

## ***The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, June 12, 2018***

### **\* *The Boston Globe***

#### **Beating bad teams shouldn't be this tough for the Red Sox**

Nick Cafardo

BALTIMORE — Is beating these bad teams a little tougher than it ought to be for the Red Sox?

Any time a team wins a 2-0 game in extra innings in the majors is a good thing. But it took the Red Sox 12 grueling innings Monday to go through the Orioles' bullpen. The Sox kicked off a 10-game road trip after going 3-3 against the lowly Tigers and White Sox.

The Orioles are the worst team in the majors. They entered Monday's game with a .297 winning percentage. Orioles starter Dylan Bundy was dominant, and engaged in a pitchers' duel with Steven Wright.

The Red Sox lineup was certainly lengthened with the return of Mookie Betts, who went 1 for 5 after last playing May 26. The Red Sox have been abysmal with runners in scoring position lately. After going 0 for 4 with runners in scoring position Monday night, they're in a 2-for-41 rut.

The two runs scored Monday came on sacrifice flies by Brock Holt and Jackie Bradley Jr. after Orioles reliever Mychal Givens loaded the bases with nobody out.

It's been hard. Too hard.

"It's just baseball," said Holt. "You go through tough stretches and then you got through stretches when you're playing really good. We're getting guys on, but we're just not getting that big hit with runners on. That will turn. One day we'll get hot again. Hopefully we can get back to doing that."

Yes, we know that on any given night anyone can beat anyone in Major League Baseball, and it's unrealistic to think that in this nine-game stretch against doormats, the Sox could go 9-0. But 4-3 and needing 12 innings for the fourth win?

"I talked about it yesterday," manager Alex Cora said. "Sometimes we hit the ball hard, sometimes we're expanding the zone. Teams go through stretches like this. The good thing is they battled today. They kept their energy throughout and they battled and they won."

In these offensively challenged games, you have to wonder if the Red Sox may need to be thinking about adding offense.

They already have the highest payroll in baseball. But the bottom third of the order remains challenged. Other than Rafael Devers hitting a deep double in the 12th, he, too, has struggled. He had gone 0 for 4 before the double Monday, but did play very good defense to help the win.

The lack of offense wasted a perfectly good start by Steven Wright, who pitched 6⅔ scoreless innings. If the Orioles' offense wasn't so inept, this game would have ended long before extra frames.

Instead of dominating this part of the schedule, the Red Sox have been doing their best to be mediocre.

When Betts shakes the rust off, the Red Sox should be better. But even before his return the excuse was used that the offense couldn't click without him. But they still should have done better than .500 against the Tigers and White Sox without him.

This win should have been easier, also, because the Orioles aren't playing for anything except the probability they're going to get traded to a contender.

Manny Machado, who missed the game with sickness, is second in the majors in RBIs (50), but he is batting just .227/.264/.394 in his last 17 games. Still, he'll be the big rebuilding piece for the Orioles.

There is some hope with younger hitters such as first baseman/outfielder Trey Mancini, catcher Chance Sisco, second baseman Jonathan Schoop, and others.

The Orioles also have an improving farm system with pitching prospects, but they still don't dabble in international signings per order of owner Peter Angelos.

The House that Larry Lucchino Built is also a place the Red Sox usually love to hit in. Players can't wait to hit here. It was certainly a problem trying to get anyone on base against Bundy, and when they got a runner to second, forget it.

The game seemed to turn for the Red Sox when Joe Kelly entered for Wright with the bases loaded in the seventh inning. Neither offense had much of a chance while the two starters were in the game.

The Orioles loaded the bases against Wright with two outs in the seventh with a hit by pitch, single, and walk. That's when Cora opted for Kelly to face Adam Jones, who is one of the best knuckleball hitters in baseball.

After looking at Wright's mush for almost seven innings, Jones struck out swinging.

This was shaping up as a much harder game than it should have been. But that's the way things have been going lately for the Red Sox at a time when they should be piling up the wins.

"We're here to win series," Cora said. "There's going to be stretches when you don't score runs sometimes," Cora said. "Sometimes you swing the bat well against staffs that dominate the league and sometimes you don't against a staff that's struggling."

"I told them the other day that if you're at this level, you have talent. You can get people out no matter what your ERA is. You execute. We've run into a stretch that maybe you think the staff we're facing is no good, but Bundy was good. The White Sox pitched well against us and it happens."

These Orioles are a team the Red Sox should beat easily. The Orioles' season is already over. The Sox then go to Seattle to play a very tough team. Meanwhile, the Yankees are not going away.

You have to play the schedule. Dominate the teams you need to dominate and hold your own against the rest.

This one was way too hard.

### **Needing no rehab game, Mookie Betts is back with Red Sox**

Peter Abraham

BALTIMORE — The Red Sox unexpectedly activated Mookie Betts off the disabled list on Monday and batted him leadoff against the Baltimore Orioles at Camden Yards.

In a game the Sox won, 2-0, in 12 innings, Betts was 1 for 5. He came out of the game after the top of the 11th inning and felt fine afterward. Betts had been out since May 27 with an abdominal strain on his left side and missed 14 games. He returned without first playing in a minor league game but was not hampered.

“I think I swung through a slider, didn’t feel it. So then I knew everything was going to be all right,” he said.

Betts said Saturday it was his preference to play in at least one rehabilitation game. But that changed Sunday when he went through his regular pregame routine then hit off a pitching machine.

“I felt like I’ve been ready to play for a couple of days,” Betts said. “It gets sore sometimes, but I think that’s just meaning that the muscles are working.”

After talking Monday to president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski and manager Alex Cora, Betts elected to come off the DL rather than play for Single A Salem.

“He’s good physically; mentally, no hesitation,” Cora said. “The last few days have been great.”

Betts swung at the first pitch he saw from Baltimore righthander Dylan Bundy and hit it hard. But the line drive was caught by left fielder Trey Mancini. He also hit a deep fly ball in the eighth inning and singled in the 11th. Cora decided at that point it was enough.

“I’m ready to go [Tuesday] if I’m in there. If I’m not, I’ll be in there for the next day,” Betts said.

Teams are typically cautious with such injuries because a player could miss a month or more if it worsens.

“I think through this whole thing, I’ve felt not so bad because it wasn’t like a big tear,” Betts said. “It was just a matter of letting it kind of heal and letting it come together. Because the only real thing I couldn’t do was hit. But every other activity I was fine doing.”

Betts is hitting .354 with a 1.166 OPS. To make room for Betts on the roster, first baseman Sam Travis was optioned to Triple A Pawtucket. Travis was 2 for 12 with three RBIs in four games.

#### Slow progress

The Sox do not seem to be in any great hurry to bring Tyler Thornburg back from the disabled list. He pitched a scoreless inning for Pawtucket on Sunday but is not scheduled to pitch again until Thursday then either Saturday or Sunday.

Thornburg has pitched three times since starting a second minor league rehab assignment. He has shown normal fastball velocity and the ability to repeat his delivery but not command of his breaking ball.

As Thornburg returns from shoulder surgery, the Sox want him to build up to being able to pitch on consecutive days or two out of three days.

“We don’t need a guy who pitches one day and he can’t pitch for three. That doesn’t work here at the big-league level,” Cora said. “We need guys to be available to be able to pitch and he’s getting to that point.”

Drew Pomeranz, who is on the disabled list with biceps tendinitis, played catch Sunday but was shut down Monday with a stiff neck.

Dustin Pedroia is on the road trip but is not yet doing on-field workouts as he deals with inflammation in his surgically repaired left knee.

#### Swihart’s shot

Blake Swihart had only 33 plate appearances over the first 51 games. He had 37 in the 12 games that followed, all since Hanley Ramirez was dropped from the roster.

But Swihart was 6 of 34 with one extra-base hit and 13 strikeouts in those opportunities.

“Inconsistency I think,” Cora said. “I told him the other day, ‘Don’t try and get four hits in one at-bat.’ You can see sometimes that he gets frustrated.”

Swihart struck out with a runner on second to end the second inning in Sunday’s 5-2 loss against the White Sox and popped to shortstop with the bases loaded and two outs in the sixth inning.

He did have a single batting righthanded off lefthander Jace Fry in the eighth inning.

Swihart started four games in right field, one in left, one at first, one at catcher, and one as the DH when Betts was out. His playing time could drop off now with Betts on the roster, but the Sox are carrying only three bench players so he could be needed.

Swihart is hitting .156 with a .416 OPS overall. If keeping him on the roster was intended to build trade value, it has not worked out.

Cora feels Swihart has been too determined to swing at times, especially when ahead in the count.

“He just has to be patient, stick with the process [and] stay in the strike zone,” the manager said. “If he does that, he’ll be fine.”

Could Swihart catch again?

“We’ll see,” Cora said.

Orioles make moves

Baltimore activated closer Zach Britton off the disabled list. He missed the first 64 games of the season recovering from Achilles’ tendon surgery.

Britton has a 1.61 earned run average, a 1.00 WHIP, and 135 saves since becoming a full-time reliever in 2014. The 30-year-old is signed only through the end of the season and seems sure to be traded.

The Orioles placed Pedro Araujo, a rookie righthander, on the disabled list with what was said to be an elbow sprain.

Araujo, who was selected out of the Cubs organization, has allowed 24 runs on 29 hits — nine of them home runs — and 18 walks over 28 innings.

Hard to stop

Andrew Benintendi was 2 for 3 with two walks. He is 24 of 63 (.381) in his last 16 games with 14 extra-base hits, 14 RBIs, and 16 runs . . . Rafael Devers has in six straight at 7 of 22 with three doubles . . . Famed composer John Williams was at the game wearing an Orioles cap and jersey. Williams was the conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra from 1980-93.

### **It took almost all night, but the Red Sox’ bats finally woke up**

Peter Abraham

BALTIMORE — The Red Sox are still finding it excruciatingly difficult to score against some of the worst teams in baseball. But their pitchers, six of them, were able to avert a minor crisis on Monday night.

Steven Wright and a parade of relievers held the Baltimore Orioles down long enough for the Sox to escape with a 2-0 victory over 12 innings at Camden Yards.

Sacrifice flies by Brock Holt and Jackie Bradley Jr. helped the Sox avoid losing for the fourth time in five games.

Wright pitched into the seventh inning before Joe Kelly, Brian Johnson, Brandon Workman, Heath Hembree (3-1), and Craig Kimbrel (21st save) finished the extra-long shutout.

The Sox are only the third visiting team, the first since 2014, to record a shutout of 12 or more innings in the 27-year history of Camden Yards.

Baltimore had five hits and struck out 14 times. Seven of the last eight Orioles hitters struck out swinging. Kimbrel fanned the final three after a leadoff walk.

The Sox were held to six hits. They have scored only 10 runs in their last five games and are 2 of 41 with runners in scoring position. Not even the unexpected return of Mookie Betts from the disabled list helped. He was 1 for 5.

“Teams go through stretches like this,” manager Alex Cora said. “The good thing is they battled today. They kept their energy.”

