

## ***The Boston Red Sox Thursday, April 18, 2019***

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

**Now is not the time to mince words: Red Sox stink**

Dan Shaughnessy

NEW YORK — The Red Sox stink. They lost to the Yankees, 5-3, Wednesday after Ryan Brasier surrendered a grand slam to Brett Gardner on an 0-2 pitch in the seventh inning. The Sox are 6-13 and a whopping eight and a half games out of first place.

I grew up on Hub hardball gloom. I came of age as a baseball fan when the Red Sox annually finished eighth in a 10-team league and flirted with losing 100 games. I learned talk radio at the right hand of Eddie Andelman who perfected the sky-is-falling mindset of Red Sox Nation. I did a Sunday night TV show with Bob Lobel who had a panic button on the set and kept saying, “Why can’t we get players like that?” every time an ex-Red Sox did something good for some other team. I wrote “The Curse of the Bambino,” my doctoral thesis on Red Sox negativity.

And yet, with all this training, with a lifetime of jokes, chokes, and front office buffooneries, I am having a hard time getting my head around the crazy notion that the 2019 Red Sox might not make the playoffs.

Seriously. I write these words not because I am an agent of Sox/Globe owner John Henry. Not because I have gone Full Roachie. Not because I root, root, root for the home team.

It simply makes no sense to me. How can a healthy team with the fattest payroll in baseball . . . a championship team that won 119 games last year and brought virtually every player back . . . a team that plays in the Tomato Can age of MLB tanking . . . how can this team not be one of ten big league teams to make it to the 2019 postseason tournament?

Sorry, I am just not buying. I know we are all tired of hearing about how it’s still early. We’re sick of Alex Cora saying “We’ll be fine.” Tired of the stubborn, smarter-than-everybody Sox refusing to admit they failed to prepare properly in Fort Myers, Fla. All that is painfully obvious now.

I’ve seen some of the numbers that indicate that a team can take itself out of contention in April. The Globe’s intrepid Alex Speier points out that during the Wild Card era, only two of 46 teams that started 6-12 went on to make the playoffs.

Swell. But how in the name of Izzy Alcantara can these Red Sox be this bad?

The Sox have yet to win a series. They went 2-6 on the West Coast. They went 3-3 at Fenway against moribund teams from Toronto and Baltimore. They were outscored 16-1 in back-to-back games vs. the Orioles and Yankees Monday and Tuesday. They got swept by a Yankee team with 12 players on the injured list.

Wednesday’s Sox box score features six batters living at or below the Mendoza Line. Mookie Betts is down to .200. Jackie Bradley Jr. is at .148. Steve Pearce .125. Dustin Pedroia .100.

Sandy Leon has no grade point average. Zero. Point. Zero.

“We’re just searching,” Cora said.

Eight and a half games back on April 18?

“We just got to play better,” said the manager. “Eight and a half. Seven and a half. Six and a half. We got to play better. We looked better today. If you look at the game we had a chance to take the starter out and got to the bullpen and add on, but we didn’t do that.”

Now they’re on to St. Pete. To play the first-place Rays.

“As always we’re going to go down there, and try to win the series. Sweep them, or win two out of three, and move on. That’s the goal in every series, and we haven’t done it yet. Maybe it’s time to get it done.”

Only 143 left to play. Time is running out.

### **Red Sox’ Dustin Pedroia exits game against Yankees**

Peter Abraham

NEW YORK — Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia had one at-bat and played one inning in the field before coming out of Wednesday night’s game against the Yankees with what the team said was “left knee soreness.”

Pedroia has appeared in six games and is 2 for 20 without an extra-base hit. He has played just 28 innings in the field since being activated from the injured list on April 9.

Pedroia had cartilage restoration surgery on his knee on Oct. 27, 2017. He was able to play just three games last season, from May 26-29, before returning to the injured list. He then had a second surgery in July.

Pedroia was limited throughout spring training and appeared in seven games. He opened the year on the injured list then was activated after playing just three games and 23 innings in the field for Single A Greenville.

Before Wednesday, Pedroia had not played in the field since Saturday. Both manager Alex Cora and president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski claimed that was pre-planned.

Pedroia, 35, is signed through the 2021 season. Counting this season, he is owed \$40 million.

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

### **Alex Cora believes Mookie Betts is very close to snapping out of slump**

Michael Silverman

NEW YORK — Mookie Betts is beginning his season in an offensive slump almost as concerning as the Red Sox’ overall start.

But manager Alex Cora is not about to do anything drastic.

“Hit him eighth? No, I’m not hitting him eighth,” Cora said before Wednesday night’s series finale against the Yankees. “But keep him in the leadoff spot? I don’t think one thing has to do with the other. He’s just searching right now. He actually took some good swings (Tuesday), he just fouled it off (in going 0-for-3).”

Betts went 0-for-4 Wednesday, dropping his batting average to .200 on the season.

“We’ll take a look at it ,hitting balls off the end,” said Cora after the 5-3 loss. “It looked like he expanded the zone a little bit with two strikes again so we’ll keep working with him.”

After the Red Sox' 8-0 loss Tuesday night at Yankee Stadium, Cora said left-hander Chris Sale showed signs of emerging from his own season-opening slump and was going to deliver a boffo performance his next start.

He was equally optimistic about Betts.

"I feel like he's getting close, he's getting close," Cora said. "We'll keep staying with what we think is going to help and is going to make us a good offensive club but I don't think it's the order leading off, hitting second, hitting third. I don't think it matters, I think it's just him trying to find his swing and I do feel like he's getting closer."

