

The Boston Red Sox Thursday, October 26, 2017

*** *The Boston Globe***

Alex Cora's varied roles in the game will serve him well here

Chad Finn

So here's what we know about Alex Cora as a major league manager: Nothing. His slate is as blank as the Red Sox' won-lost record will become the morning of March 29, when they open the season at Tampa Bay.

He has spent one season as bench coach with the Houston Astros, managed the mighty Criollos de Caguas in the Puerto Rican Winter League from 2014-16 . . . and that is about it for his dugout experience, unless you think he gained some knowledge through osmosis by sitting next to so many managers during a 14-year playing career spent mostly as a utility player.

Cora is a relative novice, the most inexperienced Red Sox manager since Butch Hobson replaced Joe Morgan in 1992. Let's hope this is the only time we draw a parallel to Hobson, a beloved player in the late 1970s who burned most of his stockpile of goodwill during his hapless three-year stint managing a Red Sox team that never finished higher than fourth.

Perhaps Cora's lack of seasoning as a manager is a concern in some outposts of Red Sox Nation. I can understand that. After all, you don't really know what you have in a manager until a dossier of evidence is built up over time on his approach and tactics.

Even Hobson was celebrated when he was hired, with general manager Lou Gorman saying they promoted him from Pawtucket to Boston because other organizations coveted him. And experienced managers can disprove a preconceived perception when circumstances change.

Remember when Terry Francona was just a Phillies retread who arrived in Boston with a career record that was 78 games below .500? He's 214 games above .500 now.

Right now, we have no guarantees where Cora will fall on the Francona-Hobson Scale of Managerial Competence. But we can make educated assumptions based on who we know him to be from his four-year playing career (2005-08) with the Red Sox and what those who have worked with him say about the man.

And those educated assumptions lead to confidence that in Cora, the Red Sox have hired the right manager at the right time.

Honestly, I couldn't even feign concern about this decision if I drew the "pretend you're worried" straw on some generic hot-take sports debate show. Why? Let me ask you this: What do we know about him?

Answer: He's an expert communicator who understands the Boston market and mind-set. More important, we know he has a knack for helping younger players thrive; we saw this first-hand when he was a player and Dustin Pedroia was breaking through. It's something Astros manager A.J. Hinch talked about during the Red Sox-Astros Division Series.

"His first year of coaching has gone well given his ability to connect with players and given his baseball intellect," Hinch said. "He's very sharp, sees the game in an extraordinarily deep way, has really connected well with players in our clubhouse, and spent a lot of time developing relationships and being the bench coach liaison to the clubhouse that I asked him to be."

We also know Cora is arriving from the most analytically advanced organization in baseball in the Astros, so he's going to desire and know how to utilize reams of data. Yet he's also an ex-player who has seen the game from various perspectives — a college star at Miami, a touted prospect, a regular (he played at least 134 games three times for the Dodgers from 2001-04), a utility player, and a journeyman.

I always thought the I've-been-through-it-myself relatability to virtually any experience in baseball is what made Francona so adept at handling diverse personalities. Cora seems to be the same way. He may never have been a superstar, but he knew how to connect with one; he was one of the few Red Sox players to get through to Manny Ramirez when the worst of his personality would come out.

Part of the reason I believe Cora is going to be a great success is because of whom he is following. Farrell is the most maligned successful manager the Red Sox have had in my lifetime, though I'll hear arguments on miserable John McNamara and Don Zimmer, who was so helplessly old-school he probably wrote out the lineup card on slate.

Even if Cora has tactical hiccups on occasion, well, so did his predecessor. Early on, he's going to get leeway from the fans because of who he is not.

And chances are certain aspects of the ball club will improve, based in part on Cora's personality, but also because it's tough for some of them to get worse. The Red Sox ran the bases last year as if they were trying to create bloopers for their own YouTube channel.

It's highly unlikely that their collection of established young players will uniformly regress again under the optimistic and youthful 42-year-old Cora as they did under the distant Farrell.

I do wonder how he will handle the pitching staff. Farrell and pitching coach Carl Willis got the best out a bullpen that was presumed to be a weakness but turned out to be a strength. Hiring an experienced pitching coach — former Red Sox pitcher Mike Maddux is an intriguing name — would seem to serve Cora well.

But before he even begins, it's easy to foresee how Cora will serve the Red Sox well. He's not experienced as a manager, but he's had an array of experiences that have led to him becoming a manager. He's going to be good at this. And even if he isn't right away, chances are he'll still be better than the last guy.

There's new hope for pitchers who can't win in the playoffs

Alex Speier

It seems a bit silly now, in retrospect, that Clayton Kershaw's postseason credentials were a matter of debate, that there were questions about whether he could excel in the brightest spotlight. Because OF COURSE he could excel when it mattered the most.

He is, after all, Clayton Kershaw, a pitcher who has made excellence more commonplace than any pitcher of this decade and, arguably, any decade. While his career resume is incomplete, to this point, no starting pitcher has ever separated himself so thoroughly from his peers during the regular season.

For such pitchers, postseason struggles represent burdens — and certainly fascinating curiosities — but not fundamental flaws. Pitchers who perform that well, that consistently, eventually will find a way to achieve success in the playoffs when given enough opportunities.

Kershaw delivered a dazzling reminder of that notion in what struck those who have been around him the longest as a landmark performance — an outlook captured by Tim Brown of Yahoo! Sports.

In his first World Series appearance, he dominated over seven innings, striking out 11 without a walk while yielding one run in the Dodgers' 3-1 win. That outing — not the first in which he's dominated in October, but certainly the most prominent — effectively dissolved any curiosity about whether something about the

postseason represented a form of kryptonite for a pitcher who entered this year with a career 4-7 record and 4.55 ERA (roughly twice his regular season mark) in the playoffs.

For the Red Sox, who feature two pitchers – David Price and Chris Sale – who belong in the just-below-Kershaw-and-above-nearly-everyone-else tier and who, to this point, have seen their playoff performances fall short of their regular season standards – such October brilliance should come with some measure of reassurance. Clearly, there are aspects of pitching and performing in the playoffs – the quality of competition, the quality of scouting reports and game plans, the intensity and effort level involved with each pitch – that distinguish it from the regular season.

It's more difficult to overpower postseason opponents than regular season ones. Yet pitchers like Kershaw – as well as Price (2-8 with a 5.03 ERA in the playoffs, including 0-8 with a 5.74 ERA as a starter) and Sale (0-2 with an 8.38 ERA in his first two playoff appearances this postseason) – have forged their elite regular season status because of their ability to figure out how to accomplish difficult feats.

Price took a step forward this October with his dominance out of the bullpen for the Red Sox, delivering 6 2/3 shutout innings out of the bullpen. Yet he took only limited satisfaction in his effort, suggesting that it would not alter the broader impression of his postseason struggles.

“If I throw well out of the bullpen that doesn't mean anything,” Price said after delivering four scoreless innings in Game 3 of the ALDS. “I've got to do this as a starter. I know that, y'all know that.”

Sale face-planted in Game 1 of the ALDS against the Astros, then delivered four strong innings of relief in Game 4 before faltering in his fifth inning of work, his two-run yield in the eighth inning setting in motion the Red Sox' elimination.

Their combined zero career wins as playoff starters will undoubtedly inspire questions if the Red Sox return to the playoffs with the duo. Yet in the end, it seems to make little sense to view past playoff struggles as more predictive of the postseason future than a much, much larger body of regular season work.

Randy Johnson, after all, once lost seven straight playoff starts, at the time the longest streak in postseason history (before Price surpassed that standard with his current run of eight straight losing playoff starts). Over five appearances in the 2001 League Championship Series and World Series, Johnson made that losing streak a footnote.

Years of postseason struggles can frame perceptions about what a pitcher is or can be in October. One start can recast them.

Knee surgery means Dustin Pedroia is sidelined at start of next season

Peter Abraham

Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia will miss at least the first two months of next season after undergoing cartilage restoration surgery on his left knee Wednesday.

Pedroia is not expected to be ready for major league games for approximately seven months, according to the Red Sox. With the 2018 season starting on March 29, that means as many as 50 games.

Righthanded pitcher Steven Wright had the same procedure done this year, on May 8. Pedroia also chose the surgeon he had, Dr. Riley Williams III at the New York Hospital for Special Surgery.

“It's a long and challenging rehab. But knowing Pedey, he'll crush it,” Wright said. “The way I feel now, I'm glad I did it. It was the best decision.”