At 45-22, the Sox are percentage points behind the Yankees in the American League East.

It took all night for the Sox to even threaten to score. They didn’t advance a runner to third base until the 11th inning. But with the bases loaded, Mychal Givens struck out Mitch Moreland after falling behind 3 and 0.

With Givens (0-3) still on the mound, Xander Bogaerts singled to right field to open the 12th. Rafael Devers followed with an opposite-field double to the gap in left and Bogaerts was held at third.

Eduardo Nunez was then hit in the ribs by a slider to load the bases.

In a tense game, that provided a comic moment.

“He was going, ‘Oh my God, am I going to die?’ I couldn’t stop laughing. I felt so bad,” Cora said. “At least it made laugh in the 12th inning of a close game.”

Said Nunez: “He was laughing at me. Then I started laughing. But it still hurt.”

Holt’s sacrifice fly to center scored Bogaerts. Devers moved up on the throw and scored when Bradley sent a fly ball to left.

“Stick with who I am and try and get the job done,” Holt said. “Bases loaded and no outs is a good situation to be in as a hitter. Pitcher’s got to come at you.”

The 19-46 Orioles have lost five straight and 12 of 14. The Sox are 7-1 against the Orioles this season, outscoring them, 43-19.

Baltimore starter Dylan Bundy had a 4.79 earned run average in 14 previous appearances against the Sox. But he controlled a lineup gone cold.

Bundy held the Sox to three hits over eight innings with two walks and seven strikeouts.

Andrew Benintendi reached base three times facing Bundy and that was pretty much all the Sox accomplished against the righthander.

Benintendi singled with one out in the first inning before J.D. Martinez and Moreland struck out swinging.

Benintendi singled to lead off the fourth inning. But Martinez popped to second and Moreland grounded into a double play.

Benintendi walked with two outs in the sixth inning and stole second with Martinez up, trying to get something started. But Martinez struck out.

Bogaerts singled with one out in the seventh inning and was stranded as Devers struck out and Nunez grounded to first base.

The Orioles had more chances against Wright but nothing came of them. He allowed four hits over 6 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings and struck out five.

Wright effectively changed speeds with his knuckleball and allowed only occasional good contact.

“I’ve faced a lot of these guys for the last five or six years. I know what they can do and what they’re capable of doing,” Wright said. “That helped keep my focus to throw quality pitches over the plate.”

Adam Jones singled and took second on a passed ball in the third inning. He advanced to third base on a fly ball to right field but the inning ended there when Devers ranged to his left and made a spinning play to take an RBI single away from Danny Valencia.

In the seventh inning, Wright hit Andrew Sisco with a wayward knuckleball. Jace Peterson then bunted for a single and Joey Rickard walked to load the bases.

Jones had reached base three times against Wright and Cora turned to Kelly.

Following Wright’s knuckleballs, Kelly’s fastball must have looked like a lightning bolt. Jones struck out on a 97-m.p.h. fastball to end the inning.

“That was a good time not to use an off-speed pitch,” Kelly said.

Wright has 22 $\frac{2}{3}$  scoreless innings in his last six appearances to drop his ERA to 1.21. In two starts since joining the rotation, he has worked 13 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings and allowed six hits while striking out 11.

Workman struck out Pedro Alvarez to leave a runner stranded at second in the ninth inning. He then left two runners on in the 10th when he struck out Trey Mancini. Hembree then struck out the side in the 11th.

## **\* *The Boston Herald***

### **Red Sox work overtime to bounce Orioles in 12**

Jason Mastrodonato

Alex Cora and the Red Sox have been waiting for Rafael Devers to find a spark.

At the very least, his double in the 12th inning of last night’s game against the Baltimore Orioles sparked his team.

With the game tied 0-0 and the Red Sox offense in the midst of a 46-inning stretch in which it scored only eight runs, Xander Bogaerts led off the 12th with a single through the right side. Devers then smoked a double – the Sox’ first extra-base hit of the game – and Brock Holt lifted a sacrifice fly to finally break the deadlock.

It took almost four hours, but the Sox walked away with a 2-0 win in the opener of a three-game series.

“I know there are going to be stretches where you don’t score runs,” manager Alex Cora said. “Sometimes you score runs against staffs that have been dominating the league, and then you don’t score runs against other teams. ... It happens.”

Devers entered the night hitting .184 with a .244 on-base percentage and .551 OPS in his previous 32 games. He was 0-for-4 before connecting on a long double to the wall off Michael Givens in the 12th which led to the only two runs of the game.

It was the swing he’s been looking for.

“Yeah that was the one,” he said. “My mindset going into today was just each at-bat making the adjustments necessary. After the first at-bat, I made an adjustment, second at-bat and so on.”

Helping Devers become a consistent, productive hitter again is among the Red Sox’ top priorities right now. He provides length and protection in the middle of the lineup when he’s hitting the way he did his rookie year (.284 with an .819 OPS and 10 homers in 58 games).

But he’s been cold for most of the season. So has the Red Sox offense the past five games.

Seven of the nine starters were hitless through eight scoreless innings thrown by the O’s Dylan Bundy, who entered with a 4.79 ERA in 62 innings against the Red Sox before holding them to three hits, two singles by Andrew Benintendi and one by Bogaerts.

On the other side, knuckleballer Steven Wright entered with a 5.68 ERA in 31 2/3 innings against the Orioles. But this Baltimore team is scoring less than 3.6 runs per game, worse than every team but the not-so-subtly-tanking Miami Marlins.

Wright pitched 6 2/3 scoreless innings, the first time in his career he’s made back-to-back scoreless starts, something he didn’t even accomplish during his All-Star season in 2016.

Asked if his knuckleball has been as good as it was before his shoulder injury, which he suffered after pinch-running in August 2016, Wright said, “Yeah, I feel pretty good right now.”

It was smooth sailing until the seventh, when Wright loaded the bases on a hit-by-pitch, bunt single and a walk, prompting Cora to insert Joe Kelly with two outs.

Going from Wright to Kelly is about the most significant change you can make in relief. From the pitcher with the second-slowest average fastball velocity (85.2 mph) in baseball and a much slower knuckler, to the one with the fifth-fastest fastball (98.5) seems cruel, a theory Kelly proved by blowing away Adam Jones on four straight 97-mph fastballs to end the inning.

Four relievers combined to hold it scoreless until Devers’ double sparked the rally in the 12th.

Devers is hitting just .231 with a .686 OPS. He’s still connecting on home runs with the same frequency he did last season, but the most noticeable difference is he’s not hitting for average, not getting his singles and not going to the opposite field.

“My swing is definitely geared toward opposite field, so I don’t know what’s been happening lately, but it’s a good sign to see it go that way,” he said.

Perhaps that double will give him some confidence.

“It was a good swing, but I feel like I’m always confident,” he said. “I know I can hit. I know I have a talent for hitting, and I never lost faith in that. Just remaining confident and knowing that I’m only a swing away.”

## **Red Sox notebook: Forget about rehab, Mookie Betts returns to lineup**

Jason Mastrodonato

BALTIMORE – In a surprise move, Mookie Betts was activated from the 10-day disabled list yesterday and hit leadoff for the Red Sox in their 2-0, 12-inning victory against the Baltimore Orioles last night.

Betts was 1-for-5 in his return, knocking a single under the third baseman's glove in the 11th inning before the Red Sox removed him from the game.

"It felt amazing," Betts said. "It felt normal. I didn't feel it at all."

Asked if he'd play today, he said, "We'll see. I'm fine. I'm ready to go if I'm in there. If not, then I'll prepare for the next day."

Betts had missed the previous two weeks with a left abdomen strain and was expected to need a short minor league rehab assignment before he returned to the big league club.

He went about a week without taking swings while letting his sore left side heal, then slowly began making progress, enough that he didn't think he needed a rehab assignment before he jumped back into a big league game.

"I feel like I've been ready to play for a couple days," he said. "It gets sore sometimes, but I think that's just meaning the muscles are working."

"I think through this whole thing, I've felt not so bad because it wasn't like a big tear ... It was just a matter of letting it kind of heal and letting it come together. Only real thing I couldn't do was hit. But every other activity I was fine doing."

Given the Red Sox just witnessed Dustin Pedroia return from the DL for only three games before going right back on the shelf, it made sense to think they would take extra caution with Betts.

Most players with abdomen strains return in 2-6 weeks. Betts missed just two and passed on a rehab assignment.

Manager Alex Cora said Betts has been on "the J.D. Martinez program," a pregame routine vigorous enough to convince the club he was ready to handle a big league game.

"The last few days have been great," Cora said. "The pregame routine yesterday, hit off the machine, hit today. We talked about it yesterday, he brought it up, 'Three at-bats in Salem or (come back to the majors)?' It's one of those where he feels comfortable competing at this level the way he is right now. He's healthy, and we agreed to it."

"With the conviction he swung the last two days, what he went through, we're there. We're very comfortable with the decision we made."

### **TRAVIS SENT DOWN**

To make room on the roster for Betts, the Sox optioned Sam Travis back to Triple-A Pawtucket.

Travis had a strange and brief stint with the Sox, making one pinch-hitting appearance with two men in scoring position late in a four-run game against the Houston Astros and coming through with a two-run single in his first big league at-bat of the season.

He then made three starts, one in left field, one at designated hitter and one at first base, going 1-for-11 before he was sent down.

The Sox opted to go with 13 pitchers for the time being, giving them extra length with Justin Haley, Brian Johnson and Hector Velazquez capable of multiple innings out of the bullpen. They might go back to 13 position players next week.

“We will probably get through this week and see where we’re at,” Cora said.

#### NUNEZ HAS STOMACH ACHE

Eduardo Nunez was plunked in the stomach in the 12th inning and immediately fell to the ground, hunched over in pain.

Cora started laughing when talking about it afterward.

“He was going, ‘Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God. I’m not gonna die. I’m not gonna die,’” Cora said, laughing. “I felt so bad. I just, I couldn’t stop. It was funny. Whatever. At least he made me laugh in the 12th inning of a close game. He’s not dead. He’s alive.”

#### SETBACK FOR POMERANZ

Drew Pomeranz might have suffered a minor setback in his recovery from left biceps tendinitis yesterday morning.

“He threw yesterday again, but today he has a stiff neck,” Cora said. “Same hotel, same brand (that caused J.D. Martinez to have a sore back recently). I don’t know if he slept on the wrong side or whatever. He was feeling better but he has that.”

Pomeranz hasn’t pitched since May 31. ...

Pedroia has yet to do any baseball activities since landing on the DL again. ...

The slow return of reliever Tyler Thornburg doesn’t appear to be speeding up.

He’s scheduled to go back to Pawtucket to pitch Thursday, then not again until Sunday. He had been pitching on back-to-back days before his most recent rehab stint ended on May 25, and the Sox brought him back to Boston to rest up a bit before trying to rehab again.

