RESEARCH BRIEF | INDEPENDENT BASEBALL ANALYSIS | 2026 REGULAR SEASON

Colorado's 2026 ABS challenge edge: where it came from and what to do next

Question: Savant ranks Colorado 2nd in MLB for ABS challenge value (+7.2 Runs Above Average, behind Minnesota Twins at +8.7), yet its hitters won only 42% of their challenges. What produced that value, and can the club improve it?

BOTTOM LINE

The edge is mostly volume, not pitch selection. Colorado gained +8.6 runs over an average club on the same pitches (95% range +3.1 to +14.4): +7.9 from challenging more often and +0.7 from picking better pitches, which is statistically indistinguishable from zero. Hitters led MLB in volume and ranked 29th of 30 in selection; catchers and pitchers carried the quality. I would not tell anyone to challenge more or less. The three low-cost tests below are a better way to learn more in 2027.

WHERE THE VALUE CAME FROM (runs against an average club on the same pitches; 2026 regular season)

	Challenges	Overturned	Win rate (MLB)	From volume	From selection
Hitters	178	75	42% (49%)	+5.2	–2.8
Catchers and pitchers	208	134	64% (58%)	+2.6	+3.5
Total	**386**	**209**	**54%**	**+7.9**	**+0.7**

Volume = value earned by challenging more or less often than an average club does on the same pitches. Selection = how valuable each challenge was compared with an average one.

KEY EVIDENCE

- **Hitters challenged 178 times where an average club would have challenged about 130.** That volume was worth +5.2 runs, the most in MLB. Their selection cost –2.8 (29th of 30). The 42% win rate is the cost of challenging that much.
- **Catchers and pitchers won 64%, and the quality sits with two people.** Hunter Goodman won 77 of 113 on pitches that predict 69 (Savant RAA +3.95, 2nd among 107 catchers). After adjusting for the small sample, his edge is about +2.8 points per challenge, and the range includes zero: a lean, not a finding.
- **Most of what Colorado "left on the table" was too close to judge.** Of 473 unchallenged wrong calls, 318 (67%) were within an inch of the line, and only 42 were two inches or more off.
- **A lost challenge costs little.** I estimate about 0.047 runs per lost challenge (a comparison of clubs, not proof of cause and effect), well below Savant's 0.2-run rule of thumb. The average club ends a game with 1.0 challenges unspent.
- **No clear Coors Field difference.** Challenge rate, success rate and umpire error at home were not clearly different from the road. That means I did not detect one, not that there is none.
- **One result to watch, not to rely on.** Colorado hitters won 25 of 73 challenges at the bottom edge (34% vs 49% for other clubs). I looked at six role-and-edge combinations, so this is suggestive only.

WHAT COLORADO COULD DO IN 2027

- **A. Make hitters' challenge confidence measurable.** Log sure / lean / guess before each challenge, spring training included, and score it monthly. Bringing selection to average is worth about 3 runs a season if the point estimate is right, so plan for less.
- **B. Count challenge skill in catcher decisions.** Track overturns above expected per 100 opportunities in the catcher report. Weigh it alongside framing and receiving, not over them.
- **C. Measure how well challengers see the pitch before changing any rule.** In a what-if replay, a break-even rule helps the average club only if challengers can place the pitch to better than about two inches (+11.8 runs a season at one inch, +3.9 at two). Colorado's actual choices already beat that rule at two inches (–6.9).

LIMITATIONS

Runs Above Average, volume and selection are model-relative, not literal runs (about ten runs is one win). One season, one club: nothing here predicts 2027. The what-if replay is static and the amount of blur is my assumption. The edge comparisons were not adjusted for multiple looks. Savant's own method also counts some close pitches differently, so rankings can differ slightly from mine.

METHOD AND SOURCES

All 2,427 regular-season games of 2026. Pitch locations, calls and challenges from MLB StatsAPI game feeds; base-out context from Baseball Savant Statcast files; official totals from Savant's ABS leaderboard. My rebuild matches Savant's published data closely: Colorado reconciles exactly (386 challenges, 209 overturned), the geometry reproduces all 10,541 located ABS rulings, and 24 of 30 club challenge totals match exactly. Full method, figures and limitations: the article “Colorado Bought Its ABS Edge in Bulk” by Brad Konop. Independent, non-commercial research. Not affiliated with, endorsed by or reviewed by MLB or the Colorado Rockies; not a Rockies document. Baseball data © MLB Advanced Media, L.P.