Wright didn't know the details of Pedroia's surgery. But in his case, Williams grafted cartilage from a cadaver into his knee. The surgery, still relatively new, has been successful for basketball and soccer players.

Wright was on crutches for five weeks and it was some time after that before he was able to really progress with his rehab work.

"It took some time to push it. But once I did it responded well," he said. "I was able to transfer weight like I would when I pitch. It's coming back to where I feel normal. To see me walk around now, you'd never know I had knee surgery."

Pedroia injured his knee April 21 in a collision at second base with Baltimore's Manny Machado. He returned to the lineup six days later, but dealt with the injury over the remainder of the season.

Pedroia went on the disabled list twice because of the injury, first on July 29 and again on Aug. 9 after playing one game. He did not return until Sept. 1.

That the injury hampered his play was obvious. Pedroia hit .242 with little power in September and was cautious running the bases. He went 2 for 16 in the Division Series against Houston.

When the Red Sox' season ended Oct. 9, Pedroia acknowledged that his knee bothered him throughout the year, and that if he elected to have surgery, it would be a lengthy rehabilitation.

Pedroia, 34, has four years and \$56 million remaining on his contract. A source familiar with his thinking said Pedroia believes the surgery will enable him to be productive over the long term.

Pedroia hit .293 with a .760 OPS overall this past season. He started 97 games at second base and six others as the designated hitter.

The Red Sox have a number of internal options at second base. Marco Hernandez, Brock Holt, Deven Marrero, and Tzu-Wei Lin all have major league experience at the position.

Josh Rutledge also can play second base, but his roster status is more complicated. He is a Rule 5 draft pick, arbitration eligible, and coming off hip surgery.

Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said Pedroia's surgery does not affect the team's offseason plans.

"We feel we have enough infield depth," he said.

Eduardo Nunez, who will be a free agent after the World Series, filled in well for Pedroia after being acquired from the San Francisco Giants July 26. Nunez hit .321 with an .892 OPS in 38 games for the Sox, 26 of them at second base.

Nunez ended the season with a right knee injury that did not require surgery.

Nunez said several times how much he enjoyed his time in Boston. But as a free agent, he could command a starting job elsewhere.

This surgery is at least the seventh Pedroia has had in the last 11 years. He had arthroscopic surgery on his left knee last Oct. 12 to repair a torn meniscus.

He has also had procedures on his left wrist and thumb (2014), left thumb (2013), left foot (2011 and '10), and left wrist (2007).

“One benefit for me was all that time off allowed other parts of my body to heal,” said Wright, who dealt with a shoulder injury this past season. “For Pedey, the time off will help him. He’s been grinding through things for a lot of years now. This will help his body overall I bet.

“This could get him back to where he was. That’ll be the best thing for him and for us as a team.”

Wright said he expects to be ready to pitch at the start of spring training, or shortly after. With Eduardo Rodriguez expected to miss time recovering from knee surgery done earlier this month, Wright will be competing for a rotation spot.

Fenway Park may offer fans their own dugout seats

Nicole Yang

Fenway Park has received early approval for some game-changing new seats.

According to the Red Sox, the Boston Landmarks Commission has given its approval for a dugout-style fan experience.

The proposal features new seating areas adjacent to the team dugouts that will offer ticket holders a below-field-level view of the game similar to what the players experience.

The sections’ capacity has not been confirmed, but plans show as many as 25 individuals will be able to enjoy the space.

According to the Boston Herald, architect Charles F. Izzo told the Landmarks Commission’s board on Tuesday night that fans in the new areas will be free to stand and mingle, because their assigned bar stool-style seats will be below the eye level of those in rows behind them. They will also have access to a drink rail for snacks and refreshments.

“Other ballparks have installed them,” Izzo told the Herald. “They’ve been a big hit.”

Before the Red Sox go ahead with the idea, the plan still requires approval from Major League Baseball. Team spokeswoman Zineb Curran noted in a statement that “it would be premature to discuss the proposed changes at this stage” because the organization is still “awaiting review and analysis from various other city organizations.”

*** *The Boston Herald***

Red Sox need power, but not at Giancarlo Stanton's price

Michael Silverman

LOS ANGELES — It’s OK for the Red Sox to gawk, to admire and even admit to lust in their hearts.

How could they not?

Giancarlo Stanton is only the best pure power threat currently residing on the planet, an almost cartoonishly chiseled modern-day sultan of swat. Of course the Red Sox will explore the notion of trading for him as soon as the Marlins, seemingly inevitably, put him on the market.

But as desperate as the Sox are for power — yep, they need it baaaaaad — they have to take that proverbial cold shower in order to stand firm and resist the temptation of trading for the Stanton model.

There are alternatives. Say hello, free agents J.D. Martinez and Eric Hosmer.

And we'll get to those just-say-no-to-Stanton reasons soon but on the face of it, the rationale for the Red Sox turning their back on Stanton sure is counterintuitive.

This won't be easy.

As luck would have it, "Drooling for Stanton," this offseason's branding opportunity, began in earnest last night before Game 2 of the World Series when the Marlins slugger supreme stopped by in street clothes to accept his second Hank Aaron Award for best offensive player in the National League.

With 59 home runs, 132 RBI and a .631 slugging percentage, Stanton was an easy choice for the voters. He's probably going to win the NL MVP as well, another occasion which will give members of the media the excuse they found last night to ask him about what's up with him this offseason.

Stanton has a full no-trade clause in his contract, you see, so there's a game he and the Marlins and their new owner, Derek Jeter, need to play. The Marlins aren't close to winning and they're also hamstrung by the heavily back-loaded \$295 million remaining on Stanton's contract that does not expire until 2027, although there is an opt-out for him after 2020.

Stanton, who turns 28 next month, understands that if he wants to join a winning team in the near future, he will need to eventually OK a trade.

But so far, he said, there is little to go on.

"From the new ownership group, no — I think we're all going to take care of that after the World Series," Stanton said.

The Miami right fielder played the decision he faces carefully and deliberately, betraying nothing.

"I don't know, to be honest," he said about a gut feeling on what will happen. "I've had thoughts on both sides, but I don't know any specifics."

His decision, if there is one, lies ahead, OK?

"I'll figure out those plans and the specifics when we get there," Stanton said. "I don't have stamped-out ideas for that."

While Stanton and the Marlins prepare for their dance that should conclude with the mutual decision to accelerate a break-up, the Red Sox can seize the moment to take a deep breath.

Without even diving into the sheer mess of sending top-shelf young talent to the Marlins, the bigger so-called "problem" of the Red Sox (and, again, plenty of other teams) trading for Stanton is that he simply is not worth the bucks, never mind the prospect of sending young talent to the Marlins. (Caveat 1: If the Marlins and Stanton are open to renegotiating the contract to make it less onerous on a team trading for him, then forget this was written.)

It's not that Stanton wouldn't smash, mash and bash as well as anybody else not named Aaron Judge for the next decade or so, but he's not the only person in baseball capable of hitting a bunch of home runs.

If you go into a car dealership where every make of car is available with a pocketful of cash, you are not obligated to drive off with the snazziest Jaguar or most miraculous Tesla. That doesn't mean you need to purchase a sensible Toyota, either.

But a Lexus, maybe a nice Acura or BMW? That's what the Red Sox need, a high-end but not impossibly priced bauble like Stanton.

His contract would be a disaster for the Red Sox. The salary begins to grow more and more in Stanton's post-peak years, cresting at \$32 million for 2023-25, when he will be 33-35 years old.

It feels funny to be preaching fiscal responsibility to the Red Sox. Should I care if they bust the payroll threshold and pay countless millions in luxury taxes for what might be decades if not centuries?

The Sox are most likely going to blow past the threshold anyway in 2018 (Caveat 2: Unless they can trade away some big contracts) but the hit that Stanton's salary next year (\$25 million) would make is already too much of a burden, and it would only get heavier.

There's a better, more prudent way to spend the owners' dollars than sinking way too many of them into the lap of Stanton, who, we need to add, has had a problem staying healthy and playing full seasons.

There's no guarantee that Stanton would even approve a trade to Boston.

The Red Sox should keep that temptation from ever reaching Stanton's plate.

Good luck, Alex Cora; you'll need it

Ron Borges

It is difficult to define joy, but you know it when you see it. You also know when you don't see it, which is one of the many things that differ between the team Alex Cora is now on and the one he will soon be coming to Boston to manage.

The Houston Astros play with a joy so apparent it makes you smile. The 2017 Red Sox played with a face so grim one wondered who stole their dogs. As much as anything, that is the biggest problem Cora will face when he first steps into the clubhouse at JetBlue Park in Fort Myers in February.