After Tuesday night's loss. Betts said he was doing what he could to get back in a groove.

"Just trying to make some adjustments," he said. "Obviously I haven't played very well. I'm just trying to make adjustments pitch by pitch and make something happen."

Cora does not think Betts is putting undue pressure on himself in order to replicate his 2018 MVP season.

"No, I just think he's off right now," Cora said. "The cool thing about those guys, the special ones, it takes one swing to get back to it. Like I said, I'm not going to be surprised if then all of a sudden, today in the first at-bat, boom, he puts a good swing on it and from there he clicks. So I don't think he's putting pressure on himself. I just think like right now he's off a little bit. He's missing his pitch. He hasn't fouled off too many pitches that he's fouling off right now. He's falling behind in counts and they're pitching to the edges, they're expanding, it's all that stuff going on right now. But like I said, with those special guys, one swing might get them. One swing in the cage, or one swing in BP, or one swing in the game. Then they take off.

"He's just searching. He's searching. And it's uncomfortable to have fun in this game when you don't feel comfortable at the plate. We don't want to take away the joy of the game and all that but sometimes it's hard to smile and to have fun when you don't feel right. But we'll see. Like I said, hopefully tonight it's (J.A.) Happ (starting for the Yankees) get a pitch, put a good swing on it, run the bases and go from there."

Benny still sore

Cora has emphasized that for the rest of the season he intends to keep Betts hitting second behind Andrew Benintendi. But for the third game in a row, Benintendi was out of the starting lineup as he continues to heal from a bruised right foot after he fouled a ball off it Sunday.

"He's doing OK, trying to stay away from him one more day," Cora said. "He's actually going to do everything out there BP wise, moving around. Take advantage of tomorrow too so. If everything goes well he should be back on Friday. We still can use him today but two more days, we're good."

The Red Sox are off on Thursday.

Last year the Red Sox lost their 13th game in Game 41, on May 14. .... Since joining the Red Sox, Wednesday night starter Nathan Eovaldi has made five starts against the Yankees and gone 2-0 with an 0.31 ERA. ... Christian Vazquez hit his second home run in his last four games. He hit three home runs last season.

Tipping point

Cora poked fun at reports that Yankees consultant and close friend Carlos Beltran was responsible for Tuesday night's lights-out Yankees starter James Paxton not tipping his pitches anymore.

"I know everybody in New York praised Carlos Beltran for what he said about the tipping — that's easy to do, just tell Paxton not to throw the breaking ball," said Cora, smiling broadly to make sure everybody understood he was joshing. "I don't know how much credit Carlos can get from fixing Paxton, he just stopped throwing the breaking ball. I'll let him know that, too."

Nunez backs out

Boston Red Sox second baseman Eduardo Nunez (36) in the first inning during a baseball game against the Arizona Diamondbacks, Saturday, April 6, 2019, in Phoenix. (AP Photo/Rick Scuteri)

Cora revealed the reason why Eduardo Nunez did not start on Marathon Monday was due to a back issue. Instead, catcher Christian Vazquez started at second base. The Red Sox were vague then about why Nunez was unavailable.

“Just a little banged up — tight back,” Cora said. “So he had to grind through a few games because of where we were so as you know there’s a lefty on the mound today, he’s not playing, trying to give him two days again and we’ll see what happens in Tampa. He’s been grinding physically so that’s been what’s going on with him.” . . .

Cora got a kick out of Sale’s profane assessment of his start Tuesday.

“I read the quotes — I laughed,” the manager said. “Because I talked to him after the game yesterday and I do feel he’s that close. I think we went from getting the velocity back, getting the slider back, now, yesterday, missed location. If you take a look at the game there were some fastballs that were supposed to go glove side and he left over the plate. He did it to (Brett) Gardner, he did it to (Luke) Voit, he did it to (Aaron) Judge. So now that I think all the ingredients are there maybe the next one is the one that we take off. And I do feel that he’s that close. One thing about my players, our players, the organization’s, I like them to be genuine, transparent and responsible. And if he feels he stinks, hey, he’s honest.”

### **Red Sox bullpen joins list of culprits for team’s abysmal 6-13 record**

Michael Silverman

NEW YORK – For the first 18 games, the Red Sox bullpen had escaped relatively unscathed from the carnage of the Red Sox’ 2019 season.

As of Wednesday night, they seized the controls and became certified members of the self-wrecking crew.

The seventh-inning grand slam on an 0-2 count allowed by Ryan Brasier, after Brandon Workman loaded the bases on two walks and a single, turned a 3-1 deficit into a 5-3 loss that sent the 6-13 reeling in a different direction after a dozen other losses that could be attributed to abysmal starting pitching or stagnant hitting or shoddy defense or some combination.

The Workman-Brasier duo ruined a splendid start from Nathan Eovaldi (six innings, one unearned run, six strikeouts, three hits), by far the best of his four starts this season.

“Nate did a hell of a job tonight – bullpen guys, it’s our job to come in and get outs and hold the league and I made a bad pitch on a good count for me and it bit me in the butt,” said Brasier.

The entire team felt that bite in a new spot, considering how the bullpen had managed to avoid much if any blame – Colten Brewer is the only other reliever to have a loss this season besides Workman – when most thought the bullpen was the weak spot entering this season.

Workman was to the point.