“It was a good time for him to obviously take a step back but also in the training room, understand how to deal with (his shoulder),” Cora said. “He’s a guy that, when healthy, everybody knows what he can do. It’s just a matter of getting there, being able to bounce back, instead of being a guy who pitches one day and can’t pitch for three. That doesn’t work here at the big league level. We need guys to be available, be able to pitch, and he’s getting to that point.”

#### **Buckley: Nothing to worry about with your 2018 Red Sox**

Steve Buckley

Here we go again with the Red Sox, huh?

This was an actual statement, delivered to me at an actual coffee shop on an actual yesterday afternoon. It was strictly hi-how-are-ya stuff, and a rhetorical exercise: The actual person was only interested in delivering his Red Sox weather report, not in anything I had to offer in terms of, say, an extended forecast.

Yet I’ll offer one anyway: The Red Sox are fine. The Red Sox are going to continue to be fine.

Put another way, people really need to chill about this team. And I speak to you, again, as the resident Jor-El (“Krypton’s gonna explode, I tell you!!”) who believed last year’s Red Sox were dysfunctional posers, destined to be destroyed come playoff time. Which is what happened, which is why former Houston Astros bench coach/current Sox manager Alex Cora has a World Series ring to flash into your eyes at parties and cookouts.

Why are some people cautious about the 2018 Red Sox?

Some thoughts:

- Going into last night’s series opener against the still-open-while-we-renovate Baltimore Orioles, the Sox had lost 3-of-4 games, including 2-of-3 against the still-open-while-we-renovate Chicago White Sox. (The renovating we’re seeing across baseball this season is on a par with what Jackie Kennedy did to the White House in 1961. Serious stuff.)
- Let’s face it, everyone around here is in a kind of crappy mood anyway. You want Tom Brady and Bill Belichick to play nice. You want Rob Gronkowski to play. You want Alex Guerrero to stop playing doctor. And then there’s the Celtics: You either are on board with the LeBron James-to-Boston pipe dream or you are not. Each side thinks the other side is blind, doesn’t know anything about basketball, etc.
- You’re sick and tired of Xander Bogaerts sliding headfirst into first base, because you know it’s a matter of time before he dislocates a shoulder or jams a finger and lands on the disabled list.

OK, so that last one is a reach. Nobody (other than me, apparently) really cares that Bogaerts keeps sliding headfirst into first base. Even Cora, who should know better because he’s admitted he gummed up both hands on headfirst slides during his playing days, keeps making it sound like we’re talking about something as trivial as li’l Xander skipping out of Sunday Mass after Holy Communion.

But talk about a miscarriage of justice: Poor Julian Edelman gets fined four games by the NFL on a PED violation even though he’s made it quite clear “I don’t know what happened,” and yet Bogaerts does nightly Stupid Base Running Tricks and his manager practically cackles.

In a way, the 2018 Red Sox are living the lives of decades of Sox teams prior to 2004: They must pay for other people’s crimes. For the pre-2004 Red Sox, it was the whole “1918” thing. It used to be an annual disclaimer for various Red Sox people that they didn’t care about the many missteps and blunders of years past, except it was all a lie. On the night of Oct. 27, 2004, when the Red Sox completed a four-game sweep of the St. Louis Cardinals for their first World Series championship in 86 years, winning pitcher Derek Lowe spoke for the room when he said, “No more going to Yankee Stadium and listening to ‘19-18,’ that’s for sure.”

Nobody nowhere is yelling “2016” or “2017” as a means to get inside the Red Sox’ heads. The Sox won 93 games in each of those seasons, earning American League East titles. But they were kittens in both postseasons, swept by the Indians in ’16, sent home in four games by the Astros last year. And let’s be honest: Nobody wanted to take last year’s Red Sox out for a beer. From the Manny Machado mess to the Apple watch caper, it was hard to embrace that bunch.

And now?

Once you accept the fact David Price is going to yell at clouds every now and then, there’s nothing to complain about beyond actual baseball stuff. Take, for instance, the caterwauling over the team’s decision to get rid of Hanley Ramirez. Nothing to see here, folks. Turn back the calendar 50 years and it was Sox fans complaining about Hawk Harrelson being traded to Cleveland.

Handwringing over Hanley aside, there’s absolutely nothing Red Sox-related to grouse over.

Until Xander Bogaerts dislocates his shoulder sliding headfirst into first base.

## **\* *The Providence Journal***

### **Red Sox 2, Orioles 0 (12 innings): Boston finally breaks through**

Bill Koch

BALTIMORE --- It certainly took the Red Sox offense long enough to make its presence felt Monday night, but the end result was all that mattered to the visitors at Camden Yards.

Steven Wright's second straight gem of a start ultimately wasn't in vain. Nor was stellar relief work from five members of the Boston bullpen, with Craig Kimbrel finally emerging to record the last three outs.

It was a 2-0, 12-inning victory over the Orioles that the Red Sox desperately needed to begin a three-city road trip, with their dormant bats taking advantage of just a second meaningful rally on the night.

Mychal Givens finally succumbed for Baltimore in the 12th, as Xander Bogaerts singled through the right side and Rafael Devers smacked a long double to left center. Eduardo Nunez was hit by a pitch, loading the bases with nobody out, and consecutive sacrifice flies by Brock Holt and Jackie Bradley Jr. were enough to manufacture the only two runs of the game.

"Stick with who I am and try to get the job done," Holt said. "Obviously, bases loaded and no outs is a good situation to be in as a hitter. The pitcher's got to come at you."

Orioles pitching had retired 13 straight men before the Red Sox mustered a two-out threat in the 11th. Mookie Betts grounded a generous single under the glove of Danny Valencia and down the line in left, Boston's first hit out of the infield since the fourth. Back-to-back walks by Andrew Benintendi and J.D. Martinez set up Mitch Moreland to be the hero, but Givens came from 3-0 down in the count to notch an inning-ending strikeout.

"Sometimes we're going to go through stuff like this during the season," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "The pitching staff did outstanding, we played great defense and we ended up winning."

The Red Sox bullpen was equal to the challenge. Joe Kelly, Brian Johnson, Brandon Workman, Heath Hembree and Kimbrel combined for 5 1/3 scoreless frames, allowing just three runners to reach scoring position. Workman notched inning-ending strikeouts in the ninth and 10th and Hembree fanned the side in order in the 11th to pick up the victory.

Wright had the Orioles similarly flummoxed, running his own scoreless string over his last six outings to 22 2/3 innings. Baltimore advanced the game's first two runners to third base against Wright in the third and seventh, but a Valencia grounder to Devers snuffed out the first threat and Kelly took care of the second. He was summoned into a bases-loaded, two-out jam and zipped a 97 mph fastball past Adam Jones to end the threat.

"Joe came in behind me and did something that I struggled to do tonight against Adam Jones -- get him out," said Wright, as Jones was 2-for-2 with a walk against the knuckleballer. "It was definitely an all-around good victory for us today."

It was the longest of Dylan Bundy's four scoreless starts this season, covering eight brilliant innings. He retired Boston 1-2-3 three times and didn't allow a baserunner to reach third. Only Benintendi escaped unscathed against the right-hander, singling twice and drawing a two-out walk in the top of the sixth.

Bundy carved his way through the light-hitting Mets in his previous outing, tossing the first seven innings of a 1-0 shutout on Wednesday. He picked up right where he left off on a nice night by the Inner Harbor, allowing just five of the 28 batters he faced to reach safely. Bogaerts added an infield single and a walk to

Benintendi's output, but the rest of the Red Sox were a combined 0-for-23 with seven strikeouts against Bundy.

Boston's last shutout victory in extra innings also came here, a 1-0 thriller in 11 frames Sept. 19. Bradley plated the game's lone run somewhat ingloriously on a Brad Brach wild pitch, and Kelly picked up the victory by fanning the side in order in his lone inning of relief. Matt Barnes slammed the door in the bottom of the 11th.

### **Red Sox Journal: Team staying positive with Devers**

Bill Koch

BALTIMORE — The reminders, from Red Sox manager Alex Cora, or simple clubhouse observations, are frequent.

Rafael Devers is just a 21-year-old trying to make his way through his first full big league season, and he's struggling right now.

As the team's third baseman of the present and future, Devers has plenty of time to turn things around. Nobody in the organization believes the .572 OPS posted by Devers in his last 16 games is a true indicator of his ability. But Cora is making a daily effort to prevent Devers from spiraling mentally.

"One thing I've been telling him is don't let them know that you're down, because they're going to bury you," Cora said. "That's the way it works at the big-league level. Nobody is feeling sorry for you in this case."

Devers hasn't homered since a 4-2 win at Tampa Bay on May 22 and has just five extra-base hits — all doubles — since that date. He's drawn six walks and struck out 19 times, expanding the zone to chase fastballs up and breaking balls down. J.D. Martinez has been among those making the occasional suggestion to Devers, encouraging him to use the whole field and be patient.

"He's trying to slow down his front side," Cora said. "It seems like everything is pulling off. His outs are rollovers, ground balls. He hasn't hit the ball in the air on a consistent basis. He hasn't hit the ball to left-center on a consistent basis."

Devers smiled sheepishly after crushing a pair of home runs off Bartolo Colon in a 5-1 win at the Rangers on May 4. Roughing up a pitcher twice his age was a new experience for Devers, never mind one he idolized while growing up in their native Dominican Republic. His pregame meal prior to one of the four pressure-packed matchups with the Astros included a small bowl of Froot Loops, something you might not see out of a grizzled veteran like Dustin Pedroia, for example.

"He's showing up every day," Cora said. "I think structure and preparation is improving. Hopefully he gets going sooner rather than later."

#### **Making progress**

Three members of Boston's traveling party remain on the disabled list, one of whom seems closer to returning than the others.

The reports were encouraging over the weekend after a pair of outings by reliever Tyler Thornburg (right shoulder). Thornburg appeared Friday and Sunday for Triple-A Pawtucket, touching 95 mph on the radar gun in each appearance. He threw 23 of his 33 pitches for strikes over two scoreless innings, allowing one hit and one walk.

"The breaking ball wasn't there, but the velocity was there," Cora said. "Repeating his delivery was there. It was a good one for him [on Sunday]."

Thornburg is scheduled to pitch again for the PawSox on Thursday and then either Saturday or Sunday. It's his second 30-day rehab period after being shut down following a May 22 appearance against Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

"This is a guy that, when healthy, everybody knows what he can do," Cora said. "It's just a matter of getting there, being able to bounce back. We don't need a guy that pitches one day and then can't pitch for three."

Drew Pomeranz (left biceps tendinitis) played catch for the second time on Sunday but reported a stiff neck when he arrived at the ballpark on Monday. Pedroia (left knee inflammation) received treatment again on Monday but has yet to resume baseball activities.

Right at home

The Red Sox entered Monday night's game having won nine of their last 10 against the Orioles, including six of seven this season. Boston's .585 winning percentage at Camden Yards is the highest among visiting American League teams since the park's 1992 opening. ... Martinez has worn out Baltimore pitching over his last 14 games, homering eight times and piling up a 1.586 OPS. ... Eduardo Rodriguez starts Tuesday night and two of his seven victories this season have been against the Orioles.