Who stole the fun?

Everyone who devotes their life to sports — be it the athlete on the field, the scout traversing the country in search of the next great talent or the fan in the stands investing so much time, money and emotion in the game — got this way because the games of our youth were joy-filled moments. There was little of that feeling evident in the Red Sox clubhouse.

Win or lose, most of them found a way to treat every day as if it was a wake. Sure there were the three B's in the outfield dancing after a victory but half the time Jackie Bradley Jr. seemed to be making a list of everyone who ever suggested he might not be good enough to be an everyday big league hitter and then checking it twice to refresh his memory. No joy in that.

As he has aged, Dustin Pedroia has devolved from a scrappy guy who was easy to admire into a sourpuss who leads by complaint. The chip on his shoulder that once served him so well as he tried to prove wrong all those people who said he was too small has metastasized into a cancer that is eating him up and was doing the same to a goodly portion of the people around him last season.

Contrast Pedroia with Jose Altuve, the tiny second baseman of the Astros who seems so clearly happy to be doing what he's doing. To be fair, Pedroia was dragging around a leg attached to a badly disintegrating knee that was surgically repaired yesterday. Having had four knee operations of various complexity, I can vouch for the fact trying to function with a constantly inflamed and aching knee will not always bring out the best in you, but Pedroia's emotional dyspepsia didn't begin this spring. It just deepened the more time he spent around David Price.

The Red Sox were not a bad baseball team in 2017 but they were a flawed one. Frankly, Manager John probably led them as far as they were capable of going so no one should really complain that their 93 wins

and AL East title were all they could muster. If you really believe they were better than the Astros, you should start following another sport.

This should have been a Red Sox team we liked because of what it accomplished but it was not. The Sox came from behind time and again to win and they maximized their abilities for the most part. Yet who among you would say you loved these Red Sox? The reason you didn't was too many of them didn't seem to love what they were doing.

It is difficult to put your finger on how this manifested itself but nearly everyone I know who follows the Sox closely asked some form of the same question as one nasty display of petulance or dull display of disinterest followed another: "Do these guys like to play baseball?"

The answer was, "It didn't seem so."

So now Alex Cora must come in and try to change this culture of disillusionment. Price fostered it but, to be honest, he didn't do it alone. He had the grousing presence of Pedroia, who is not aging gracefully and is probably now being hurt by the very me-against-the-world attitude that once helped make him a great player, to go along with him but frankly those two were not alone in establishing a barren joylessness that often seemed to engulf the Red Sox this season. Eradicating it won't be easy.

Neither you, the fan, nor Cora, the manager, should be fooled into thinking the attitude of gratitude in Houston and the one of dyspepsia in Boston simply reflects the Astros winning more often. The truth is the 2017 Red Sox won more than often enough to have filled their workplace with joy. That they didn't says much about them, and perhaps Manager John, who never seemed too happy himself as the season wore on. Dealing with the sourness around him seemed to wear him out, too.

Certainly the Sox need more power in the middle of their lineup. They need someone to replace Pedroia, who will not be ready when the season begins. They will always need another arm and they need to manage Chris Sale differently, so he doesn't fade at the end of the season as he has in both Chicago and Boston. Most of all they need to convince Price that playing baseball for more than \$30 million a season is the same game he once so gladly played for free.

Baseball was once a joyous expression of who everyone in the Sox clubhouse hoped to be one day. Now they are those guys, living out a dream. Before Alex Cora does anything with his pitching rotation or his batting order, that's the first, and most important, thing he must do.

He's got to find a way to remind his players that the right approach to playing a game is to remember why you started playing in the first place — because it's a lot more fun than cutting sugar cane or being a hod carrier. It's a joy to play, pressure or not. If the Red Sox are made to see that, they might not be the Astros in 2018 but they'd be fun to watch again.

After Dustin Pedroia's surgery, Red Sox need Eduardo Nunez even more

Chad Jennings

Dustin Pedroia will not be ready for the start of next season, and the Red Sox are now stuck between the urgency of short-term need and uncertainty of long-term commitment.

Pedroia underwent cartilage restoration surgery on his left knee yesterday, and the team announced Pedroia is expected to return to game action in approximately seven months, which would be the end of May.

The Red Sox are going to need a fill-in second baseman until then, and they might very well need a dependable backup even after Pedroia returns.

"Feel we can handle the second base position internally," Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski wrote in an e-mail. "In regards to additional depth, little early for me to answer that."

There's an interesting disparity in that stance: confidence that internal options can fill the void, but uncertainty whether the current depth is sufficient.

Here's the second base depth chart beyond Pedroia, in no particular order: Brock Holt, Deven Marrero, Josh Rutledge, Marco Hernandez and Tzu-Wei Lin. The first three had an OPS below .600 this season, and the other two don't have enough big league at-bats to know what kind of hitters they'll be.

Are there enough in-house options to fill in at second base for two months? Sure. That's basically the group that filled in at third base when Pablo Sandoval went belly-up in June.

Is there confidence such depth can get the Red Sox through a season? Hardly. There's a reason the Red Sox had to fast-track Rafael Devers to play third, and there's a reason they traded for Eduardo Nunez to play anywhere.

What the Sox need is a capable second baseman who can reliably do the job while Pedroia is rehabbing, but won't become completely obsolete when Pedroia's back in the lineup.

They need Nunez again.

The role for the soon-to-be free agent would be just as clear today as it was when the Red Sox acquired him from San Francisco in July. At the time, every infield position was covered, but Nunez wound up becoming the Red Sox' regular second baseman in August, because of Pedroia's knee, and he had an .892 OPS in 38 games before suffering his own knee injury in September, a sprained PCL that was not considered a long-term concern or candidate for surgery.

Nunez would fill in for Pedroia, provide insurance behind Devers, and serve as a bat-first backup to Xander Bogaerts at shortstop. He also could play the outfield in a pinch, and even if he were to get significant at-bats at designated hitter, Nunez' .774 OPS the past three years is better than all but two American League teams got from the DH position this year.

Nunez would surely come with the pricetag of an everyday player, but that might be exactly what the Red Sox need.

Pedroia has four years left on his contract, and this season revealed the unpredictability of a 34-year-old infielder playing with a bad knee. Pedroia had offseason knee surgery last year as well — a relatively minor meniscus cleanup — but still missed three games in April because of the knee, he went on the disabled list soon after the All-Star break because of the knee, and he was in and out of the lineup through September because of the knee.

“Obviously, we had to try and find a way to do what we did so I could be out there,” Pedroia said at season's end. “But if you were to get it fixed, the recovery is a long time.”

Getting it fixed is what Pedroia tried to do yesterday at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, and the Red Sox were not caught off guard by the decision.

Their in-house alternatives are light-hitting utility infielders. The rest of the free agent market is mostly a combination of fading All-Stars (Chase Utley, Brandon Phillips), out-of-position hypotheticals (Zack Cosart, Asdrubal Cabrera), a good second baseman with limited versatility (Neil Walker) and a former second baseman who's mostly a left fielder now (Howie Kendrick).

Trade options are limited, both in terms of what the Red Sox can give up and what they can expect in return.

But clearly they need something.

Yesterday's procedure should improve Pedroia's outlook, but what exactly that means seems to be anyone's guess. Surgery did not make him 10 years younger, and it did not come with an on-the-verge second base prospect for the Red Sox to take home.

The Red Sox could cross their fingers with Lin and Marrero for a couple of months, then cross their fingers with Pedroia for four months and three years after that.

Or they could do what they did in July and go after Nunez, uncertain how exactly they'll use him day to day, but convinced they would need him one way or another.

*** *The Providence Journal***

Dustin Pedroia has knee surgery; will miss start of 2018 season

Tim Britton

BOSTON — For the first time since 2006, the Red Sox won't have Dustin Pedroia at second base on Opening Day.

The team announced that Pedroia underwent a successful cartilage restoration procedure on his left knee in New York on Wednesday — a surgery that will keep him off the field for approximately seven months. It is the same procedure Steven Wright underwent in April, costing him the rest of his season.

In a best-case scenario, Pedroia could return to the Red Sox around Memorial Day.

"Nothing in regards to the time frame is unexpected," president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said in a text Wednesday. "If surgery was decided upon, it matches the expectations."

Pedroia's knee bothered him nearly all season, despite arthroscopic surgery last offseason. He aggravated that knee on Manny Machado's hard slide into second base back in April, missing a few days then. By late July, he required two separate stints on the disabled list due to inflammation in his knee. Even when he returned, he needed regular rest; he didn't play consecutive nine-inning games in the field in the regular season after July 26.