“Nate came out and pitched very well today – we were in position to win the game and I loaded the bases up,” said Workman. “It’s not good. We’ve been struggling as a team. As I said, we were in position to win one today and I came in there and loaded the bases and got one out so it’s definitely difficult to swallow that.”

The Red Sox jumped out to the early 1-0 lead, with J.D. Martinez hitting a home run, No. 4 on the season, on the first pitch he saw from Happ.

They expanded the lead to 3-0 in the second, when Christian Vazquez hit his third home run of the season, this one to his opposite-field, in short right field at Yankee Stadium.

Eovaldi showed flashes of his dominant stretches from last year, as he repeatedly kept the Yankees at bay. He stranded a base-runner in each of the first two innings and did not allow any in the third.

The fourth was a challenge. It began with a walk, and then fill-in second baseman Eduardo Nunez was charged with an error when he could not hold onto a feed at second base from third baseman Rafael Devers on a groundball. That put two base-runners on, at first and second, with no outs. Eovaldi bore down. He struck out DJ LeMahieu looking, but then Clint Frazier laced an RBI double into left field. With runners at second and third and just one out, Eovaldi struck out Mike Tauchman. Eovaldi pumped his fist after the out.

Then, Gio Irshela hit a groundball that appeared headed to right field and would have knocked in at least one run if not for first baseman Steve Pearce making a flat-out dive to his right to snag Irshela's ball cleanly. Eovaldi sprinted to first and was able to glove the feed from Pearce in time for the third out and minimizing the damage to just one run.

Then came the seventh, and Alex Cora was left to explain the 13th loss in 19 tries this season.

"They're all tough," said Cora. "One thing is for sure, the starting rotation is getting to where we want it. (Eovaldi) threw the ball well. Velocity was good. He grinded out a few innings, but the split was better, the breaking ball was better, and he finished off with a good fastball. We've still got to finish off games. We didn't. It takes everybody to get out of this. Today, in the seventh inning, we didn't do a good job."

### **Dustin Pedroia re-injures left knee, leaving return to action in much uncertainty**

Michael Silverman

NEW YORK – Dustin Pedroia's first start at second base since Saturday, a three-day span, was a short one.

That he had to leave because of "left knee discomfort" could mean that his layoff could be a long one.

Pedroia "felt something weird in his knee" after fouling off the first pitch of his second-inning at-bat, manager Alex Cora said. "He came up to me and was like, 'Hey, it didn't feel right there,'" said Cora. "I decided to take him out. He'll see the doctor tomorrow, see where we're at. Like I said, he was also feeling ill. That's going around right now. That's why he took off. It's not like he's hiding."

Pedroia will be examined by a doctor in New York on Thursday. The surgeon who conducted the cartilage procedure on his knee in 2017 is based in Manhattan. Cora indicated that the team will likely have to make a move to bring up a new second baseman — Tzu-Wei Lin is a leading candidate — for the series against the Rays that begins Friday.

"For him to come up to me and tell me how he felt — obviously I know a lot of people think he's going to push and push and push and not be smart about it, but he understands where he's at and how he felt," said Cora. "I've got to do what I've got to do to take care of the player. I was surprised that he came up to me and told me that, but at least he was honest. We'll see. We'll see what happens. I really don't know. He was a little bit down. He was down. I haven't seen him like that. So, hopefully it's nothing serious, it's something that he just got scared, but we'll know more tomorrow."

Eduardo Nunez replaced Pedroia to start the bottom of the second inning.

For two years, Pedroia has tried to battle back from his surgically repaired left knee, the one that limited him to just three games last year and has limited his availability in the first two weeks of this season to just six games to date.

### **David Price unhappy some teams didn't play on Jackie Robinson Day**

Michael Silverman

NEW YORK – David Price was already displeased with the efforts of MLB when it comes to growing and promoting the game to the African-American community.

On Wednesday, he voiced another complaint, this time about MLB's inability to have every team play on the annual Jackie Robinson Day date, April 15. This year, only 20 of the 30 teams played on Monday, including the Red Sox but not the Yankees. When the Red Sox played here Tuesday night, the Yankees honored Robinson.

Price tweeted twice:

"Hey @mlb every year on April 15th we celebrate Jackie Robinson Day...EVERYONE plays on that day next year deal? N one should have an off day let alone 10 teams!!" and "1/3 of @mlb teams had an off day on Jackie Robinson day...I just can't wrap my head around that. We've had a problem for a while and this couldn't make it any more noticeable."

Mondays and Thursdays are the busiest travel days on the baseball calendar. The Red Sox have nine Mondays off, one or two each month. The travel schedule is collectively bargained, meaning both players and management sign off on the schedule each year. Next year, April 15 falls on a Wednesday.

Asked to respond to what Price had to say, MLB issued this statement:

"In a perfect world, all teams would play on Jackie Robinson Day. Unfortunately, there are some scheduling challenges when April 15th falls on a Monday, which is a heavy travel day for Clubs. MLB worked with the Clubs who were not playing on Monday to ensure that their players would wear 42 and have festivities on Tuesday to celebrate Jackie Robinson Day. While it is not ideal, one benefit is that this extends the celebration and awareness of Jackie Robinson Day over two days and guarantees that every one of our players participates."

Price told the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune that he spoke with both Players Association head Tony Clark and MLB commissioner on Wednesday about the Jackie Robinson Day scheduling issue.

"I saw Tony Clark when I was eating lunch today and I told him," Price said to the Eagle-Tribune. "I spoke to Manfred on the phone today. And I told him. That's all I can do."