### **Mookie Betts activated off disabled list**

Bill Koch

BALTIMORE — Rarely would a lineup demotion for a scorching hitter like Andrew Benintendi be so universally welcomed by Red Sox fans.

That's because it meant the return of Mookie Betts (left abdominal strain) from the disabled list Monday night at Camden Yards. The right fielder was back in his customary leadoff spot for the series and road trip opener against the Orioles. Sam Travis was optioned to Triple-A Pawtucket.

Betts had been out since May 27, a late scratch before a Sunday afternoon loss to the Braves at Fenway Park. His activity level had steadily increased over the last week, as he took on-field batting practice several times during the homestand. Boston manager Alex Cora and the team's medical staff allowed Betts to chart his own course during his rehab, one that ultimately didn't include a game or two with a minor league affiliate.

"It was just a matter of letting it kind of heal and letting it come together," Betts said. "The only real thing I couldn't do was hit. Every other activity I was fine."

"We talked about it yesterday, me and Mookie," Cora said. "He brought it up kind of like, 'Three at-bats in [Class-A] Salem or ...?' He feels comfortable that he can compete at this level the way he is now. He's healthy and we agreed to it."

That Betts still leads the Red Sox in a handful of offensive categories was a testament to his dominance through the first two months. He remains atop the big leagues in runs scored at 52 and also tops Boston in doubles (19) and stolen bases (13). Mindful of that production, both Betts and Cora were hesitant to rush the process and eventually open the door to a more serious injury.

"They've been great with kind of letting me determine everything," Betts said. "They told me, 'Whenever you feel confident is when you'll play.' And I feel pretty confident."

"Just watching him, you could tell," Cora said. "With the conviction he swung with the last few days, what he went through — we were there. We were very comfortable with the decision we made."

Benintendi has carried his hot May into June, racking up a 1.111 OPS through 13 games while Betts was unavailable. Benintendi had five doubles and five homers among his 18 hits, with Boston going 8-5 during that stretch.

"If there's a pitch that he feels he can drive he's going for it, which is great," Cora said prior to Thursday's 7-2 loss against the Tigers. "He's also making adjustments, going the other way. He's becoming a complete hitter."

Betts said the venue for his comeback was coincidental, but the average onlooker could be excused for taking that statement with a bit of skepticism. He mashes at Camden Yards to the tune of 11 home runs in just 123 career at-bats, including one of his four career three-homer games. Betts is also a welcomed addition to a lineup that scored just eight runs in its last four games, including a 1-0 loss to the White Sox on Friday.

"I'm just looking forward to being here and being back in the lineup," Betts said. "No matter where we were I think I was going to try to get in there at some point."

### \* *MassLive.com*

#### **Nights like Monday make growing pains for Boston Red Sox third baseman Rafael Devers worth it**

Chris Cotillo

BALTIMORE -- After a blistering start to his major-league career in 58 games last season, the numbers suggest Red Sox third baseman Rafael Devers has taken a step back this season. He's been inconsistent at the plate and leads the majors with 12 errors, causing some to call for a demotion back to Triple-A after nearly a full year in the big leagues.

But nights like Monday, when Devers showed glimpses of brilliance on both sides of the ball with a key double into the left-center gap to ignite the Sox' game-winning rally in the 12th inning and multiple key defensive plays at third base, make all of his growing pains worth it.

As Chris Hatfield of SoxProspects pointed out last week, Devers would be the youngest position player on the roster of the Salem Red Sox, Boston's Hi-A affiliate. At just 21, the Dominican-born Devers is developing like any 21-year-old with insane talent would-- with the caveat that his struggles are magnified on the big-league stage in Boston.

"There's a lot of reaction there," manager Alex Cora said before Monday's game. "I don't think he's slamming the bat like he did early in the season. He understands that when you're down, they're going to bury you. That's the way it works at the big-league level. Nobody is feeling sorry for you in this case."

Devers, who hit decently in April before OPSing just .672 in May and .552 in June, entering play Monday, has the strong support system he needs around him. Cora, who was an infielder himself, as well as Devers' veteran teammates, are all doing what they can to help the youngest member of the Red Sox develop into a consistent major-leaguer.

"I talk to him a lot," Cora said. "He actually had a great weekend of work in the cage. There were a few things that J.D. [Martinez] noticed and threw out there to him."

After struggling in Boston's six-game homestand against the Tigers and White Sox, Devers spent time in the cage working on slowing down his front side. His goal is to stop rolling over weak ground balls by getting too in front of pitches, instead trying to sit back and look to drive the ball to the opposite field.

Devers popped out to third base in his first at-bat Monday, then flew out to right field. A seventh-inning strikeout and a weak groundout to second made him 0-for-4 on the day before hitting a 94.6 mph fastball with an exit velocity of 101.8 mph to the opposite field and spark a game-winning rally for Boston.

"My mindset going into today was, in each at-bat, making the adjustments necessary," Devers said. "After the first at-bat, I made an adjustment, and then after the second one and so on. That was the one. Just looking to make adjustments and stick with my plan."

That same approach has done Devers well defensively, where he has gone from making 10 errors in his first 39 games to committing only two miscues in his last 25. Even with that improvement, Cora doesn't believe the errors tell the full story.

"He's been good the whole season," Cora said. "It all depends on how you see it. If you believe in errors, he's having a bad season. But if you believe in range and everything that comes with numbers, he's one of the best. He can range to his left. He's under control now. His arm is precise. He's doing a good job for us."

Devers saved a run in the third inning Monday, ranging to his left to prevent a Danny Valencia base hit with Adam Jones on second base. He made five putouts on a busy night, showing improved range against a big-swinging Orioles club.

"I've been working hard since spring training, doing all the work each day," Devers said about his defense. "Trying to find mistakes in my game and improving on those mistakes. I think it has benefited me so far."

Devers won't be an All-Star this season, but he can be a major contributor on a championship team. On a veteran team with the most wins in all of baseball, seeing a young talent develop at the big-league level in real time is not the worst problem to have.

"We know the talent," Cora said. "We know what he can bring."

### **Tyler Thornburg, Boston Red Sox reliever: 'I'm trying not to get too frustrated with the process**

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- Tyler Thornburg told MassLive.com on Feb. 27 he hadn't ruled out being on the Red Sox's Opening Day roster.

But it's June 12 and Thornburg still hasn't pitched an inning of relief for the 2018 Boston Red Sox. He's on his second rehab assignment. His first 30-day rehab assignment expired. He began his second one last Tuesday.

"I had certain expectations; the lower end of the recovery spectrum," Thornburg said. "But I also know I've had this going on for a lot longer than other people who have had this surgery."

"I'm trying not to get too frustrated with the process and know that as long as we take our time and do it right, it's going to come out a lot better than some people who've had (it)."

Thornburg underwent surgery to treat thoracic outlet syndrome in his right shoulder last June.

He has yet to throw a single pitch for the Red Sox since they acquired him from the Brewers on Dec. 6, 2016, for Travis Shaw, Mauricio Dubon, Josh Pennington and Yeison Coca.

Thornburg has watched Shaw established himself as a fan favorite in Milwaukee. The third baseman brought the nickname "Mayor of Ding Dong City" with him to Wisconsin. He has bashed 14 homers already this season after hitting 31 last year.

Thornburg dominated for the Brewers in 2016, posting a 2.15 ERA, 0.94 WHIP and 13 saves in 67 outings (67 innings). He's excited to show Boston fans what he can do.

"It's been like a year and a half, so yeah, it's just one of those things where I'm sure they're ready," he said about Sox fans. "I'm ready. The team's ready. But again, trying to take things smart and not necessarily let that dictate what we're doing."

Thornburg has pitched in three games since beginning his second rehab assignment last Tuesday. He has hurled 3 scoreless innings, allowing one hit, one walk and striking out one.

He'll pitch again Thursday. The goal is to throw back-to-back days (then respond well physically) before being activated from the disabled list.

"It's pretty much being able to not only throw back-to-back but be successful in it," Thornburg said. "And then after doing that, making sure I don't take too much time off. That's the reason we're throwing so much and doing so much because when I come back, I don't want to be a detriment to the bullpen; being someone who throws two or three times and then needs a day or two off. So that's really been the main reason it's been so many outings and taken so long really."

Thornburg has appeared in 12 rehab outings. In 10 outings with Pawtucket, he has allowed only two earned runs in 8 1/3 innings (2.16 ERA).

He has thrown aggressive bullpens as well.

The Red Sox would rather have him return completely healthy and be ready for the most important games.

"Rather have me healthy in August, September and the playoffs," he said.

He has shown impressive velocity since beginning his rehab, reaching 95 mph. He's not too surprised the velocity has returned so quickly.

"Not really because each outing I'm not really too worried about pitching well," Thornburg said. "It's just really the bounce back that we're worried about right now. So just trying to get that on par with a regular season kind of thing."

### **Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora can't contain laughter as Eduardo Nunez reacts to being hit by pitch**

Chris Cotillo

BALTIMORE -- When Red Sox infielder Eduardo Nunez went down after being hit in the ribs with a pitch in the 12th inning of Boston's 2-0 win Monday night, manager Alex Cora couldn't help but laugh at his player's reaction.

"He was going, 'oh my God, oh my God, oh my God...am I gonna die? Am I gonna die? Am I gonna die?'" and I just couldn't stop [laughing]," Cora said. "I just couldn't stop. At least he made me laugh in the 12th inning of a close game. That was hilarious."

Thankfully for Nunez and the Red Sox, all the 87 mph slider from Mychal Givens did was knock the wind out of Nunez. He stayed in the game, which was a positive sign for his mortality.

"He's not dead," Cora said. "He's alive."

### **Back-to-back sacrifice flies give Boston Red Sox 2-0 extra innings win over Baltimore Orioles**

Chris Cotillo

BALTIMORE -- After 11 scoreless innings at Oriole Park on Monday night, back-to-back sacrifice flies by Brock Holt and Jackie Bradley Jr. in the top of the 12th were just enough for the Red Sox (45-22) to kick off their 10-game road trip with a 2-0 victory against the last-place Orioles (19-46).

After Xander Bogaerts led off the 12th with a single, Rafael Devers hit a deep opposite field double to put two runners in scoring position. Eduardo Nunez was hit by a pitch to load the bases for Holt, who delivered the game's first run before Bradley Jr. added another in a similar fashion.

Closer Craig Kimbrel, who warmed up on four separate occasions, picked up his 21st save of the season by striking out the side in the 12th.

Boston's offense, which has scored just eight runs in its last five games, was quiet again despite Mookie Betts' return to the lineup after a 14-game absence, with the club tallying just six hits in 12 innings. Red Sox starter Steven Wright had another very strong outing, lasting 6.2 scoreless innings while allowing only three hits. He lowered his ERA to 1.21 on the season, further enhancing the chances that Boston will keep him in its rotation even if Drew Pomeranz returns healthy.