Pedroia clearly wasn't himself upon his return. Including the postseason, he hit .220 with a .301 on-base percentage and .280 slugging percentage after September 1. Perhaps even more jarring was the occasional uncertainty he showed in the field on his unstable knee; there was a routine ground ball he essentially tackled in the ALDS.

"Obviously, we had to try and find a way to do what we did so I could be out there," he said. "But if you were to get it fixed, the recovery is a long time. So I have a lot of things to weigh in with the doctors and figure it out."

"He has a bad knee that he's going to have to watch and we're going to have to watch for the rest of his career," Dombrowski memorably said back in July.

Dombrowski said Wednesday that Pedroia's surgery doesn't influence Boston's offseason plans given the club's internal options at second base. While the Sox have plenty of candidates to share time there, none resemble everyday players at this point in their careers. Brock Holt got the bulk of the time in Pedroia's place in September, but he was one of the worst players in the American League this past season. Furthermore, Holt hasn't been consistently healthy over the last three seasons himself.

Marco Hernandez is coming off a lost season due to his own shoulder surgery. Deven Marrero can certainly play the position defensively, but he hasn't proven he can acceptably hit right-handed pitching. He and Tzu-Wei Lin are each one season removed from being two of the worst hitters in minor-league baseball.

Boston has repeatedly said it would not entertain the idea of moving Mookie Betts back to second base — the position he played the majority of the time in the minor leagues. Considering what second base historically does to those who play it — just look at Pedroia now — it would appear unwise for the Sox to expose their most valuable asset to the physical rigors of that position.

The Red Sox would likely love to bring back Eduardo Nuñez to play second while Pedroia's out and move around the infield later. But upon finally reaching free agency after years of fighting for regular playing time, Nuñez would be justified in looking for a longer-term promise of everyday action than the Red Sox can provide him.

A stopgap veteran free agent such as Brandon Phillips or Chase Utley might make more sense on anyone-year deal. Oakland's Jed Lowrie and Detroit's Ian Kinsler could be available in a deal. Perhaps this is the time to start considering a longer-term replacement for Pedroia; the aging curve for second basemen is not strong.

*** *The Springfield Republican***

MLB free agents Top 40: Boston Red Sox potential targets include J.D. Martinez, Eric Hosmer, Carlos Santana, Jay Bruce

Christopher Smith

The 2018 offseason's free agent class might be the strongest ever. It will be headlined by Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, Josh Donaldson, Andrew McCutchen, Dallas Keuchel, Andrew Miller and potentially even Clayton Kershaw and David Price if they choose to opt out of their contracts.

This offseason's free agent class doesn't have as many superstars but it's deep in talent.

The first base market is especially deep with Eric Hosmer, Carlos Santana, Logan Morrison, Mitch Moreland, Yonder Alonso, Lucas Duda and Mark Reynolds. Even Neil Walker and Jay Bruce are options at first base.

Where the Red Sox currently stand

Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski must fix the Red Sox's offense this offseason, but his 2018 payroll already is nearing Major League Baseball's \$197 million competitive balance tax threshold.

(Full breakdown of the 2018 payroll so far).

So Dombrowski has work to do. The Red Sox almost certainly will exceed the threshold. It just depends by how much they want to spend over the \$197 million cap.

The Red Sox would owe \$3.8 million if their 2018 payroll is \$216 million (a \$19 million overage). They would receive a 32-percent surcharge if their payroll exceeds the threshold by \$20-40 million. There's also an additional 62.5 percent surcharge if the payroll exceeds \$40 million.

1. YU DARVISH

Right-handed starting pitcher

Darvish posted a 3.86 ERA and 1.16 WHIP while averaging 10.1 strikeouts per nine innings compared to 2.8 walks in 31 starts (186 2/3 innings) during the regular season.

He recorded a 3.44 ERA, 1.15 WHIP and 11.1 strikeouts per nine innings in nine starts after being traded from Texas to the Dodgers.

He has won both his postseason starts, allowing two runs in 11 1/3 innings.

The 31-year-old, who missed 2015 after undergoing Tommy John surgery, has a 3.42 ERA in 131 career regular season starts.

Will the Red Sox be interested? FanRag Sports' Jon Heyman listed the Red Sox in his Sept. 14 column as one of the teams that might show interested in Darvish.

It seems unlikely Boston would pursue a notable starting pitcher unless it traded one of its two highest-paid starting pitchers (David Price or Rick Porcello) to free up money.

Boston's 2018 payroll already is nearing MLB's \$197 million competitive balance tax threshold heading into the offseason. The Sox likely will be willing to exceed the threshold but the priority should be to spend money on adding one or two power hitters.

2. ERIC HOSMER

First Baseman

The Gold Glove first baseman and Scott Boras client might receive a \$200 million contract.

He batted .318 with a .385 on-base percentage, .498 slugging percentage, .882 OPS, 25 homers, 94 RBIs, 31 doubles and one triple during 2017.

He turned 28 on Oct. 24. So he's on the young side for a free agent.

Hosmer posted a .297/.363/.459/.822 line with 18 homers, 93 RBIs, 33 doubles and five triples in 2015. He slashed .266/.328/.433/.761 with 25 homers, 105 RBIs, 24 doubles and one triple in 2016.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Yes, he should be their top target. He's always been known as a leader. And the Red Sox need to add a player or two with experience winning in the postseason. Hosmer has won one World Series and played in two.

He has hit well at Fenway Park during his career. He's 35-for-99 (.354 batting average) with a .404 on-base percentage, .485 slugging percentage, .889 OPS, three homers, four doubles and 17 RBIs in 24 games there.

3. J.D. MARTINEZ

Outfielder

Martinez is the best pure power hitter on the free agent market.

The 30-year-old put together a monster season in 2017, belting 45 home runs, driving in 104 runs and slashing .303/.376/.690/1.066 in 199 games for Detroit and Arizona.

He has bashed 128 homers over the past four seasons, including 38 in 158 games during 2015. He's not a great defensive outfielder. So perhaps AL teams could pursue him as a DH who plays the outfield occasionally.

Will the Red Sox have interest? The Red Sox ranked last in the AL in homers (168) in 2017. They should make Martinez one of their top targets.

4. JAKE ARRIETA

Right-Handed Starting Pitcher

The 31-year-old has been one of the major's best starting pitchers since 2014.

The Scott Boras client won the NL Cy Young in 2015, and he finished ninth in both 2014 and 2016.

He started out slow in 2017 with a 8-7 record and 4.35 ERA in 18 starts during the first half. But he came on strong during the second half with a 6-3 record and 2.28 ERA in 12 starts to help lead the Cubs to the NL Central title.

He allowed just one earned run in 10 2/3 innings during the postseason.

He has experienced success in the playoffs during the career with a 5-3 record, 3.08 ERA, 1.08 WHIP and 11.3 strikeouts per nine innings in nine starts.

Will the Red Sox be interested? It seems unlikely the Red Sox will add a high-priced starting pitcher unless they trade David Price or Rick Porcello. Adding a power hitter is a more pressing need in free agency.

5. JUSTIN UPTON

Left Fielder

Upton, who turned 30 in August, has the ability to opt out of the four years, \$88.5 million remaining on his contract.

All signs point to him opting out and becoming a free agent to negotiate a more lucrative deal.

He belted 35 homers, stroked 44 doubles, knocked in 109 runs and slashed .273/.361/.540/.901 during 2017 for the Tigers and Angels.

Detroit traded him in a waiver deal to Los Angeles on Aug. 31.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Probably not unless they traded Jackie Bradley Jr. and moved Andrew Benintendi to center field. But he obviously has the power the Red Sox lack in the middle of their order. He has a .271/.352/.542/.894 line with two homers, five doubles, one triple and 11 RBIs in 13 games at Fenway Park.

6. MIKE MOUSTAKAS

Third Baseman

The left-handed hitter, who turned 29 in September, chose the perfect time for his best major league season: leading into free agency.

The Scott Boras client bashed 38 homers, drove in 85 runs, hit 24 doubles and slashed .272/.314/.521/.835. It marked his best season, but 2015 marked his breakout season. He slashed .284/.348/.470/.817 with 22 homers, 82 RBIs and 34 RBIs in '15, then missed all but 27 games in 2016 because of a torn ACL.