Red Sox manager Alex Cora agreed with the gist of Price's opinion.

"I don't know about the marketing part of it, that's something the league is doing with Latinos and African Americans but just reading it and thinking about it, it makes sense to play that day – everybody plays," said Cora. "The league will take a look at it and maybe he's right about this and the league will make an adjustment. It's a special day for everybody so I think, in my opinion, yes he's right about that."

This is not the first time this season Price has expressed his opinion about the actions, versus words, of MLB when it comes to African-Americans in the game.

In an interview with MassLive during the series against the Diamondbacks, Price voiced criticism on the marketing efforts, or lack of, for teammate Mookie Betts, the AL MVP last season.

“OK, that’s a joke,” Price told MassLive. “I saw the Brewers first baseman (Jesus Aguilar) has a commercial on MLB Network. Great player. Great player. I love watching him play. I’ve heard nothing but great things about him from Travis Shaw and all those guys. But he’s not Mookie Betts. We’re trying to grow this game in the African-American community. Put that guy (Betts) on commercials. That’s how this game grows. MLB is probably the worst at marketing their players. They need to do a better job of that. We’ve talked about that to the union and (MLB commissioner) Mr. (Rob) Manfred many times.”

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

### **Yankees 5, Red Sox 3: Gardner’s grand slam seals New York sweep**

Bill Koch

NEW YORK — Each night of this wretched season to date seems to bring with it a different culprit for the Red Sox.

This time it wasn’t the starting pitching. You might even be able to excuse the offense, pedestrian as it was after staking Boston to an early lead.

Wednesday was the time for a perceived weakness in the winter months to sting the Red Sox at Yankee Stadium. A bullpen that has been generally sturdy to this point buckled under the Bronx pressure, handing New York a second win in as many games of the abbreviated series.

Brandon Workman lit the match, Ryan Brasier supplied the gasoline and Brett Gardner started the fire with one swing. The Yankees rode the sudden spark to a 5-3 victory, one that dealt Boston just its second sweep in the last two years.

Gardner’s one-out grand slam to right field in the bottom of the seventh inning was the 100th home run of his career, and it was quite the time to notch such a milestone. New York erased a 3-1 deficit, denied Nathan Eovaldi a decision after six dominant innings in his best start to date and sent the Red Sox to Tampa Bay on the sourest of notes.

“The bullpen guys, it’s our job to come in and get outs and hold the lead,” Brasier said. “I made a bad pitch on a good count for me and it bit me in the butt.”

“We were in position to win one today and I came in there and loaded the bases and got one out,” Workman said. “It’s definitely difficult to swallow that.”

Brasier and Matt Barnes have operated at the back end of the relief corps to date, leaving Boston with three outs to steal in the seventh. Workman allowed a leadoff single to Clint Frazier and issued walks to Mike Tauchman and Austin Romine, loading the bases for the top of the order. Brasier got ahead 0-and-2 on Gardner before leaving a fastball out over the plate, one Gardner lined to the second row of the bleachers in right field.

“We tried to go up in the zone and it wasn’t up enough,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “Gardner did a good job staying with that pitch. It’s kind of like right in his swing path.”

It was just the fifth homer allowed by Brasier in the big leagues but his second at this venue. Neil Walker did the honors with a three-run shot last Sept. 18, and the Yankees forced the Red Sox to wait two extra nights before clinching a third straight American League East title. Such an achievement feels light years away now, as Boston finds itself rooted in the basement ahead of a three-game set with the first-place Rays.

“We’re just trying to roll through this tough time and get back to winning like last year,” Brasier said. “I know it’s hard to do what we did, but everybody knows the group of guys we’ve got in here can do it.”

The Red Sox jumped on top just three batters into this one. J.D. Martinez launched a first-pitch fastball from J.A. Happ to Monument Park in the first, a 424-foot solo homer to center that made it 1-0. Boston dropped to 3-7 this season when taking the lead, a stark contrast to the 10 straight games won by the Red Sox when striking first in the 2018 postseason.

Happ was done in by the long ball again in the second, as the stadium's cozy dimensions in right field came back to bite the hosts. Mitch Moreland lined a leadoff single to right and Christian Vazquez lifted a lazy fly that settled into the second row, a two-run homer to give the Red Sox a 3-0 lead.

Eovaldi's only trouble spot came in the fourth when Luke Voit drew a leadoff walk. Gleyber Torres hit a bouncer to deep short and Nunez couldn't glove the throw from Xander Bogaerts, putting two men on with nobody out. Frazier grounded a one-out double inside the bag at third and the Boston cushion was shaved to 3-1.

Eovaldi stopped the bleeding there, fanning Tauchman on a filthy 3-and-2 split-fingered fastball down in the zone for the second out. Some help from his defense helped Eovaldi complete the escape, as Steve Pearce made a terrific backhanded dive on a bouncer by Gio Urshela and flipped to Eovaldi covering.

"Tonight I was able to keep the walks down and attack the strike zone," Eovaldi said. "I felt good mechanically, and when I feel good mechanically all my pitches work off the fastball."

### **Red Sox Journal: Betts still looking to solve his hitting woes**

Bill Koch

NEW YORK — What's wrong with Mookie Betts?

The reigning American League Most Valuable Player might well be a victim of the lofty standards he set last season. Betts totaled six extra-base hits and 14 strikeouts through 18 games entering Wednesday's matchup with the Yankees. The right fielder sprinted out of the blocks through 18 games last season, piling up 14 extra-base hits against just eight strikeouts.