After having only five baserunners through the first nine innings, the Red Sox finally threatened in the eleventh inning, when a two-out rally sparked by a Betts single and back-to-back walks for Andrew Benintendi and J.D. Martinez loaded the bases for Mitch Moreland. Moreland worked the count to 3-0 before Orioles reliever Mychal Givens fired three consecutive strikes to end the inning.

Boston is now 3-3 in extra-inning games on the season. Before Tuesday, the Sox hadn't played bonus baseball since May 11 in Toronto.

Benintendi continues on-base streak

The Red Sox reached base just five times in the first nine innings Monday night, with outfielder Andrew Benintendi accounting for three of them. Benintendi singled in the first and fourth before walking in the sixth to raise his season average to .298.

Benintendi has now reached base in 16 consecutive games and has reached base multiple times in 11 of those 16 games. He continues to be a constant on-base threat despite the sputtering offense around him in recent days.

Betts' return encouraging despite one hit

Betts, whose activation from the disabled list before the game surprised many, was just 1-for-5 despite making solid contact in three at-bats. He lined out to left to lead off the ballgame on a ball hit with an exit velocity of 103.6 mph and later flew out to the warning track on a ball hit at 99.8 mph before finally reaching base with an 11th-inning single that went under third baseman Danny Valencia's glove.

Betts was removed from the game after hitting in the 11th, with Brock Holt taking over in right field after pinch-hitting for Christian Vazquez earlier in the inning. It's probably nothing more than manager Alex Cora not wanting to overwork Betts in his first game back.

Missed call on Peterson bunt almost costs Sox

Shortstop Jace Peterson, who started in place of the Manny Machado (illness), laid down a seventh-inning bunt to give the O's men on first and second with two outs. A Joey Rickard walk loaded the bases, giving Baltimore one of its most serious threats of the game before Joe Kelly struck out Adam Jones to end the inning.

Though it didn't seem like the Red Sox dugout noticed, the NESN broadcast showed that Peterson's back foot was out of the batter's box on his bunt single. This would've been an automatic out had it been caught by the umpire, but the play was not reviewable and was never debated.

Thankfully for the Red Sox, the misstep never cost them. But it would've been a big story if the Orioles had scored in the seventh.

### **Mookie Betts back in Boston Red Sox lineup vs. Orioles; Manny Machado sitting for Baltimore**

Chris Cotillo

BALTIMORE -- Mookie Betts is back in the Red Sox lineup as the club prepares to face the Orioles in the first of three games Monday night.

Betts, who last played May 26 and has been on the 10-day disabled list with a left abdominal strain, will hit leadoff for Boston against righty Dylan Bundy. Boston optioned Sam Travis to Pawtucket to clear a roster spot for Betts.

Betts, who hit on the field at Fenway Park before games against the Tigers and White Sox last week, was expected to require at least a one-game rehab stint before returning to the lineup. The club considered sending him to Hi-A Salem for a game or two, but the progress the outfielder had over the weekend was enough for Betts to be activated for the start of a 10-game road trip.

"Everything [that was problematic] is pretty gone," Betts said. "We'll see how the game goes today after nine innings."

Red Sox lineup:

1. Mookie Betts RF
2. Andrew Benintendi LF
3. J.D. Martinez DH
4. Mitch Moreland 1B
5. Xander Bogaerts SS
6. Rafael Devers 3B
7. Eduardo Nunez 2B
8. Christian Vazquez C
9. Jackie Bradley Jr. CF

Pitching matchup: RHP Steven Wright (2-0, 1.57 ERA) vs. RHP Dylan Bundy (4-7, 4.04 ERA)

Pregame notes:

-Star shortstop Manny Machado is not in Baltimore's lineup, with the team saying he is sick. Machado, a top trade candidate approaching next month's trade deadline, will be replaced at shortstop by Jace Peterson.

-Baltimore made a couple of roster moves before the game, activating top reliever Zach Britton off the 60-day disabled list and moving righty Pedro Araujo to the 10-day DL with a right elbow sprain. Britton, another trade candidate, has been out all season after suffering a freak achilles injury over the winter.

-Boston has won 9 of its last 10 games against the cellar-dwelling Orioles, including 6 of 7 matchups this season. The Red Sox lead the majors with 44 wins while the Orioles lead the league in losses with 45.

## \* *RedSox.com*

### **Sox rally in 12th to take opener from Orioles**

Jeff Siedel

BALTIMORE -- Mookie Betts returned from the disabled list, knuckleballer Steven Wright kept up his streak of scoreless innings, and the Red Sox came away with another victory.

Brock Holt and Jackie Bradley Jr. hit consecutive sacrifice flies in the top of the 12th inning as the Red Sox defeated the Orioles at Camden Yards, 2-0, on Monday. The Red Sox loaded the bases with no outs against Mychal Givens (0-3) before Holt and Bradley came through. Heath Hembree (3-1) got the win, and Craig Kimbrel earned his 21st save.

Wright extended his scoreless-innings streak to 22 2/3 innings by throwing 6 2/3 frames in his second start this season. It is the longest active scoreless streak in the Majors.

"I feel like, especially against this lineup, I know they've been struggling," Wright said. "But they've got a pretty powerful lineup. You can't take a hitter off because I've faced a lot of these guys for the last five or six years, and so I know what they can do and what they're capable of doing."

Wright allowed four hits with five strikeouts and three walks before leaving with the bases loaded in the seventh -- when Joe Kelly struck out Adam Jones, ending the threat.

Betts (left abdominal strain) was activated from the disabled list Monday and re-inserted into the Red Sox lineup. He batted leadoff and went 1-for-5, leaving after the top of the 11th when manager Alex Cora put Holt into right field to give Betts a break.

"He hasn't played in two weeks, so I [thought] that was enough for him right there," Cora said. "He's good to go. It's fun to have him in the lineup. We'll see how he feels and we'll decide tomorrow if he plays or not."

Betts said afterward that he understood Cora's reasoning and didn't feel any ill effects from his first game since May 26.

"I feel fine," Betts said. "I'm fine. I'm ready to go tomorrow, if I'm in there, and if not, will prepare for the next day."

Boston could not do much against Orioles starter Dylan Bundy, who threw eight brilliant innings and gave up three hits. The Red Sox loaded the bases in the 11th with two outs but could not score before finally breaking through in the 12th.

The Red Sox now are 7-1 versus the Orioles this season. The Orioles have lost five in a row.

### **SOUND SMART**

Andrew Benintendi went 2-for-3 and improved his 2018 average against the Orioles to .433. He is 13-for-30 with two homers, two doubles, one triple and 11 RBIs. He also has a .345 average at Camden Yards in 15 career games.

### **HE SAID IT**

"They're a big-swinging team. The thing with knuckleballs is people think you throw just one knuckleball, but the thing is, they're big league hitters. The biggest thing is timing, and a pitcher's got to disrupt their timing. So, for me, especially as a starter ... I really just try to go back and forth with the velocity." -- Wright

UP NEXT

Eduardo Rodriguez (7-1, 3.68) has won a career-high four straight starts and will try to add to that when he starts for the Red Sox Tuesday against the Orioles at 7:05 p.m. ET. Rookie David Hess (2-2, 3.07) starts for the Orioles.

### **Betts fine after exiting first game back from DL**

Jeff Seidel

BALTIMORE -- Red Sox manager Alex Cora pulled Mookie Betts before the bottom of the 11th inning in Boston's 2-0, 12-inning win in the series opener vs. the Orioles at Camden Yards on Monday night. But the move was merely precautionary.

This was Betts' first game back after a stint on the disabled list (left abdominal strain), and the manager said after the game that they felt he had been in the game long enough. Betts went 1-for-5, and his 11th-inning single in a scoreless game started a rally in which the Red Sox loaded the bases with two outs but could not score.

**\**WEEI.com***

### **Red Sox 2, Orioles 0: Don't hold your breath for Manny Machado**

Rob Bradford

BALTIMORE -- It was time to remember those rumors, the ones that cropped up suggesting the Red Sox were laser-focused on making a run at acquiring Manny Machado.

"Those," said one source Monday night, "were wildly overstated."

That shouldn't have come as a surprise. It never really made much sense considering Machado's contract expires at the end of this season and there would be virtually no chance getting the shortstop to sign an extension. And then there is the matter of the price of any such deal, which would surely necessitate the further gutting of the Red Sox' farm system.

Now we're sitting here with 1 1/2 months to go before the non-waiver trade deadline and Machado is lining up to be Major League Baseball's prize trade target. The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal called the Orioles star "the best rental position player ever available at the deadline." Machado (who didn't play in the Red Sox' 2-0, 12-inning win over the Orioles Monday night) is hitting .312 with a .971 OPS and 18 homers. (For a complete recap, [click here](#))

And guess what? A case could be made that the Red Sox are in a more logical position to make a run at Machado than they were in January. Such a player would immediately make Alex Cora's team the favorite to win the World Series, a notion that also rings true for the Yankees. And he can play a position (third base) where the Red Sox carry the third-worst OPS in the entire MLB.

It's still not going to happen. Why? Rafael Devers.

For virtually the entirety of Monday, there was little to suggest confidence was growing in the Red Sox' third baseman of the present and the future. The day before Devers was pinch-hit for the first time in his

entire life. He was hitting just .232 with a .688 OPS, having committed more errors than anyone in baseball.

For the Red Sox, all of that didn't tell the story they wanted to tell when it comes to their 21-year-old slugger.

Monday offered a lot of what the team loves about Devers. The third baseman made multiple key plays in the field to help keep the Orioles scoreless, while fending off four not-so-great at-bats to finally come up with one of those left-center field gap shots he built his reputation on a year ago.

Before the game, Cora praised Devers' growth.

"It's funny because there's a lot of reaction there but it's just for a little bit. I don't think he's slamming the bat like he did earlier in the season," the manager said, citing Devers' demeanor. "He understands. One thing we were talking about, one thing I told him, 'Don't let him know that you're down because they're going to bury you. That's the way it works at the big league level, nobody is feeling sorry for you.' He's done a good job. He's showing up every day. Structure and preparation is improving and hopefully, he gets going sooner rather than later. We know the talent, what he can bring. Maybe now that he's back to hitting sixth, Mookie is back, the lineup is falling into place, he's probably relaxing a little bit and has a few guys in scoring position and has a ground ball and an RBI and gets going."

Then there was this after the game.

"He's been good the whole season," Cora said of Devers' defense. "It all depends how you see it. If you believe in errors then he's having a bad season but if you believe in range and everything that comes with numbers and all that for me he's one of the best. He can range to his left, he's under control now his arm is precise. He's doing a good job for us."

That leads us back to Machado.

There is still somewhat of a leap of faith when it comes to Devers, one that certainly isn't needed with Machado. But considering the potential and glimpses shown by the current Red Sox' third baseman -- as was most recently exhibited in Camden Yards -- Dave Dombrowski and Co. feel comfortable making other corners of their roster the priority heading to the end of July.