"I hit some homers in the minor leagues," he said back in June. "I hit 36 one year. So I know I've got some pop. You play in Kauffman, you play here, it's not a place that's friendly for homers. It's a tough place to hit 'em. So you just try to hit the gaps, hit doubles, get on base and kind of play that kind of baseball."

Will the Red Sox be interested? Moustakas was rumored to be a potential trade target for Boston in June before the Royals began playing better. He should be of no interest to Boston now as a free agent. The Red Sox have 20-year-old phenom Rafael Devers at the hot corner.

7. ALEX COBB

Right-Handed Starting Pitcher

Cobb, who turned 30 on Oct. 7, was one of the Rays' top starting pitchers in both 2013 (11-3 record, 2.76 ERA, 22 starts) and 2014 (10-9, 2.87 ERA 27 starts).

But Tommy John surgery in May 2015 caused him to miss the entire 2015 season and limited him to five starts in 2016.

He returned strong this season, going 12-10 with a 3.66 ERA and 1.22 WHIP in 29 starts (179 1/3 innings). He put himself in position to receive a pretty lucrative contract in free agency.

Will the Red Sox be interested? It's unlikely the Red Sox will be interested in adding a notable starting pitcher unless they trade one of their two highest-paid starters (David Price or Rick Porcello).

8. WADE DAVIS Right-Handed Closer

The 32-year-old closer has been an All-Star each of the past three seasons, recording 76 saves and a 1.65 ERA (31 earned runs, 169 1/3 innings).

Davis is the top closer on this year's free agent market. He should receive a big payday considering the lucrative deals closers Kenley Jansen, Aroldis Chapman and Mark Melancon received last offseason. Will the Red Sox be interested? High unlikely. Craig Kimbrel has a \$13 million team option for 2018 that the Red Sox will pick up.

9. LANCE LYNN Right-handed Starting Pitcher

Lynn, who will turn 31 next May 12, missed the 2016 season after undergoing Tommy John surgery. But he returned strong in 2017, posting an 11-8 record with a 3.43 ERA and 1.23 WHIP in 33 starts (186 1/3 innings).

He and Alex Cobb likely will receive similar contracts.

Will Red Sox be interested? FanRag Sports' Jon Heyman listed the Red Sox on Sept. 14 as one of the teams that might be interested in Lynn.

It seems unlikely the Red Sox would sign a notable starting pitcher unless they traded David Price or Rick Porcello to free up money.

10. LORENZO CAIN Center Fielder

Cain, who turns 32 next April 13, had another impressive season in 2017. He batted .300 with a .363 on-base percentage, .440 slugging percentage, .803 OPS, 15 homers, 27 doubles, five triples, 49 RBIs and 26 steals.

He's an all-around solid player with speed who can hit for average and deliver some extra-base power. Will the Red Sox be interested? Unlikely.

11. GREG HOLLAND Right-Handed Closer

Holland has a \$15 million player option for 2018 that he'll decline to become a free agent.

After missing 2016 (Tommy John surgery), he returned strong in 2016 for the Rockies. Holland, who turns 32 next month, posted a 3.61 ERA, 1.15 WHIP and he led the NL in saves (41) and games finished (58). He averaged 11.0 strikeouts per nine innings compared to 4.1 walks.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Very unlikely with Craig Kimbrel under control (\$13 million option the Sox will exercise).

12. CARLOS SANTANA

First Baseman

Santana hit 23 homers, 37 doubles, three triples and posted a .259/.363/.455/.818 line during 2017 with the Indians. It marked his second straight season with an OPS over .800.

He hit 34 homers, 31 doubles, three triples and knocked in 87 runs last year.

Santana, who will turn 32 on April 8, has the ability to play third base and outfield if needed as well. He finished very strong during 2017 with a .906 OPS over his final 70 games.

Will the Red Sox be interested? They should be. They need a first baseman and Santana provides the power this offense lacked in 2017.

He has a .253/.374/.453/.827 line with five homers, four doubles and 17 RBIs in 26 games at Fenway Park.

13. JAY BRUCE

Outfielder/First Baseman/DH

Bruce, who will turn 31 next April 3, belted 36 homers, drove in 101 runs, hit 29 doubles, two triples and slashed .254/.324/.508/.832 in 146 games for the Mets and Indians during 2017.

He has averaged 32 homers and 96 RBIs per 162 games during his career. His career .249/.319/.472/.790 slash line isn't as impressive, but he has posted an OPS over .800 six of the past eight seasons.

Difficult seasons in 2014 and '15 dropped his career averages quite a bit.

Will the Red Sox be interested? He's probably someone Boston will consider as a first baseman/DH. He has played almost his entire career in the outfield but has 15 games at first baseman. He should be able to play the position more often with some work at spring training.

The Red Sox ranked last in home runs in the AL during 2017. Bruce could help the power void. He has played just one game at Fenway. He went 3-for-5.

14. JONATHAN LUCROY

Catcher

Lucroy, who turned 31 in June, is one of the major's top offensive catchers.

The two-time All-Star finished fourth for the 2014 NL MVP while leading the league with 53 doubles. He stroked 51 extra-base hits (24 homers, 24 doubles, three triples) in 142 games (544 plate appearances) during 2016 while also throwing out 39 percent of base stealers.

His stats dropped this year, but he finished strong. He posted a .265/.345/.371/.716 line, six homers, 21 doubles and three triples. But he slashed .310/.429/.437/.865 over his final 46 games after a trade to the Colorado Rockies.

Will Red Sox be interested? No. Red Sox catcher Christian Vazquez, already known for his cannon arm, emerged as an offensive threat in 2017 as well.

15. ZACK COZART

Shortstop

Zack Cozart had a terrific 2017 season, batting .297 with a .385 OBP, .548 slugging percentage, .933 OPS, 24 homers, 24 doubles, seven triples and 63 RBIs in 122 games for Cincinnati.

It was a career year and he made the All-Star team. His OPS was 217 points higher than his career OPS (.716).

Cozart, who turned 32 in August, has displayed some pop in the past with 52 extra-base hits in 2012 and 45 extra-base hits in 2013. But he never put it all together before this season.

Would the Red Sox be interested? No, unless they traded Xander Bogaerts.

The Red Sox could trade some arbitration players to lower their payroll.

16. NEIL WALKER Second Baseman

Walker, who turned 32 in September, missed the final month of the 2016 season after undergoing back surgery (lumbar microdiscectomy).

A partially torn left hamstring then limited him to 111 games in 2017.

But Walker continued to be productive both seasons when he did play. He posted an .823 in 2016 and a .801 OPS during '17 while playing on a one-year, \$17.2 million qualifying offer.

He has spent almost his entire career at second base, but he also has logged some games at third, first and DH.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Dustin Pedroia underwent a cartilage restoration procedure on his left knee Wednesday that will keep him sidelined until at least some point in May. So the Red Sox could be in the market for a second baseman this offseason, someone who could fill a super utility role when Pedroia does return.

17. CARLOS GONZALEZ Outfielder

Many impending free agents had year career years during 2017. Gonzalez, who turned 32 on Oct. 17, regressed.

Gonzalez spent some time on the DL with a shoulder strain and his .762 OPS in 2017 was 95 points below his career mark (.857).

The left-handed hitter posted an OPS below .800 for only the second time in the past nine years.

He also has benefited from the altitude at Coors Field. He's a .329/.391/.607/.999 career hitter at Coors Field. He's hit .252/.308/.427/.735 on the road during his career.

Will Red Sox be interested? Probably not unless they traded Jackie Bradley Jr. Even then, they'd probably look for more of a sure bet. Gonzalez is a risk considering his production dip in 2017 and his home/road splits.

18. TODD FRAZIER Third Baseman

Todd Frazier showed he's more than just a power-hitter during his half season with the Yankees. He showed he's a leader in the clubhouse.

Frazier, who turns 32 on Feb. 12, brought a ton of energy to the Yankees during their run to Game 7 of the ALCS.

He's a .245 career hitter with a .321 on-base percentage, but he has elite power. He belted 29 homers in 2014, 35 homers in 2015, 40 homers in 2016 and 27 homers in 2017.

Will the Red Sox be interested? No. Rafael Devers is ready to be a star.

19. CC SABATHIA

Left-handed Starting Pitcher

CC Sabathia experienced a resurgence the past two years after adding a cutter to his repertoire. Sure he's 37 and has some knee issues. But he showed during this year's postseason just how effective he still can be.

He posted a 2.37 ERA in four starts (19 innings, five runs) against the hard-hitting Indians and Astros. He allowed just one run in 9 1/3 innings in the ALCS vs. the Astros.