"Just trying to make some adjustments obviously," Betts said following his 0-for-3 performance on Tuesday. "I haven't played very well. Trying to make adjustments pitch by pitch and make something happen."

"He's just searching," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said Wednesday. "He actually took some good swings yesterday. He just fouled them off."

Betts was back in the leadoff spot on Wednesday with Andrew Benintendi (right foot contusion) still ailing and out of the lineup. Their flip-flop at the top of the Red Sox order raised more than a few eyebrows this offseason after Betts put together a virtuoso 2018 at the plate.

"I don't think it's the order," Cora said. "Leading off, hitting second, hitting third — it doesn't matter. I think it's just him trying to find his swing, and I do think he's getting closer."

Betts is walking less and striking out more to begin 2019. His walk rate has dipped from 13.2 percent to 12.8 percent, and his strikeout rate has increased from 14.8 percent to 17.9 percent. Betts has also been less fortunate when he ventures outside the strike zone, making contact 5.3 percent less frequently.

"I just think right now he's off a little bit," Cora said. "He's missing his pitch. He's fouling off too many pitches. He's falling behind in counts. They're pitching to the edges. They're expanding. It's all that stuff going on right now."

"With those special guys, one swing might get them. One swing in the cage or one swing in BP or one swing in the game and they take off. Hopefully that can happen."



Friday return?

Benintendi (right foot contusion) was out of the lineup due to injury for what the Red Sox hope will be the final time Wednesday night.

The left fielder went through a full pregame workout and is expected to return Friday when Boston opens its weekend series at Tampa Bay. Benintendi has been idle since fouling a ball off his instep Saturday against the Orioles.

“If everything goes well he should be back on Friday,” Cora said. “We still can use him tonight. I think the two more days will benefit him.”

J.D. Martinez made his second straight start in left field. That follows a start in left by Steve Pearce in Monday’s traditional Patriots’ Day matinee. To say that Benintendi’s defense would be a significant upgrade over Martinez and Pearce would be rather kind indeed.

Pedroia leaves early

Dustin Pedroia’s return to the lineup Wednesday lasted less than two innings.

Pedroia popped to shallow right field in the top of the second and was replaced in the field by Eduardo Nunez. Boston announced Pedroia was removed due to left knee discomfort, the same issue that caused him to miss all but three games of the 2018 season.

Nunez has been battling back tightness and went 0-for-3 in Tuesday’s 8-0 loss to the Yankees. His 2-for-4 outing in Friday’s 6-4 victory over Baltimore represents the entirety of his offensive production over his last six games. Nunez was 0-for-10 with four strikeouts otherwise.

“Trying to give him two days and then we’ll see what happens in Tampa,” Cora said. “He’s been grinding physically.”

Pedroia was given the day off on Tuesday after starting three straight games against the Orioles. He served as the designated hitter in each of the last two, marking just the 12th and 13th time in his 1,511 career games he’s been employed in such a fashion.

Price frustrated

The Red Sox wore No. 42 jerseys for the second straight night on Tuesday, something that didn’t sit well with David Price.

The Yankees had a day off on Monday while Boston celebrated Jackie Robinson Day during a home contest with Baltimore. New York was one of 10 teams not to play until Tuesday, honoring Robinson and his historic breaking of the color barrier in April 1947.

“Everyone plays on that day next year, deal?” Price tweeted in part. “No one should have an off day, let alone 10 teams!”

“Just reading it and thinking about it, it makes sense to play that day,” Cora said. “Everybody plays. The league will take a look at it.

“He’s right about this, and maybe the league will make an adjustment. It’s a special day for everybody. I think in my opinion, yes, he is right about that.”

**Slow-starting Chris Sale telling it like it is**

Bill Koch

NEW YORK — If he's not the last member of the Red Sox who would resort to making excuses for his performance, Chris Sale is certainly on the short list.

The lefthander offered a brutally frank assessment of his outing following Boston's 8-0 loss to the Yankees on Tuesday night. Sale took questions for about four minutes in the visiting clubhouse at Yankee Stadium and, at times, seemed to hit himself harder verbally than New York just had with its bats on the field.

"I just flat-out stink right now," Sale said, an edge creeping into his typically soft-spoken delivery. "I don't know what it is. When you're going good, it's good. When you're going bad, it's pretty bad."

Was Sale's outing really that poor? The final line says yes — five innings, seven hits, four earned runs and a fourth loss in as many starts this season. But there were certain benchmarks that should give the Red Sox some encouragement that their ace is nearing a breakthrough of sorts on the mound.

"I do feel he is that close," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said on Wednesday. "One thing about our players and the organization — I like them to be genuine, transparent and responsible. If he feels he stinks, well, he's honest."

Sale's fourth start last season came on a wretched April afternoon at Fenway Park, a 3-1 victory over the Orioles. Sale's four-seam fastball averaged 90.2 mph, and he generated just seven swings-and-misses on 93 pitches. Sale lasted just five innings on that day as well, but his two hits and one earned run allowed were a superior result.

"I just know I've got to pitch better," Sale said. "I don't care how I feel or what it looks like. I need to start putting up zeroes."

Sale's raw stuff was far better on Tuesday. His four-seam fastball averaged 95.5 mph, but he generated just one of his 12 swings-and-misses on that pitch. The Yankees put six of Sale's 33 four-seamers in play at an average exit velocity of 103.4 mph.