Steven Wright continued his remarkable run in the Red Sox' starting rotation, not giving up a run over 6 2/3 innings. It was Wright's sixth straight scoreless outing, a streak that stretches over 22 2/3 innings.

### **Why Alex Cora was laughing after Eduardo Nunez got drilled in the stomach**

Rob Bradford

BALTIMORE -- It was only 87 mph, but getting hit in the stomach with a baseball is never fun. Eduardo Nunez can attest to that.

Nunez felt the pain of such an instance in the 12th inning of the Red Sox' 2-0 win over the Orioles, getting plunked by Mychel Givens directly in the midsection. The hit-by-pitch made the Red Sox' batter immediately crumple to the ground.

As is the custom, Red Sox manager Alex Cora came out to check on his player. But once there, the reaction from Cora wasn't what anyone expected. He started bursting out laughing while Nunez continued to writhe in pain.

After the game, Cora explained ...

"He was going, 'Oh my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. I'm not gonna die. I'm not gonna die.' I felt so bad, I just, I couldn't stop," the manager said. "It was funny. Whatever. At least he made me laugh in the 12th inning of a close game. ... He's not dead. He's alive."

Nunez elaborated, explaining he wasn't addressing Cora, but rather a teammate who seemed genuinely concerned.

"Brock (Holt) was so worried," Nunez said. "I said, 'Brock, I'm not going to die. It's just pain.' They thought it was funny. I saw Alex laughing, which made me laugh too."

### **Mookie Betts after his return: 'It felt amazing'**

Rob Bradford

BALTIMORE -- With obliques (or abdominal strains) you never quite know until you absolutely know.

According to Mookie Betts, he found his certainty Monday night.

The Red Sox right fielder, who had missed two weeks due to the issue with his side, returned to the lineup, going 1-for-5 before being replaced in the 11th inning by Brock Holt. (The defensive change, according to Sox manager Alex Cora, was simply due to Betts not having played in a game, and the contest extending beyond the norm.)

He hit a ball to deep right field, and collected his sole hit in the eighth inning.

But it was one swing that put all the fears to bed. On the third pitch of his second at-bat against Baltimore starter Dylan Bundy, got the test he was looking for and passed.

"I think I swung through a slider and I didn't feel it so then I knew it was going to be alright," he said after the Red Sox' 2-0, 12-inning win over the Orioles.

As for a synopsis of his night, Betts added, "It felt amazing. It felt normal. I didn't feel it at all."

While Betts' presence didn't take over the game like the Red Sox had seen so many other times this season, Cora noted the difference having his leadoff hitter back made.

"It's fun to have him in the lineup," the Sox' manager said. "He changes the game. He does. But we felt that was enough for today after the layoff. We'll see how he is tomorrow. He told me after the game, 'I'm okay.' We'll see how he feels and we'll decide tomorrow if he plays or not."

### **Patriots reportedly take field trip to Fenway Park in place of OTAs Monday**

Ryan Hannable

This is the final week of the Patriots voluntary offseason workout program, which had four OTA sessions scheduled, but Bill Belichick changed things up a bit as he's done in the past.

Most years Belichick takes the team away from the field one day for a team-building activity usually to see a movie, but this year was a little different.

According to ESPN's Mike Reiss, the players who were at Gillette Stadium on Monday were greeted with coach buses and then led by a police escort, they were taken to Fenway Park for some team bonding. With the Red Sox on the road, they had the whole place to themselves. The Boston Herald's Karen Guregian added they played corn hole and other games.

Two players who were not present were Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski, as they reportedly will not participate in the final week of the voluntary offseason program. The only thing both players have been present for this offseason was the mandatory minicamp last week.

The team should return to the field Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, with Thursday's OTA session being open to the media.

### **Red Sox injury updates: Why Mookie Betts is back**

Rob Bradford

BALTIMORE -- The original plan was to send Mookie Betts to Salem, Virginia, where he would suit up with the Red Sox' Single-A affiliate for at least a game to test his ailing left abdominal muscle. But at about 4 p.m. he emerged in the clubhouse with a smile on his face and clearly the news he was waiting for.

After two weeks out of the Red Sox' lineup, Betts was cleared to play for the big league club.

"Just talking with (Red Sox manager Alex Cora) AC and (Dave) Dombrowski and just decided to go ahead and jump right into it," said Betts prior to the Sox' series opener against the Orioles Monday night. "I think through this whole thing, I've felt not so bad because it wasn't like a big tear. It wasn't anything that really to turn I guess to or from. It was just a matter of letting it kind of heal and letting it come together. The only real thing I couldn't do was hit. But every other activity I was fine doing."

But with swinging the bat such an important part of the equation, there was certainly some hesitancy to dive back into the Sox' lineup so soon. But, as Cora explained, the right fielder passed all the tests, including running through the gauntlet that is preparing with J.D. Martinez.

"I think just watching him you can tell," Cora explained. "With the conviction he swung the last two days, what he went through, we're there. We're very comfortable with the decision we made. There was a lot. Yesterday the only thing he didn't do was get four at-bats at the big league level. He went through all the checkpoints, all the stations as he has before the game. I was telling Joe (Castiglione) during my interview that he's in the J.D. Martinez program so there's a lot of working. He did well. He feels fine. He feels like he's ready to go."

(Asked how many players were in the "J.D. Martinez program" Cora surmised about five, although he wouldn't reveal identities.

"I feel like I've been ready to play for a couple days," Betts said. "It gets sore sometimes but I think that's just meaning the muscles are working."

- Tyler Thornburg is creeping closer to major league action, having come off another solid outing for Triple-A Pawtucket. His step will be to spend the three-game series at Camden Yards with the Red Sox before pitching again for the PawSox, Thursday in Lehigh Valley.

"It was a good time for him to obviously take a step back but also in the training room, understand how to deal with it," said Cora. "He's a guy that, when healthy, everybody knows what he can do. It's just a matter of getting there, being able to bounce back, instead of being a guy who pitches one way and can't pitch for three. That doesn't work here at the big league level. We need guys to be available, be able to pitch, and he's getting to that point."

Regarding Thornburg's most recent outing, Cora added, "I think velocity has sustained, 94-95 (mph). Breaking ball a little inconsistent but everything that we get from Walk (Kevin Walker) and KB (Kevin Boles) is he's repeating his delivery. The fastball up is a good one, I think right now it's just a matter of him to be able to do it on back to back days and the quote-unquote grind, be ready to pitch at this level is the most important thing."

- Drew Pomeranz, who is recovering from biceps tendonitis, had a small setback, limiting what he could participate in Monday.

"Pomeranz, he threw yesterday again, but today he has a stiff neck," Cora said. "Same hotel, same brand. I don't know if he slept on the wrong side or whatever. He was feeling better but he has that."

### **Red Sox lineup: Mookie Betts returns from disabled list and will bat leadoff vs. Orioles**

John Tomase

The Red Sox activated right fielder Mookie Betts from the disabled list and he'll bat leadoff and play right field on Monday in the opener of a three-game series at Baltimore.

Betts has been sidelined since May 27 with a left abdominal strain. Even after missing two weeks, he still leads the American League in runs (52), as well as average (.359), on base percentage (.437), slugging percentage (.750), and OPS (1.187). He also owns 17 home runs and 13 steals.

He returns in a park he has dominated throughout his career. He has 11 lifetime homers in Camden Yards, his most of any visiting park. To make room for Betts on the 25-man roster, the Red Sox optioned first baseman Sam Travis to Triple-A Pawtucket.

Betts will be playing in support of knuckleballer Steven Wright, who's coming off seven innings of shutout ball against the Tigers as he angles for a job in the rotation while left-hander Drew Pomeranz recovers from biceps tendinitis.

Wright will be opposed by right-hander Dylan Bundy, who's 3-6 with a 4.79 ERA lifetime against the Red Sox.

The Red Sox have owned the Orioles thus far, with six wins in seven tries. They've outscored the O's 41-19 and limited Baltimore to no more than three runs six times.

This will be their first visit of the year to Camden Yards, however, where the Orioles are still terrible (10-18, .357) but markedly better than on the road (9-27, .250).

Here's the Boston lineup:

Mookie Betts RF  
Andrew Benintendi LF  
J.D. Martinez DH  
Mitch Moreland 1B  
Xander Bogaerts SS  
Rafael Devers 3B  
Eduardo Nunez 2B  
Christian Vazquez C  
Jackie Bradley Jr. CF

***\*NBCSports.com***

### **Why Cora laughing at Nunez was the moment of the night**

Evan Drellich

BALTIMORE -- The Red Sox' 2-0 win over the Orioles on Monday night brought a dominant effort by the bullpen. Steven Wright's knuckleball cemented his spot in the Sox rotation. Mookie Betts returned -- Hallelujah -- and the Sox had just enough grease to elbow their way past the most miserable Birds.

Chances are, a month or two from now, you will remember none of that. Why would you?

If baseball's purpose remains escapism and a reflection of ourselves, seeing the leader of the Red Sox react just like an eighth-grader in a situation usually reserved for austerity may still bring a grin well into the future.

Down the line, what you may recall from Monday night is Alex Cora laughing at Eduardo Nunez at home plate after Nunez got hit by a pitch in the stomach. And you will appreciate the Red Sox more for that levity.

The manager wasn't trying to be mean. He, in fact, was not mean at all. Cora was the tired kid in the back of the classroom before last period who just couldn't help himself.

When Nunez got hit near the ribs, it loaded the bases for the Sox in a still scoreless game. Head trainer Brad Pearson was crouching next to Nunez, hand on Nunez's shoulder. Nunez was still on the ground but communicative, and Cora was standing next to him, bending forward at the waist and losing it.

"He was going, 'Oh my God, Oh my God, Oh my God,'" Cora said of Nunez, "'I'm not gonna die, I'm not gonna die.' I felt so bad, I just — I couldn't stop."

Cora was laughing as he retold it, too.

"It was funny," Cora continued. "Whatever. At least he made me laugh in the 12th inning of a close game."

He made everyone laugh. If you see it today, you'll laugh. At least, you'll chuckle, because it was such an oddity and eminently relatable.

This was an otherwise intense moment in the baseball game. Brilliant Buck Showalter was across the way. A division title could be decided by one game -- and yeah, all of that is true. It's always true. But what you wind up remembering from individual games in the course of 162 often is not a specific play. It's often nothing at all to do with the field. It might be the flashlights on phones while Matt Barnes pitches. Or a bullpen cop. You know how it goes.

Pedro Martinez had already moved on to the Mets when the sprinklers came on while he was pitching. Instead of dashing off the field to avoid getting wet, he went through them first, a childlike instinct to simply enjoy the moment taking over. The score doesn't resonate years later. The amusement conveyed in an unexpected moment does.

### **Red Sox lineup gets much-needed boost with return of Betts**

Evan Drellich

BALTIMORE -- The Red Sox offense is still difficult to evaluate beyond some basic, blanket statements: they're very good. They're better than what they showed in 2017.