The lefty went 14-5 with a 3.69 ERA and 1.27 WHIP in 27 starts during the regular season.

Will the Red Sox be interested? He'd be a great fit for the Red Sox considering his success in the postseason and how Boston failed to receive a quality start from any starting pitcher in the 2016 and 2017 ALDS.

But it's difficult to believe Sabathia would ever want to pitch in Boston. He views himself as a Yankee. "This (New York) is where I want to play," Sabathia told reporters Saturday, per the New York Post. "Definitely. This is my home. ... I want to see this thing through."

20. JASON VARGAS

Left-Handed Starting Pitcher

Vargas, who will turn 35 on Feb. 2, made only 12 starts combined between 2015 and '16 because of Tommy John surgery in July 2015.

He made the All-Star with a strong return in 2017. He led the AL with 18 wins, and he posted a 4.16 ERA and 1.33 WHIP in 32 starts for the Royals.

Will the Red Sox be interested? High unlikely. You have to think National League teams will be interest. He's a finesse pitcher. His fastball averaged 85.6 mph in 2017, per Fangraphs.com. He'd probably be best against NL lineups where he can pitch around certain hitters with the pitcher hitting in the nine hole.

21. EDUARDO NUNEZ

Second Base/Third Base/Shortstop

Nunez, who turned 30 in June, batted .313 with a .341 OBP, .460 slugging percentage, .801 OPS, 12 homers, 33 doubles and 58 RBIs in 114 games for the Giants and Red Sox during 2017.

He can play shortstop but he's best at third and second base.

He posted a .321/.353/.539/.892 line with eight homers in 38 games for Boston after being traded from San Francisco on July 26.

A PCL injury in September derailed his season.

Will the Red Sox be interested? The Red Sox should be interested, especially now that Pedroia has undergone major knee surgery.

22. LOGAN MORRISON

First Baseman

Morrison, who turned 30 in August, bashed 38 homers in 2017 for Tampa after never before hitting more than 23 homers in a season.

He hit 22 doubles, one triple and drove in 85 RBIs while slashing .246/.353/.516/.868 in 146 games. Buyer beware. He's a career .245 hitter with a .763 OPS. He has averaged 23 homers, 72 RBIs and 28 doubles per 162 games during his career.

His 38 homer season in 2017 is the outlier so far — and it might be going forward.

Will the Red Sox be interested? He's an option. Boston needs a first baseman and it needs to add a power hitter. Morrison is a career .198/.274/.430/.704 hitter with five homers, five doubles and 14 RBIs in 26 games (22 starts) at Fenway.

23. LUCAS DUDA

First Baseman

Duda, who turns 32 on Feb. 3, belted 30 homers in 2017 for the Mets and Rays. He struggled after a trade to the Rays on July 27 and finished with a .217/.322/.496/.818 line overall.

He certainly has power. This marked his second 30-homer season. He also had one in 2014. He hit 27 homers in 2015.

He's a .242 career hitter with a .340 on-base percentage, .457 slugging percentage and .796 OPS over eight major league seasons.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Boston likely will at least consider Duda. He's a first baseman with power, but there are better options on the free agent market.

24. YONDER ALONSO

First Baseman

Like Logan Morrison, Alonso's career-year came right before hitting fee agency.

The Cuban first baseman, who turns 31 next April 8, belted 28 homers for the Athletics and Mariners in 2017 after never hitting more than nine homers in a season before this year. He hit 22 doubles, drove in 67 runs and slashed .266/.365/.501/.866.

He's a career .268 hitter with a .340 on-base percentage, .407 slugging percentage and .747 OPS.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Boston is looking for a first baseman and needs to add power. But his 28 homers in 2017 weren't the norm. He's averaged 13 homers and 30 doubles per 162 games during his career.

25. CARLOS GOMEZ

Center Fielder

Gomez, who turns 32 on Dec. 4, posted a .255/.340/.462/.802 line with 17 homers, 23 doubles, one triple and 51 RBIs in 105 games for the Rangers.

The Scott Boras client's OPS was over .800 for the first time since 2014. He also boosted his on-base percentage 42 points from 2016.

He missed 26 games during the first half with a right hamstring strain and he missed 10 games in August because of an excision of a cyst behind his right shoulder.

It should be very interesting to see the type of contract Boras helps Gomez receive considering his decline in 2015 and '16 before an upswing in production during his contract year.

Will Red Sox be interested? Unlikely.

26. JOSE BAUTISTA Outfielder/DH

The Blue Jays are unlikely to exercise Bautista's \$17 million option for 2018, making him a free agent. Bautista, who just turned 37 on Oct. 19, has regressed each of the past two years. His slash line dipped from .250/.377/.536/.913 in 2015 to .234/.366/.452/.817 in 2016 to just .203/.308/.366/.674 in 2017.

He hit 23 homers and 27 doubles but he lost bat speed and had trouble catching up to high fastballs.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Why not? He has power and plays with an edge. Sure, he lost bat speed but he still might have a couple of good seasons left in him if he can get healthy.

27. MARK REYNOLDS First Baseman

The 34-year-old Reynolds slugged 30 homers, drove in 97 runs, hit 22 doubles, one triple and slashed .267/.352/.487/.839 for the Rockies in 2017.

He's always had power (30 homers, 86 RBIs per 162 games in his career) but he's a .237 career hitter. The Colorado altitude certainly helped lead to a resurgence over the past two years after down years in 2013, '14 and '15.

He slashed .294/.393/.584/.978 with 21 of his 30 homers at Coors Field during 2017 while slashing .242/.311/.392/.703 on the road.

Will Red Sox be interested? Boston would be better off to look for power elsewhere considering Reynolds' lopsided home-road splits.

28. MITCH MORELAND First Baseman

Moreland, who turned 32 in September, had a prototypical Mitch Moreland year in 2017 while playing on a one-year, \$5.5-million contract with the Red Sox.

He hit 22 homers, 34 doubles, knocked in 79 runs and posted a .246/.326/.443/.769 line in 149 games. The Gold Glove first baseman could be looking at another one-year deal.

Will the Red Sox be interested? They should be. Boston might consider re-signing Moreland if it chooses not to pursue one of the top free agent first basemen such as Eric Hosmer or Carlos Santana.

29. ADDISON REED Right-handed Reliever

Reed, who will turn 29 on Dec. 27, has proved more than capable as both a setup man and closer during his career.

He posted a 1.97 ERA, 0.94 WHIP and 40 holds in 80 outings (77 2/3 innings) as a setup man for the Mets in 2016.

He then recorded a 2.84 ERA, 1.05 WHIP, 19 saves and 15 holds in 77 outings (76 innings) as a closer for the Mets and a setup man for the Red Sox in '17. Boston traded for him at the non-waiver deadline.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Boston likely will move on from Reed because Tyler Thornburg is expected to return healthy for 2018. Carson Smith also will be back after returning from Tommy John surgery this past September. If the Red Sox do want to add another reliever, they'd be better off signing one in free agency rather than trading for one. Dombrowski hasn't done well the past two offseasons trading for setup men.

30. PAT NESHEK
Right-Handed Reliever

Neshek, who turned 37 in September, has been one of the major's most dominant relievers since 2012. He made the NL All-Star in 2017 while posting a 1.59 ERA and 0.87 WHIP in 71 outings (62 1/3 innings) for the Phillies and Rockies.

He averaged 10.0 strikeouts per nine innings compared to 0.9 walks.

He has a 2.75 ERA and 1.02 WHIP in 494 career outings (445 2/3 innings).

Will Red Sox be interested? Probably not. Tyler Thornburg is expected to return healthy for 2018 and Carson Smith should be even better after returning from Tommy John surgery this past September.

31. HOWIE KENDRICK
Infielder/Outfielder

Kendrick, who turned 34 in July, batted .315 with a .368 on-base percentage, .475 slugging percentage, .844, nine homers, 16 doubles, three triples, 41 RBIs and 12 steals in 91 games between Philadelphia and Washington.

He missed almost six weeks with a right abdominal strain.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Same as with Neil Walker and Eduardo Nunez. The Red Sox could be in the market for a second baseman-versatile player with Pedroia (knee) out until at least sometime in May.

32. ANDREW CASHNER
Right-Handed Pitcher

Cashner, who turned 31 last month, had a nice bounce-back season in 2017 on a one-year, \$10-million contract with the Texas Rangers. He went 11-11 with a 3.40 ERA and 1.32 WHIP in 28 starts (166 2/3 innings).

But his 4.6 strikeouts per nine innings compared to 3.5 walks isn't impressive.
Will the Red Sox be interested? No.