"We went from getting the velocity back, getting the slider back — now, yesterday, missed locations," Cora said. "If you take a look at the game there were some fastballs that were supposed to go glove side and he left them over the plate."

New York put 16 balls in play against Sale, doubling Baltimore's total of eight. If you were to split the strike zone into nine equal squares, 13 of the balls put in play by the Yankees fell inside or touched the middle three squares perpendicular to a hitter's belt. Only four of the eight balls put in play by the Orioles were inside the same three squares.

"In terms of throwing, it was better," Sale said. "Still need to pitch better. I need to get results. No matter how hard you throw or how fancy it looks, you need to put up zeroes."

Sale's next start should fall at the outset of a 10-game home stand beginning next week, as the Tigers visit Fenway Park for a four-game set opening Monday night. His fifth outing last season came in a 3-0 loss at Oakland, as Sale found himself on the wrong end of a no-hitter thrown by Athletics' left-hander Sean Manaea. Sale allowed all three runs on six hits and struck out 10 across seven innings.

"I think stuff-wise you compare it to the first three — the velocity was there," Cora said Tuesday. "The slider was a lot better today. I think he's very close to 'the real Chris Sale.'"

**\* *MassLive.com***

## **David Price criticizes MLB for teams being off on Jackie Robinson Day; Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora agrees everyone should play**

Chris Cotillo

NEW YORK -- Red Sox left-hander David Price criticized Major League Baseball on Wednesday, tweeting that the league should have all 30 teams in action on Jackie Robinson Day each season.

“Hey @mlb every year on April 15th we celebrate Jackie Robinson Day...EVERYONE plays on that day next year deal?” Price tweeted. “No one should have an off day let alone 10 teams!!”

He later added: “1/3 of @mlb teams had an off day on Jackie Robinson day...I just can’t wrap my head around that. We’ve had a problem for a while and this couldn’t make it any more noticeable.”

Jackie Robinson Day is celebrated every year on April 15, the anniversary of Robinson’s major-league debut in 1947. Every player throughout the league wears No. 42 in honor of Robinson annually on that day.

With April 15 falling on a Monday (a common off day), 10 teams were out of action and instead had their players wear No. 42 on Tuesday. The Red Sox wore No. 42 twice-- on Monday against the Orioles at home and on Tuesday at Yankee Stadium.

Price’s manager, Alex Cora, agreed with the idea. He said he would support a rule that put all 30 teams in action on April 15 every year.

“Just reading it and thinking about it, it makes sense,” Cora said. “To play that day-- everybody plays. The league will take a look at it. Maybe he’s right about this and then the league will make an adjustment. It’s a special day for everybody. In my opinion, yes. He’s right about that.”

Price met with MLBPA chief Tony Clark and spoke with commissioner Rob Manfred on the phone Wednesday, according to Chris Mason of the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune. Major League Baseball issued a statement in response (via Michael Silverman of the Boston Herald):

“In a perfect world, all teams would play on Jackie Robinson Day. Unfortunately, there are some scheduling challenges when April 15 falls on a Monday, which is a heavy travel day for Clubs. MLB worked with the Clubs who were not playing on Monday to ensure that their players would wear 42 and have festivities on Tuesday to celebrate Jackie Robinson Day. While it is not ideal, one benefit is that this extends the celebration and awareness of Jackie Robinson Day over two days and guarantees that everyone of our players participates.”

Price criticized the league for failing to market African-American players in an interview with MassLive’s Chris Smith earlier in the month.

Boston Red Sox's David Price, who will start Saturday here against the Diamondbacks, wants to see the game grow in the African-American community and overall.

“We’re trying to grow this game in the African-American community,” Price told Smith. Put that guy (Mookie Betts) on commercials. That’s how this game grows. MLB is probably the worst at marketing their players. They need to do a better job of that. We’ve talked about that to the union and (MLB commissioner) Mr. (Rob) Manfred many times.”

## **Boston Red Sox bullpen implodes, Brett Gardner grand slam ruins Nathan Eovaldi’s strong start in 5-3 loss to Yankees**

Chris Cotillo

NEW YORK -- If you looked at this Red Sox team before the season, you'd expect most of its losses to look like it did Wednesday.

The bullpen was the culprit in the latest Sox loss, with Brett Gardner hitting a game-winning grand slam in the seventh inning off Ryan Brasier to give New York a 5-3 win. The seventh-inning bullpen implosion ruined a strong night from Nathan Eovaldi, who departed after six strong innings with a 3-1 lead.

Home runs from J.D. Martinez (solo) and Christian Vazquez (two-run) in the first two innings gave Boston a 3-0 lead before Clint Frazier cut the lead to two with an RBI double in the fourth. Eovaldi bounced back to strike out Mike Tauchman and get Gio Urshela to ground out on an impressive diving stop by Steve Pearce to escape further damage.

Eovaldi departed after six innings, allowing just one unearned run and three hits while striking out six Yankees. He retired the final eight batters he faced but failed to record a win for the fourth straight outing to start the season.

Eovaldi was relieved by Brandon Workman, who allowed a Frazier single before walking Tauchman and Urshela to load the bases. With one out, Brasier came in and threw an 0-2 fastball that Gardner deposited into the right-field seats for his 100th career home run.

Workman, who was charged with three earned runs while recording one out, saw his ERA rise from 0.00 to 3.52.

Boston loaded the bases with two outs against Adam Ottavino in the eighth, but Eduardo Nunez flew out to end the inning. Aroldis Chapman recorded his third save of the season, retiring the Sox in order in the ninth to drop Boston's record to 6-13.

