brewers. “I plan to keep riding this wave all the way to the end,” says Kratz. The Brewers scored 13 runs over the three games.

Next up: the Brewers have a date with the winner of the Dodgers-Braves series to play in the NLCS, which starts Friday at the Brewers’ home field, Miller Park.