33. JON JAY
Outfielder

Jay, who turns 32 on March 15, had a pretty typical season for him in 2017 while playing on a one-year, \$8-million contract for the Cubs. He batted .296 with a .374 on-base percentage, .375 slugging percentage, .749 OPS, 18 doubles, three triples, two homers and 34 RBIs in 141 games.

He never has hit for much extra-base power. But he always has been a left-handed hitting outfielder who reaches base at a high rate. He's a career .288 hitter with a .355 OBP in eight seasons.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Probably not. The Red Sox need a fourth outfielder but Jay is a left-handed hitter. Boston likely will pursue a right-handed hitting fourth outfielder.

34. ALEX AVILA

Catcher

Avila, who turns 31 in January, had a strong season in 2017 after a couple of down years. He batted .264 with a .387 on-base percentage, .447 slugging percentage, .834 OPS, 14 homers, 13 doubles, one triple and 49 RBIs in 112 games for the Tigers and Cubs. He threw out 31 percent of base stealers.

He has a career .351 OBP in nine seasons.

Will Red Sox be interested? No.

35. JAIME GARCIA

Left-Handed Starting Pitcher

Garcia, who turned 31 in July, posted a 4.41 ERA in 27 starts between the Braves, Twins and Yankees. But he has been solid throughout his career with a 67-55 record, 3.69 ERA, 1.30 WHIP, 7.3 strikeouts per nine innings and 2.8 walks in 185 outings (174 starts).

Will the Red Sox be interested? No. Garcia had a lot of success in the National League with the Cardinals. Look for NL teams to show the most interest.

36. CURTIS GRANDERSON

Outfielder

Curtis Granderson didn't make the Dodgers' World Series roster after struggling mightily following his trade from the Mets to LA.

He slashed just .212/.323/.452/.775 in 2017, but he finished this season with 53 extra-base hits (26 homers, 24 doubles, 3 triples) after stroking 59 extra-base hits (30 homers, 24 doubles, 5 triples) in 2016. He turns 37 next March 16. But he still has some power.

Will the Red Sox be interested? It seem unlikely but Granderson once played for Red Sox president of baseball of operations Dave Dombrowski in Detroit. He's also a terrific clubhouse guy and the Red Sox will need a fourth outfielder. That said, Granderson is a left-handed hitter. The Red Sox would be better off with with a right-handed hitting fourth outfielder.

37. BRANDON MORROW

Right-Handed Reliever

The 33-year-old posted a 6-0 record, 2.06 ERA and 0.92 WHIP in 45 outings (43 2/3 innings) for the Dodgers in 2017.

He has allowed just one run in 9 1/3 innings during the postseason.

Will the Red Sox be interested? He's certainly an option if the Red Sox want to add another reliever. As mentioned above, they'd be better off signing a reliever than trading for one.

38. AUSTIN JACKSON

Outfielder

Jackson batted .318 with a .387 on-base percentage, .482 slugging percentage, .869 OPS, seven homers, 19 doubles, three triples and 35 RBIs in 85 games (318 plate appearances) for the Indians in 2017.

And he's certainly an above-average defender. Remember that catch at Fenway Park where he flipped over the wall?

The right-handed hitter always posted almost similar career numbers vs. lefties (.343 OBP, .404 slugging percentage) and righties 333 OBP, .402 slugging percentage).

But he hit left-handers especially well in 2017 with a .352/.440/.574/1.013 line, four homers, 11 doubles, two triples and 15 RBIs in 141 plate appearances.

Will the Red Sox be interested? Maybe. The Red Sox need a fourth outfielder, and likely will be looking for a right-handed hitter who can hit left-handed pitching well (see 2017 stats above).

39. TONY WATSON Left-Handed Reliever

Watson, who turns 33 next May, will be the top left-handed reliever on the free agent market.

He posted a 3.38 ERA and 1.38 WHIP in 71 outings (66 2/3 innings) for the Pirates and Dodgers this regular season.

He has a career 2.68 ERA and 1.09 WHIP in 474 career outings (453 innings).

Will the Red Sox be interested? Maybe. Robby Scott and Robbie Ross Jr. are the only two Red Sox left-handed relievers returning in 2018. Fernando Abad is a free agent this coming offseason.

Ross pitched just nine innings in 2017 before going on the DL with left elbow inflammation and then undergoing microdiscectomy (lumbar spine) in August.

Scott underwent a left elbow arthroscopy and debridement after the season.

40. BRYAN SHAW Right-Handed Reliever

Bryan Shaw's ERA increased to 3.52 ERA in 79 outings (76 2/3 innings) during 2017 but he continued to be a valuable member of the Indians pen for a fifth straight year.

He led the league in appearances for the third time in four seasons.

He allowed one run in 6 innings during the ALDS against the Yankees this year.

Will the Red Sox be interested? He's certainly an option if the Red Sox choose to add another reliever.

Dustin Pedroia, Boston Red Sox 2B, to miss time in 2018 after undergoing left knee surgery

Christopher Smith

Dustin Pedroia underwent a cartilage restoration procedure on his left knee today, per the Red Sox.

The second baseman is anticipated to return to games in approximately seven months. So he'll likely miss the first month of the 2018 season and return at some point in May if all goes well.

Dr. Riley Williams III performed the surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, N.Y.

It's the same surgery Steven Wright underwent in May. Wright's procedure also was performed at the same hospital by the same surgeon.

Pedroia made two trips to the disabled list (29 days combined) during 2017 because of left knee inflammation.

He underwent arthroscopic surgery on his left knee last October.

*** *RedSox.com***

Pedroia undergoes surgery on left knee

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia underwent a cartilage restoration procedure on his left knee on Wednesday and is likely to miss the first couple of months of the 2018 season.

The hope is that once Pedroia does return, he will be able to play without the discomfort that nagged him for the entirety of the '17 season.

The procedure was performed by Dr. Riley Williams III at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. In a press release, the Red Sox said that "it is anticipated Pedroia would return to games in approximately seven months."

Brock Holt, Deven Marrero, Marco Hernandez and Tzu-Wei Lin are among the internal options who could fill in for Pedroia.

The Red Sox might also now be more compelled to re-sign utility infielder Eduardo Nunez, who sparked the team after his acquisition in July until a right knee injury on Sept. 9 effectively ended his season.

Pedroia hoped he had fixed his left knee last offseason when he had surgery to repair a torn meniscus. But that procedure didn't provide the relief he was looking for.

From the start of '17, Pedroia's knee was a constant issue.

The veteran leader played through the pain as much as he could, but was on the disabled list twice after the All-Star break and played just one game between July 29-Aug. 31.

Limited to 105 games this season, Pedroia had a .293/.369/.392 slash line with seven homers and 62 RBIs. The right-handed hitter was clearly hampered by a lack of strength in his leg down the stretch, hitting .242 with two doubles, one homer and eight RBIs in September. The Red Sox lost in four games to the Astros in the American League Division Series, with Pedroia going 2-for-16.

The 34-year-old Pedroia is Boston's longest-tenured player. When Pedroia returns to the field in '18, he will have an ex-teammate as his manager for the first time in Alex Cora.

Pedroia is the only holdover on the Red Sox from Cora's time as a player (2005-08) in Boston.

*** *ESPNBoston.com***

Dustin Pedroia out seven months following knee surgery

Scott Lauber

BOSTON -- If it's October, it must mean Dustin Pedroia is having surgery to repair his latest injury.

This time, though, the Boston Red Sox second baseman won't be fully recovered by the start of next season.

Pedroia underwent what the Red Sox described as a cartilage restoration procedure on his left knee Wednesday. The surgery, performed by Dr. Riley Williams III at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New

York, is expected to keep the 34-year-old from playing in games for approximately seven months, according to the team.

Pedroia dealt with a left knee injury all season, even after having arthroscopic surgery last October to fix a torn meniscus. He took two turns on the disabled list and played in only one game from July 28 through Sept. 1. In late July, Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski suggested Pedroia's injury might be chronic.

"He has a bad knee that he's going to have to watch and we're going to have to watch for the rest of his career," Dombrowski said at the time.

Pedroia is halfway through the eight-year, \$110 million contract extension that he signed with the Red Sox in 2013. He will make \$16 million next year, \$15 million in 2019, \$13 million in 2020 and \$12 million in 2021.

Pedroia's offensive production took a dip because of the knee injury. He batted .293 but started only 97 games at second base, his second-lowest total since 2010. He also notched only 19 doubles and seven homers, tied for his career lows in a full season, and a .760 OPS.