Boston has now dropped four of its last five games and remains in last place in the A.L. East. They'll have an off day Thursday before starting a three-game series against the Rays at Tropicana Field on Friday.

Pedroia removed from game after one at-bat

Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia flew out to right field in the top of the second before being replaced by Eduardo Nunez in the bottom half of the inning. The team said he left with left knee soreness.

Pedroia flew out in his only at-bat before being replaced by Eduardo Nunez at second base.

Pedroia was off Tuesday after playing three straight days against Baltimore. The Red Sox have felt the need to push Pedroia over the last week with Eduardo Nunez dealing with a tight back and Brock Holt on the injured list with a scratched cornea in his right eye.

Eovaldi continues dominance against Yankees

Eovaldi turned in his best start of the year and continued his dominance against his former team. Since joining the Red Sox, the righty has allowed just one earned run in 29 innings over five starts (including Game 3 of the ALDS).

In six starts since the beginning of 2018, Eovaldi has allowed six earned runs in 36.1 innings (1.50 ERA) against New York while allowing 22 hits and striking out 29.

Betts' slump continues with 0-4 night

Sox outfielder Mookie Betts, who entered the night in a 3-for-22 slump, was 0-for-4 with a strikeout. He is now batting an even .200 on the season.

Rays up next

Boston's next assignment is not an easy one, as they'll travel to St. Petersburg to take on the division-leading Rays. Tampa is 14-4 on the season after beating Baltimore on Wednesday.

Eduardo Rodriguez, Rick Porcello and David Price will take the mound for the Red Sox. Tampa Bay's starters are TBA.

### **Boston Red Sox bullpen blows lead in loss to Yankees, becoming a question mark once again**

Chris Cotillo

NEW YORK -- The toughest loss so far for the Red Sox came Wednesday night in the Bronx. But unlike most of the team's previous defeats, it followed the exact blueprint of how Boston's losses were supposed to go this season.

The Red Sox have looked like the Bizarro World version of themselves throughout the first three weeks of the season, with an ace-filled starting rotation being the worst in baseball and a potent lineup failing to score runs on a consistent basis. Things normalized Wednesday, with Nathan Eovaldi allowing just one unearned run through six innings and big swings from J.D. Martinez and Christian Vazquez giving Boston a late 3-1 lead.

The oft-questioned bullpen, which had been an unforeseen strength of the team through 18 games, blew this one for the Red Sox in the seventh. Brandon Workman, who took over for Eovaldi, loaded the bases while recording one out by walking two batters and allowing a single. Trying to pick up Workman's pieces, Ryan Brasier left an 0-2 fastball over the middle of the plate and Brett Gardner put it in the seats in right field to give New York a 5-3 lead it wouldn't give up.

Workman, who hadn't allowed a run in his first eight appearances of the year, lost control of his cutter and elected to stay away from his curveball against the Yankees. He was blunt in his assessment of his performance.

"We were in a position to win one today and I came in and loaded the bases and got one out," Workman said. "It's definitely difficult to swallow that."

Brasier, who was Alex Cora's reliever of choice with the bases loaded because of how he matched up with Gardner and Aaron Judge, was also accountable.

"As bullpen guys, it's our job to come in, get outs and hold the lead," Brasier said. "I made a bad pitch on a good count for me and it bit me in the butt."

The last-place Red Sox have found a bunch of ways to lose so far this year, being blown out, shut out, walked off and outdueled. Wednesday's loss was different, with a chance at an elusive win slipping out of the team's hands and compounding its issues in dramatic fashion.

"We still have got to finish games," Cora said. "We didn't. It takes everybody to get out of this, and today in the seventh inning, we didn't do the job."

The bullpen was a pleasant surprise when everything else was going wrong for the Red Sox but is suddenly a question mark once again. Add it to the pile of issues for a team that hasn't done much of anything well for the the majority of its first 19 games.

The Sox are off Thursday before starting a suddenly crucial series against the division-leading Rays in St. Petersburg on Friday. A statement series against one of baseball's hottest teams would go a long way toward getting them back on track.

“We’ve just got to play better,” Cora said plainly. “It really doesn’t matter-- 8 ½, 7 ½ or 6 ½ (games back), we need to play better.”

**Michael Chavis, potential Boston Red Sox second base option, belts fourth homer for PawSox; Tzu-Wei Lin doubles twice**

Christopher Smith

Michael Chavis blasted his fourth home run Wednesday. The Boston Red Sox prospect helped Triple-A Pawtucket overcome a 7-0 deficit and win 11-8 over Buffalo.

Chavis, who Baseball America ranks the Red Sox’s No. 2 prospect behind Bobby Dalbec, went 1-for-3 with a homer, two walks and two RBIs.

The 23-year-old is slashing .250/.354/.600/.954 with four homers, two doubles, six RBIs, seven walks and nine strikeouts in 12 games (40 at-bats).

Dustin Pedroia likely is headed to the injured list after leaving Boston’s 5-3 loss against the Yankees on Wednesday because of discomfort in his surgically repaired knee.

Chavis is an option to play second base for the Red Sox at some point this season. But the Red Sox likely will recall Tzu-Wei Lin on Friday if Pedroia is placed on the injured list. The Red Sox likely want Chavis to receive more time at Pawtucket to develop both defensively and offensively before promoting him.

He has made five starts at second base, six starts at third base and one start at first base. He never played second base in a minor league game until this season.

