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World Series special

Sean McAdam's daily audio, breaking news reports all day and all night from Fenway, at projosports.com/redsox

Power versus power

Both the Sox and Rockies have powerful combos batting three-four. Here's how Matt Holliday and Todd Helton compare to David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez this season.

	Holliday-Helton	Ortiz-Ramirez
Batting avg.	.330	.315
Home runs	53	55
RBI	228	205
Slugging	.554	.561
Walks	179	182



SECTION C
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A CLOSE CALL

BOSTON — The Red Sox were virtually assured of a spot in the postseason in early September, while the Rockies had to play Game No. 163 just to qualify. On paper, the Sox would seem to rate a big edge. But Colorado's magical September/October run makes this a compelling — and nearly even — matchup.

FIRST BASE

Kevin Youkilis vs. Todd Helton

This matchup will change when the series shifts to Denver and the DH is eliminated, but for the first two games in Boston — and Games Six and Seven, if the series returns to Fenway Park — it's Youkilis vs. Helton. Helton, who was nearly traded to the Sox last winter, remains a plus defender. His power has dipped in recent years, but he's still a dangerous hitter. Youkilis has improved at first — he didn't make an error all season — and had a terrific ALCS, showing he's finally healthy after a late-season hand injury.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

SECOND BASE

Kaz Matsui vs. Dustin Pedroia

Matsui was a bust with the Mets, but he has resurrected his career in Denver and established himself as a leadoff hitter. Pedroia, a candidate for Rookie of the Year, has started slowly in each of his first two postseason series but came on as the series progressed.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

SHORTSTOP

Troy Tulowitzki vs. Julio Lugo

As he did in the regular season, Lugo has struggled at the plate in the postseason. He's also prone to errors at the worst possible time. Tulowitzki has been magnificent for the Rockies, with eye-popping defensive play. He hasn't contributed much offense in October, but knocked in 99 runs during the season. Still, he's invaluable because of his spectacular glove work.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

THIRD BASE

Mike Lowell vs. Garrett Atkins

Following a season in which he led the Red Sox in RBI, Lowell is second in the postseason in the same category. His defense may not be as airtight as a few seasons ago, but he's still above-average at his position. Atkins has hit better than .300 with 100-plus RBI in his last two seasons, though he has just one RBI in seven postseason games.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

LEFT FIELD

Manny Ramirez vs. Matt Holliday

After a subpar — for him, anyway — regular season, Ramirez has been explosive in October, hitting .400 while slugging an other-worldly .833. Defensively, he can surprise you, making spectacular plays at times while botching routine ones. Holliday, who might be the N.L. MVP, had the kind of production Ramirez used to have in his best seasons (36 homers, 137 RBI) and is a far more dependable outfielder.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

CENTER FIELD

Coco Crisp/Jacoby Ellsbury vs. Willy Taveras

The Sox will likely platoon Crisp and Ellsbury in center, but Ellsbury will get the start tonight. Crisp's range is unmatched and will come in handy in the spacious Coors Field outfield expanse. Ellsbury provided some offense in the final two games of the ALCS, but his main contributions come from his energy and speed on the bases. Taveras missed most of September and the NLDS with an injury, before returning for the NLCS. Like Crisp, he offers speed and range in the outfield.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

RIGHT FIELD

J.D. Drew vs. Brad Hawpe

Though Bobby Kielty had some good at-bats against C.C. Sabathia in the ALCS, Drew emerged from an offensive funk in the final two games of the ALCS and could be on something of a roll at the plate. Hawpe can produce runs and has been dependable in the postseason (.307).

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

CATCHER

Yorvit Torrealba vs. Jason Varitek

Varitek has had some timely hits in the postseason, but his chief contribution comes from his game-calling, leadership and handling of the pitching staff. Torrealba was a career journeyman until this year when he established himself as the Rockies' No. 1 catcher. He's second in RBI for Colorado in the postseason.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies



RED SOX GAME ONE STARTER JOSH BECKETT

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GLENN OSMUNDSON

DESIGNATED HITTER

David Ortiz vs. Ryan Spilborghs or Seth Smith

It doesn't matter whom the Rockies utilize in Fenway Park; he'll be no match for Ortiz, one of the game's handful of best hitters with a great track record in October.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

STARTING PITCHERS

The loss of Tim Wakefield hurts the Sox' depth here and forced Curt Schilling to go on normal rest. But even if the Sox have to start Jon Lester in Game Four, they rate a big edge in experience over the Rockies, who can't match the October success of either Schilling or, especially, ace Josh Beckett.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

BULLPEN

The Rockies recast their bullpen midseason when they switched from Brian Fuentes to Manny Corpas as their closer. They have reliable veteran set-up people in Fuentes, Jeremy Affeldt, LaTroy Hawkins and Matt Herges. But the Sox are deep, too — assuming Manny Delcarmen is over his three-run gopher ball to Jhonny Peralta in the ALCS. Jonathan Papelbon gives the Sox a big advantage in the ninth.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

BENCH

Seth Smith has been the Rockies' pinch-hitter deluxe and Jamey Carroll is a useful reserve infielder. But the Sox have more experience and versatility (Alex Cora, Eric Hinske, Bobby Kielty). Moreover, when the series shifts to Denver and the DH is not used, the Sox will have a big productive bat on the bench from the troika of Lowell, Youkilis and Ortiz.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

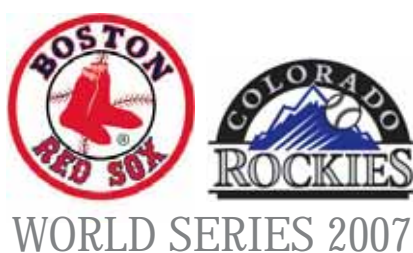
MANAGER

Terry Francona vs. Clint Hurdle

Hurdle has led his team on its incredible stretch run — 21-1 over the last 22 games — but Francona has an amazing .667 career postseason winning percentage as manager of the Red Sox and has overseen two ALCS comebacks after falling behind 3-to-1.

EDGE: Red Sox Rockies

— SEAN McADAM



TODAY ON PROJOSPORTS.COM

■ Pregame news updates from Fenway Park, including starting lineups as soon as they're announced, at projosports.com/soxblog

TONIGHT ON PROJOSPORTS.COM

■ Photos posted to the site before, during and after the game at projosports.com/redsox and projosports.com/soxblog
■ Postgame reaction immediately after the third out at projosports.com/soxblog

■ Stories posted to the site as they're filed at projosports.com/redsox

GAME TIME FORECAST

Mostly clear, lows in the lower 50s. West winds 10-15 mph, gusts to 30.

Wakefield out of the Series

Tim Wakefield's season is over because of recurring shoulder problems. It is believed that he will not need offseason surgery, but he will undergo extensive testing at the end of the season. **C5.**



GAME ONE, TONIGHT: FIRST PITCH, 8:35. JOSH BECKETT VS. JEFF FRANCIS
WORLD SERIES COVERAGE ON PAGES C4 AND C5.

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