The Red Sox acquired utility infielder Eduardo Nunez a few days before the July 31 trade deadline in part to play second base in Pedroia's absence. Once Pedroia returned in September, the Sox were careful to monitor his playing time. He started at second base on three consecutive days only once (Sept. 27-29) before the playoffs began.

Once the Red Sox were ousted from the division series by the Houston Astros, Pedroia said he planned to get multiple opinions on a course of treatment for his knee and noted that the recovery from surgery would be "a long time." After consulting doctors in New York and Boston, he opted for surgery.

With Pedroia likely to be sidelined until at least May, utility infielder Brock Holt represents the Red Sox's best internal option to play second base. Deven Marrero and Tzu-Wei Lin also are under club control for next season. Marco Hernandez is expected to be ready to play after missing most of this season due to shoulder surgery.

Nunez is eligible for free agency and likely will be seeking an opportunity to play every day. Other potential free-agent second basemen include Neil Walker, Howie Kendrick, Brandon Phillips and Danny Espinosa.

*** *WEEI.com***

Report: John Farrell interviews to be Phillies manager

Rob Bradford

John Farrell is still in the hunt to manage during the 2018 season.

According to MLB.com, Farrell was the latest candidate to interview for the vacant Phillies managing job.

It is believed to be the only interview Farrell has participated in since the Red Sox let him go four days after the completion of their season-ending American League Division Series against the Astros.

The Phillies have reportedly cast a wide net, expecting to conclude their first round of interviews by the end of the week. Some of the names who have met with Philadelphia have been Mariners bench coach Manny Acta, Dodgers player development director Gabe Kapler, A's third base coach Chip Hale, Giants third base coach Phil Nevin, and former Indians pitching coach Mickey Callaway, who was ultimately hired by the Mets.

Besides New York, two other teams -- Detroit and Boston -- have already filled their managerial openings, with Ron Gardenhire going to the Tigers and the Red Sox locking up Astros bench coach Alex Cora. Washington joins the Phillies as the only team to still not have a manager in place.

While it is unlikely either the Nationals or Phillies would make a move during the current World Series, both organizations almost certainly will lock somebody up by the start of the GM Meetings, which kick off Nov. 13 in Orlando.

The Phillies had a dreadful 2017, firing manager Pete Mackanin after going 66-96. While Philadelphia possesses some interesting young talent -- highlighted by Rhys Hoskins, who hit 18 homers in 50 games -- there were few standouts among the regulars. Not a single hitter managed to play more than 100 games and hit over .294. The Phils' top starter was Aaron Nola, who was 12-11 with a 3.54 ERA, with no other pitcher winning more than eight games.

Farrell has also been mentioned as a possible candidate to rejoin Cleveland manager Terry Francona, who needs a new pitching coach.

Dustin Pedroia out approximately 7 months after surgery

Rob Bradford

Dustin Pedroia had a cartilage restoration procedure performed on his left knee Wednesday. The surgery was performed by Dr. Riley Williams III at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, NY.

The Red Sox report that it is anticipated that Pedroia would return to games in approximately seven months.

The 34-year-old second baseman battled a knee injury for much of the season, including two different stints on the disabled list with knee inflammation. Pedroia hit .293 with seven home runs and 62 RBIs in 105 games.

*** *CSNNE.com***

Dombrowski: Dustin Pedroia should return to form after knee surgery

Evan Drellich

BOSTON -- Dustin Pedroia's likely going to miss the first two months of the 2018 season. The good news: once he's able to come back, the Red Sox expect he'll look like himself on the field.

The second baseman Dustin Pedroia had what the team called a "cartilage restoration procedure" on his left knee Wednesday morning, with an estimated seven months until he's back in big league games.

"The feeling is that Pedey should return to his pre-injury playing form," Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski wrote in an email Wednesday.

Pedroia and lefty starting pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez both underwent knee operations this offseason. Rodriguez, who had his right knee repaired after repeated subluxations, is expected back sooner. But the fact both Pedroia and E-Rod won't be ready for the start of the season does not have the Red Sox shifting gears in their planning, Dombrowski said.

"The surgeries to Eduardo and Pedey do not really affect our offseason plans," Dombrowski wrote. "Eduardo is scheduled to miss only a short time of the season and feel we presently have the starting

pitching depth to handle that. In Pedey's case, the timetable is approximately a month longer, but, we do have multiple internal candidates to play second base until Pedey returns."

Marco Hernandez, Josh Rutledge and Brock Holt are among infielders that could help fill in. Hernandez and Rutledge are recovering from season-ending surgeries themselves. Eduardo Nunez is a free agent whom perhaps the Sox will be more keen to re-sign now.

Pedroia was managing considerable pain at the end of the 2017 season.

"We had to try and find a way to do what we did so I could be out there," he said the day the Red Sox were eliminated from the playoffs, Oct. 9. "But if you were to get it fixed, the recovery is a long time. So I have a lot of things to weigh in with the doctors and figure it out."

The magnitude of the decision seems to be the reason Pedroia did not go for surgery, say, within a couple days of the season's conclusion.

"In regards to the timing, this is only a couple of weeks after our season ended," Dombrowski said. "He visited with multiple doctors to solicit their opinions before everyone met to make the best decision possible. Then, once surgery was decided upon, this was the first date available."

*** *The Boston Sports Journal***

Pedroia opts for knee surgery, will miss portion of season

Sean McAdam

The Red Sox' off-season just got a lot more complicated.

Dustin Pedroia, the team's longest-tenured player, underwent cartilage restoration surgery on his left knee in New York Wednesday morning, and won't be anywhere near ready when the 2018 season begins in late March.

An hour after the Red Sox season ended on Oct. 9, Pedroia was asked about his off-season course of action for his troublesome knee.

Pedroia conceded that surgery was an option, but sounded very much like he wanted to avoid such a scenario since "if I were to get it fixed, the recovery is a long time."

It's believed that Pedroia is dealing with a tiny hole in the middle of the knee and likely underwent an invasive procedure which involved utilizing cells from a cadaver to re-grow cartilage in the knee. That sort of surgery, according to one source with knowledge of the procedure, would restrict Pedroia from even running for a period of six months and require an eight-to-10 month rehab period, meaning Pedroia would miss a significant portion of the 2018 season.

In their release announcing the surgery, the Red Sox suggested that he could return to games "in approximately seven months," which would target his return near the start of June.

The knee forced Pedroia into trips to the disabled list in 2017, separated by a single game in which Pedroia served as the DH at Tropicana Field, only to determine that the knee wasn't yet healthy. He played in just 105 games in 2017, the third-fewest games for him since 2007.

BSJ Analysis: With Pedroia sidelined for, at minimum, the first half of the season, the Red Sox will have to take steps to provide reliable depth at second base.

The team has both Brock Holt and Deven Marrero under control for 2018, but the former's performance dipped considerably this past season and the latter, while a defensive standout, has yet to prove he can hit major league pitching enough to warrant regular playing time.

A more plausible – though far more costly – option would be to re-sign free agent Eduardo Nunez.

Nunez, of course, had his own knee injury in the latter half of the season and twice returned to play prematurely, only to be met with an aggravation of the injury. But further examination after he left Game 1 of the ALDS determined that the injury would not require surgical attention.

Beyond filling in for Pedroia – either as the starting second baseman in the event of the more invasive surgery, or providing a dependable second option as Pedroia manages the knee – Nunez could also prove valuable in filling in at shortstop and third base while taking some DH at-bats, too.

Nunez's versatility would allow the Sox to make a multi-year commitment to him, knowing that he has the ability to play several infield positions and contribute offensively for several years to come.

It would make little sense for the Sox to pursue another second baseman via trade or free agency, since Pedroia is signed for another four seasons, with \$56 million still due to him.

Entrusting either Holt or Marrero with the job would bring similar risks. Holt posted a .548 OPS this past season, a sharp decline from the previous three seasons when his lowest OPS was .705. There are also questions about what sort of impact a couple of concussions will have on Holt's career going forward.

As for Marrero, while his glove is stellar, Marrero hasn't established himself as a hitter. He performed well against lefties in limited playing time last season (.944 OPS in 55 at-bats), but overall, compiled a paltry .333 slugging percentage and .593 OPS.

Finally, another internal option could be Marco Hernandez. Hernandez had a strong spring training last year, but injured his shoulder in the first week of May and later underwent season-ending surgery. He's expected to be fully recovered by spring training, but again, doesn't have a lot of big league experience, having had a total of 109 at-bats over the last two seasons.