Yet what Mookie Betts' abdominal injury might expose more than anything is the separation between the Sox' hitting and pitching, and the fact that the pitching remains this team's calling card.

Betts' absence ended Monday when he was activated in Baltimore and started in right field. Sam Travis was optioned.

Because of the big names involved, pitching was long expected to be a strength. What team carries David Price and Chris Sale and Craig Kimbrel and expect pitching to be a secondary weapon?

But the way the season has unfolded has shifted some of the attention. Consider that the Sox entered Monday's series opener with the Orioles carrying the second-highest runs per game average in the majors, 5.17. The Yankees lead everyone at 5.45, and the Cubs are at 5.05. J.D. Martinez and Betts have probably drawn more eyes than anyone at Fenway.

The pitching was supposed to be great. The hitting was supposed to rebound, but not necessarily to this level. The surprise factor, then, and the intrigue, has more often lied with the hitters. It wasn't that long ago that the Sox were being spoken of as a doubles-based offense.

"I think the key for me has always been, and I may not be the normal here, is runs scored," Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said in January. "That to me is the big one. So if you're in a position where a guy hits 40 home runs and drives in 80, I'd rather have a guy who hits 25 and drives in 100, for me. That's why I like guys who hit doubles. I've said from the very beginning I like a doubles-hitting club. We have a ballpark that's conducive to hitting doubles."

And conducive to Martinez continuing his Godzilla-like path of destruction.

But if you peak at Baseball-Reference.com's chart of how teams do by position, a little clearer picture of the Sox emerges. The Sox have had the best pitching in the majors, per that site's wins above average measurement. That includes the best relief pitching, by the way.

Non-pitchers? The Sox rank 11th. The Sox rank in the bottom third in all of baseball at three positions: second base, third base and catcher. There's reason to believe all three positions can be better. But the strength of the Sox' pitching is the depth, what Eduardo Rodriguez and Steven Wright have added, and the emergence of Joe Kelly and Craig Kimbrel in the bullpen, all the way down to Hector Velazquez.

The season ERA of four starters: 2.83 for Sale, 3.54 for Rick Porcello, 4.00 for Price and 3.68 for E-Rod.

There's just more to work with if someone gets hurt on the pitching side. Betts, irreplaceable talent that he is, is even harder for the Sox to replace given the alternatives in his place.

## ***\*BostonSportsJournal.com***

### **Mookie Betts returns ... and all is right with the Red Sox**

Sean McAdam

BALTIMORE — Getting Mookie Betts back in their lineup isn't an instant cure-all for the Red Sox' offensive struggles of late.

But it sure is a nice start.

Fourteen games after being sidelined by a left abdominal strain, Betts was activated and placed in the lineup here Monday. It was the kind of return any team — hot or cold, good or bad — would welcome.

Betts went 1-for-5 in the Red Sox' 2-0, 12-inning victory over the Orioles. He was lifted in the bottom of the 11th because manager Alex Cora didn't want to push him too far in his first game back, but after the game, Betts said: "I'm fine, I'm ready to go (Tuesday)."

Before his season was interrupted on the final weekend of May, Betts was off to a fantastic start, leading the league in runs scored and total bases while tied for the league lead in homers. His numbers were so impressive, in fact, that some two weeks later, he was still among the league leaders in a host of offensive categories.

Not that his contributions came solely in the batter's box. Betts is among the best defenders in the game, and a number of times, the Red Sox were forced to play converted infielders (Brock Holt), or worse yet, converted catchers (Blake Swihart) in his place.

Betts is also both the fastest and best baserunner the Sox have, and losing his speed and aggressiveness at the top of the lineup was a major blow.

Simply put, Betts is on the short list of the game's best overall players, period. That the Sox barely played above .500 (8-6) in his absence speaks volumes about his importance to the team.

Initially, Betts was said to have preferred a one-game rehab assignment to regain his timing at the plate. But after going through a fairly rigorous workout at Fenway Sunday, then taking additional swings here Monday, the Sox were convinced that the time was right to activate. It may or may not have helped that Betts owns a career 1.004 OPS at Camden Yards.

The danger with any sort of "side" injury — the Sox have steadfastly refused to classify this as an oblique — is that it can get aggravated easily, resulting in an even longer convalescence. Such muscle pulls have been known to sideline players for weeks, and sometimes, months.

The Sox maintain Betts is fully recovered. "Just watching him, you can tell," said Alex Cora. "With the conviction he swung the last few days and what he went through, we're there. We're very comfortable with the decision we made. (Sunday) was a lot. He went through all the checkpoints, all the stations that he has before the games. He's in the J.D. Martinez program, so there's a lot of work. He did well, he did fine and he feels he's ready to go."

(It should be noted that when it comes to giving clearance for injured players to return, the recent track record for the Red Sox medical staff is less than stellar. Recall that Eduardo Nunez twice returned from a knee injury last fall only to re-injure the knee in his first at-bat. And there remains questions about whether Dustin Pedroia, whose return to active duty lasted all of three games, was brought back prematurely.)

The Sox put their trust in Betts, who indicated he was ready — even without the benefit of a rehab assignment.

"Throughout this whole thing, I (didn't feel) bat because it wasn't a big tear or anything," said Betts. "It was anything that I had to return from; it was a matter of letting it heal."

Because baseball is, at the bottom, such an individual sport based on one-on-one matchups, it's difficult to say that any one player can make others around him better, the way it might be said in a more collaborative game like basketball or hockey.

But this much can be said without fear of contradiction: the return of Betts makes the Red Sox lineup better.

With Betts returning to the leadoff spot, the Sox can move Andrew Benintendi — who did a remarkable impression of Betts in the leadoff spot for the last two weeks — back to his customary No. 2 spot, while dropping Xander Bogaerts from second to fifth.

The deeper the lineup, the tougher the Sox are for opposing pitchers. Heading into Monday's game with the Orioles, that reflected a Top 5 in the Red Sox batting order with the following OPS numbers: 1.187 (Betts); .920 (Benintendi); 1.030 (Martinez); .956 (Mitch Moreland); .836 (Bogaerts).

What's been missing — even with the sustained punch that Benintendi temporarily provided to the leadoff spot — is the "instant offense" that Cora envisioned when he anointed Betts as his leadoff hitter last winter. From literally the first pitch of the first game of the season, when Betts hammered a ball to the deepest reaches of the Tropicana Field, only to robbed of a likely triple by Rays center fielder Kevin Kiermaier, having Betts in the leadoff spot seemed to provide the Sox with a built-in advantage.

“He changes them when he’s in there,” noted an evaluator. “He gives them a different look, a swagger I guess. Not a lot of players can do that.”

The Red Sox survived without him. The bet is that they thrive now that’s he’s back.

## **BSJ Game Report: Red Sox 2, Orioles 0 (12) – Pitching staff picks up anemic offense**

Sean McAdam

### HEADLINES

Wright continues his roll: How well is Steven Wright pitching now? He came into Monday’s start with a 1.57 ERA ... and saw the ERA go down with 6.2 scoreless innings. Wright allowed just four hits and worked his way around three walks and a hit batsman. Oddly, Wright has been getting a lot of groundouts, which runs counterintuitive for knuckleballers who often get a lot of their outs in the air. “I pull it down, so I want it going down,” explained Wright. “For me, on the ground is a lot better than in the air. Historically, with the knuckleball, it’s been more of a flyball pitch and I’d rather it be a groundball pitch because I feel like there’s a lot more opportunity to get outs when it’s on the ground versus in the air. But I don’t really think about that. I just try to do everything I can to keep it in the zone, throw it with as much aggression as I can without overthrowing it and hopefully they hit the top part of the ball and hit it into the ground.” Wright got eight outs on the ground Monday night.

Bullpen buys time: The Red Sox trotted out five relievers in relief of Wright, who combined for 4.2 scoreless innings, during which they allowed one hit while compiling nine strikeouts. In fact, the final seven outs of the night recorded by Red Sox pitching came via strikeouts. Obviously, the more the ball is kept out of play, the better it is — especially on the road in a scoreless game, where one mistake can hand the home team the win. The biggest strikeout came back in the seventh when Wright loaded the bases on a walk, a hit batsman and a bunt single and left a mess for Joe Kelly. But Kelly went with fastballs up in the zone and overpowered Adam Jones, getting him to swing-and-miss on a 98 mph fastball, leaving three runners stranded.

Offense sputters again: The Sox won this one in spite of their offense, not because of it. They mustered just three hits in the first 10 innings and went from the fifth through the 10th with just one hit — and that was an infield single to shortstop by Xander Bogaerts. “Teams go through stretches like this,” said Cora of his offense, which has now one hit in the last 30 at-bats with runners in scoring position. Even in the 12th, when the Red Sox pushed two runs across, they scored not with hits but two straight sacrifice flies. “It’s just baseball,” shrugged Brock Holt, who delivered the first of the two sac flies. “You’re going to go through stretches where you’re playing really good and you can’t do anything wrong and then you’re going to have stretches like we’ve had the last few days. We’re getting guys on; we’re just not getting that hit with a guy in scoring position.” They’re also not getting hits with the bases loaded. The Sox are without a hit with the bases full in their last 22 such opportunities.

### SECOND GUESS

Cora gambled some by holding Craig Kimbrel back until the 12th, by which time the Red Sox finally had themselves a lead thanks to the two runs in the top of the inning. But that can be a risky proposition for a team on the road, since you invite the possibility of the game ending without using your best reliever. That was especially true for Kimbrel Monday night since, thanks to the lack of save opportunities of late, he had made just two appearances in the month of June and surely was well-rested enough to handle more than an inning.

### TWO UP

Andrew Benintendi: Moved out of the leadoff spot by the return of Mookie Betts, Benintendi kept doing the job with two singles and two walks, reaching base four times in five plate appearances.

Heath Hembree: The righty reliever earned the win and was dominant in his one inning of work, striking out the side on 15 pitches.

#### ONE DOWN

Mitch Moreland: The first baseman, who was red-hot for much of the season, has cooled considerably of late. Moreland was 0-for-5 with three strikeouts, the last of which came with the bases loaded and two out in the 11th.

#### QUOTE OF NOTE

“Sometimes, we’re going to go through stuff like throughout the season. But the pitching staff did outstanding, we played great defense and we ended up winning.”

— Alex Cora.

#### STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

Rafael Devers extended his hitting streak to a season-high six games with a double in the 12th inning.

Bogaerts has reached base in 25 of his last 26 games.

Bogaerts had his 14th multi-hit game of the year.

Benintendi was 2-for-3 with two walks and is now hitting .483 and 11 RBI in nine games against the Orioles this season.

Wright has contributed six scoreless outings in a row.

The Sox improved to 22-11 on the road and 26-10 against division opponents.

#### UP NEXT

The two teams continue their series Tuesday night at 7:05 with LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (7-1, 3.68) vs. RHP David Hess (2-2, 3.07).

