



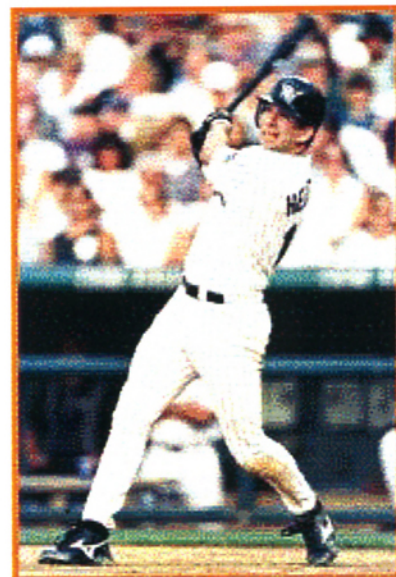
Hit Machine: Colorado's Todd Helton **Former QB now among baseball's best hitters**

When you think of the best lefty sluggers in the major leagues, you probably think of superstars such as Ken Griffey, Junior, and Barry Bonds.

Well, it's time to add first baseman Todd Helton of the Colorado Rockies to that list.

In his first two full seasons in the majors (1998 and 1999), Todd had a higher average (.317), more home runs (60), and more RBIs (211) than Junior or Barry had in their first two seasons.

This season, Todd is breaking out big time. He hit an awesome .512 in May. Through June 21, the 26-year-old had a league-leading .393 average, along with 21 homers and 64 RBIs.



Can Todd hit .400 in 2000?

Two-Sport Star

Todd has been a top athlete since he was a kid. It just wasn't clear what sport he would star in. He played baseball for Knoxville (Tennessee) Central High School. As a senior, in 1992, Todd hit .655. He was drafted by the San Diego Padres.

Todd was also a star quarterback for the football team. He decided to go to college and play baseball and football at the University of Tennessee. The Volunteers named Todd their starting quarterback in 1994. He played several games before suffering a knee injury early in the season.

Some freshman quarterback took Todd's place. The guy's name? Peyton Manning. Peyton is now a star quarterback for the NFL's Indianapolis Colts.

Baseball, After All

With Peyton taking all the snaps for the Vols, Todd started showing his stuff on the baseball diamond. He was named an All-America for three straight seasons and led the Volunteers to the 1995 College World Series.

Colorado drafted Todd in 1995 and sent him to the minor leagues. He rose quickly through the ranks and moved up to the Big Show late in 1997.

There were questions about Todd's power and his ability to hit against left-handed pitchers. He answered those questions with hard work. He practiced and built his strength. He watched videotape of himself at the plate. And he recorded the result of every at-bat in a notebook.

"I started doing it to learn more about the pitchers," Todd recently told Sports Illustrated, "but I ended up learning twice as much about myself."

Now everyone in baseball is learning something about Todd: This guy can flat-out hit!

Shorter Reporting by Steve Pittman