## ***\*The Athletic***

### **Red Sox offense is in a funk, but Alex Cora confident it will end**

Jen McCaffrey

BALTIMORE – The return of Mookie Betts was supposed to help solve the offensive issues the Red Sox have faced the last few days. But even Betts’ presence did little to help.

It took 12 innings for the Red Sox to scratch out a run against the lowly Baltimore Orioles on Monday night.

Two sacrifice flies in the top of the 12th proved the difference as the Red Sox edged the Orioles, 2-0, and improved to 45-22, moving into a first-place tie with the New York Yankees in the division. Baltimore fell to a major-league worst 19-46.

Despite their records, there seemed little disparity between the two teams in the first of three games at Camden Yards.

Since a loss on Thursday to the Tigers, the Red Sox have scored just 10 runs in their last five games. All three of their opponents in that stretch, the Tigers, the White Sox, and the Orioles, have sub .500 records.

The Red Sox are now 1-for-29 with runners in scoring position over their last four games.

“Sometimes we hit the ball hard,” manager Alex Cora said. “Sometimes we’re expanding the zone. Teams go through stretches like this. The good thing is they battled today, they kept their energy throughout, and we ended up winning.”

Baltimore’s Dylan Bundy held the Red Sox offense to just three hits and two walks over eight innings. Steven Wright did his part silencing the Orioles with 6 2/3 scoreless innings, allowing four hits and three walks.

Betts played 11 innings in his first game since May 26 after dealing with an abdominal strain. The original plan was to send the right fielder to a minor-league affiliate to rehab, but after he met with manager Alex Cora and president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski on Monday morning, he convinced them he was good enough to be activated.

Betts was 1-for-5 night at the plate, but Cora didn’t want to push him any harder and opted to lift him in the 11th.

The following inning, Xander Bogaerts led off with a single to right and Rafael Devers doubled, putting runners on second and third. Eduardo Nunez was hit by a pitch to load the bases and Brock Holt, who entered the game in place of Betts, hit a sacrifice fly to finally break the scoreless tie. Jackie Bradley Jr. added another sacrifice fly to make it 2-0 and save the Red Sox from the embarrassment of a loss to Baltimore.

Coincidentally, the last time the Red Sox entered extra innings in a game with a scoreless tie was Sept. 19 against the Orioles in Baltimore. Boston won that game, too, 1-0 in the 11th.

Even with two of the best hitters in the game in their lineup, the Red Sox couldn’t muster more than six hits on the night, three of which came in extra innings.

Betts still leads the majors with a .354 average and 1.163 OPS. J.D. Martinez’s 21 home runs and 54 RBIs are the most in baseball.

Neither of them factored into the win on Monday night.

“We’re here to win series,” Cora said. “I know there’s going to be stretches where you don’t score runs sometimes. You score runs against staffs that are dominating the league, and swinging the bat well against other teams.

“Like I told them today, at this level, if you’re here, you have talent. If you’re on the mound, you can get people out regardless of your ERA or whatever. You execute, you get people out, and I think we ran into a stretch here where people think that the staff we’re facing is not good. Bundy was great, (Chicago’s Reynaldo) Lopez was good, the White Sox pitched well against us. It happens. It happens.”

The good thing for the Red Sox is that their record suggests they’ll turn it around sooner than later.

## ***\*The Baltimore Sun***

### **Bundy stellar again but Orioles fall to Red Sox, 2-0, on sac flies off Givens in 12th inning**

Jon Meoli

Dylan Bundy's starts are back to being an occasion, and if nothing else matters in this lost Orioles season, there's plenty of solace to be taken in that.

With eight shutout innings in Monday night's 2-0, 12-inning loss to the Boston Red Sox before a light announced crowd of 15,934 at Camden Yards, Bundy made a second straight scoreless start and was made to sweat out the result yet again.

The latter part can be expected from a fallow Orioles offense missing its top star, Manny Machado. The Orioles stranded 13 on the night and lost after Mychal Givens loaded the bases and allowed a pair of sacrifice flies in the 12th.

But after a few uncharacteristic outings that spoiled his spectacular start to the season, Bundy is back to the form where his starts being appointment viewing is an expectation for him, too.

"I've always thought, and I think we all felt like he could [be elite]," manager Buck Showalter said. "I know some people thought he kind of sticks out sometimes as one of those guys who could do that. Much of it's got to do with his mindset and his presentation. That's why you pitch guys like that on Opening Day. A lot of people [think], 'OK, the club's struggling and you're facing the Red Sox.' He wants that challenge. He doesn't back away from it. He's always had that elite mindset that you look for in all players, especially guys that you want to be taking the ball every fifth day in a meaningful situation."

Sometimes, as it was when he had all four pitches working when he struck out 14 in a complete game in Chicago last month, it's the kind of marvelous outing that makes batters look silly. Others have been like Monday, when he's had the swing-and-miss stuff when he needs it but rides his fastball with finish and location to a comfortable day.

And considering Bundy, under team control for three more seasons after this one, will be around for whatever comes next for these Orioles (19-46) in transition, this kind of return from their 2011 top draft pick will always be a welcome one.

"Dylan was as good as you want to see," Showalter said. "That's a really tough lineup to go through, and he was outstanding."

As he did in some of his early-career starts against Boston, Bundy challenged a lineup that feasts on fastballs with lots of them, throwing the pitch 64.1 percent of the time. He only threw it more often only in the May 8 start against the Kansas City Royals, when he went one inning and had nothing.

The opposite was true Monday. He needed little else to turn the Red Sox lineup over three times without much resistance. Andrew Benintendi harmlessly singled in the first and fourth innings, and became the first Red Sox player to reach second base when he walked and stole second base with two outs in the sixth.

"It's a good pitch them going in there, or I feel like it is," Bundy said. "I was going in there and it was working, so we kept with it."

There was nothing for the high-powered Red Sox offense to get excited about, save for the final out Bundy recorded, which was a towering warning-track fly ball to left field from Mookie Betts. Pitching opposite knuckleballer Steven Wright, who also carried a shutout bid into the eighth inning, Bundy ended up with more swinging strikes (11 to nine) and just as much weak contact.

Bundy has pitched 17 scoreless innings in a row, dating to his May 29 start against the Washington Nationals.

"You could say that [it's a good run]," Bundy said. "Body feels good, arm feels great. Just taking the ball every five days and trying to give our team a chance to win."

Monday has helped make this second standout run for Bundy this year nearly as good as the first. He had a 1.42 ERA with 11.87 strikeouts per nine and a 1.11 WHIP through five starts and had excelled in every way imaginable before allowing nine home runs and 19 earned runs in nine innings over his next three starts.

In the six starts since, Bundy has a 2.09 ERA, with 9.84 strikeouts per nine innings and a 0.88 WHIP.

Bundy turned in his ninth quality start of the season, and the Orioles' 32nd. The Orioles have lost 18 of them as a team, tied for most in the majors. The bullpen followed Bundy with three scoreless innings from Richard Bleier, Brad Brach, and Mychal Givens before Givens loaded the bases in the 12th and allowed a pair of sacrifice flies.

### ***\*Associated Press***

### ***\*Associated Press***

#### **Red Sox beat punchless Orioles 2-0 in 12 innings**

BALTIMORE -- Seems the best-hitting team in the big leagues can win with pitching and defense, too.

Brock Holt and Jackie Bradley Jr. each delivered a sacrifice fly in the 12th inning, and the Boston Red Sox limited the Baltimore Orioles to five hits in a 2-0 victory Monday night.

Though the Red Sox lead the majors in runs and batting average, they managed only four hits through 11 scoreless innings in this one.

"Sometimes we're going to go through stuff like this, throughout the season," manager Alex Cora said. "But the pitching did outstanding, we played great defense and we ended up winning."

Steven Wright and five relievers combined for Boston's fifth shutout of the year.

The Red Sox have scored only 10 runs in their last five games, but perceive that to be nothing more than a mini-slump.

"We're getting guys on, we're just not getting that hit with guys in scoring position," Holt said. "That'll turn."

Xander Bogaerts led off the 12th with a single against Mychal Givens (0-3), and the Red Sox loaded the bases before Holt broke the scoreless deadlock with a fly to center. Bradley followed with a fly ball to score Rafael Devers, who had doubled.

Heath Hembree (3-1) struck out the side in the 11th and Craig Kimbrel got three outs for his 21st save.

"It was a very well-pitched game by everybody that was on the mound today, from the starter all the way through Craig," said Brandon Workman, who contributed 1 1/3 innings of one-hit relief. "Everybody threw the ball well. Put up 12 zeros. That's hard to do at any level of baseball."

It was the fifth straight loss for the Orioles, who have been shut out seven times this season. Baltimore left 13 on base and went 0 for 8 with runners in scoring position.

"We had plenty of opportunities," manager Buck Showalter said. "We just couldn't get that hit that's been eluding us for it seems like quite a while."

Orioles starter Dylan Bundy gave up three hits over eight innings. He struck out seven, walked two and did not permit a runner to reach third base.

It was his fourth scoreless outing of the season, the second in a row. Last week, the right-hander blanked the Mets on three hits in seven innings.

Wright was going up against an offense that ranked last in the AL in runs and was missing ailing slugger Manny Machado. The knuckleballer allowed four hits over 6 2/3 innings. In the seventh, after Baltimore used two walks and an infield hit to load the bases with two outs, Joe Kelly entered and struck out Adam Jones with a 97 mph fastball.

Red Sox outfielder Mookie Betts was reinstated from the disabled list before the game and went 1 for 5 in the leadoff spot. Betts, who came in with a major league-leading .359 batting average, missed 14 games with an abdominal strain.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Red Sox: 2B Dustin Pedroia (knee), limited to 13 plate appearances this season, worked out in the Camden Yards training room but has not yet resumed baseball activities. Cora offered no timetable for the return of the four-time All-Star. ... LHP Drew Pomeranz (biceps) threw Sunday, but woke up with a stiff neck Monday that could perhaps delay his return from the DL. ... RHP Tyler Thornburg (shoulder) "felt great" after pitching one scoreless inning for Triple-A Pawtucket on Sunday, Cora said. Thornburg will next pitch for Pawtucket on Thursday.

Orioles: All-Star closer Zach Britton was activated from the disabled list, six months after undergoing surgery on his torn right Achilles tendon. ... Machado sat out with an illness that has been making its way around the Baltimore clubhouse. "I could tell he was starting to get it yesterday," said Showalter, who has been battling the same malady. ... With the return of Britton, Baltimore placed RHP Pedro Araujo on the 10-day disabled list with a right elbow sprain and transferred OF Colby Rasmus to the 60-day DL.

#### UP NEXT

Red Sox: LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (7-1, 3.68 ERA) started his professional career in the Orioles organization, and now he's won a career-high four straight starts heading into Tuesday night's game against his former team.

Orioles: RHP Andrew Cashner (2-8, 4.98 ERA) attempts to break a run of three successive losses. Baltimore scored only one run in each of those games.