Lin went 2-for-5 with two doubles, three RBIs and one run Wednesday. He’s slashing .286/.355/.393/.748 in 28 at-bats (seven games).

The Boston Red Sox acquired Josh Taylor for Deven Marrero last season. They added him to the 40-man roster in November.

Josh Taylor records save

Josh Taylor recorded his first save for Pawtucket with a scoreless ninth. He allowed one hit and struck out two.

Taylor, a lefty on Boston’s 40-man roster, has allowed two earned runs in 7.2 innings. He has allowed seven hits and four walks while striking out 11 in his six outings.

C.J. Chatham goes 3-for-6

Shortstop prospect C.J. Chatham went 3-for-6 with a double, RBI and two runs to help Double-A Portland overcome a seven-run deficit and win 11-7.

He’s 13-for-40 (.325) with a .378 on-base percentage, .500 slugging percentage, .878 OPS, seven doubles, six RBIs, three walks and six strikeouts in 10 games.

Baseball America ranks the 24-year-old the No. 10 prospect in the system.

**Brock Holt injury: Boston Red Sox infielder has setback, won’t join team over weekend**

Chris Cotillo

NEW YORK -- Red Sox infielder Brock Holt experienced a setback in his recovery from an eye injury, according to manager Alex Cora. Holt won't rejoin the team this weekend in Tampa as originally anticipated.

Holt played a rehab game with Pawtucket on Tuesday night, going 0-for-2 with a walk and two strikeouts. He was scheduled to play Wednesday night but was not in the lineup.

"Yesterday, he didn't feel great," Cora said. "He went to see the eye doctor. He'll probably get some other lens and hopefully he'll get back (to Pawtucket) tomorrow or Friday. We'll see where he's at. Yesterday, it was three at-bats and he didn't feel great about them."

Holt said Monday that the plan was for him to play two rehab games before rejoining the team for its weekend series against the Rays. Instead, the earliest he could return is Monday at home against Detroit.

With Dustin Pedroia injuring his knee in Wednesday's loss, it appears the Sox will have to bring up a second baseman from Pawtucket before Friday. Tzu-Wei Lin, Michael Chavis and Tony Renda are the top internal options.

## **\* *The Lawrence Eagle Tribune***

### **David Price spoke to MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred about Jackie Robinson Day problem**

Chris Mason

NEW YORK — On Monday afternoon, every player on the Red Sox roster wore No. 42 in honor of Jackie Robinson Day.

One of the most important Americans of the 20th century, Robinson broke baseball's color barrier on April 15, 1947, becoming the first African-American to play a Major League Baseball game. He remains the only professional athlete to have his number retired in every stadium.

Then, the Red Sox wore No. 42 again on Tuesday night in the Bronx. The Yankees were one of 10 teams that had Monday off, so they were celebrating a day late.

That doesn't sit well with David Price.

"Hey @mlb every year on April 15th we celebrate Jackie Robinson Day... EVERYONE plays on that day next year deal?" Price tweeted to his 1.8 million Twitter followers. "No one should have an off day let alone 10 teams!! (A third) of @mlb teams had an off day on Jackie Robinson day...I just can't wrap my head around that. We've had a problem for a while and this couldn't make it any more noticeable."

Price is determined to see that change; he isn't just tweeting about it.

On Wednesday afternoon at Yankee Stadium, Price told the Eagle-Tribune that he's already spoken to two of the most important men in baseball — commissioner Rob Manfred and MLBPA director Tony Clark — about remedying the issue.

"I saw Tony Clark when I was eating lunch today and I told him," Price said. "I spoke to Manfred on the phone today. And I told him. That's all I can do."

Asked if he wanted to expound on his tweet, Price believed the issue was self-evident.

"You don't need quotes from me. You have everything you need," Price said. "Ten teams were off on Jackie Robinson Day. It's April 15 every single year. That's a problem. That's a problem."

Baseball is still trying to reconcile the racism of its past. The Red Sox didn't integrate for over a decade after Robinson's debut — it took until 1959 — and last season changed Yawkey Way back to Jersey Street because of charges of racism against Tom Yawkey.

Alex Cora, Boston's first minority manager, agreed with Price's stance on Jackie Robinson Day.

"Just reading (Price's tweet) and thinking about it, it makes sense to play that day, everybody plays," Cora said. "The league will take a look at it and maybe he's right about this and the league will make an adjustment. It's a special day for everybody so I think, in my opinion, yes he's right about that."

### **Dustin Pedroia pulled after feeling 'something weird' in bad knee**

Chris Mason

NEW YORK — On Wednesday night in the Bronx, the Red Sox lost the game, the series, and perhaps Dustin Pedroia, too.

It's the second baseman's surgically-repaired knee again. Pedroia was lifted in the second inning of a 5-3 loss to the Yankees, and it doesn't sound good.

"In the first swing of that at-bat, that one he fouled off to right field, he felt something weird in his knee," Alex Cora said. "He finished the at-bat, he came up to me and was like, 'Hey, it didn't feel right there.' I decided to take him out."

Pedroia is also battling an illness, so he wasn't around to answer questions after the game, but Cora knew it was nothing to mess around with because the veteran actually said something.

"I was surprised that he came up to me and told me that, but at least he was honest," Cora said. "We'll see. We'll see what happens. I really don't know. He was a little bit down. He was down. I haven't seen him like that. So, hopefully it's nothing serious, it's something that he just got scared, but we'll know more tomorrow."

Of course, Pedroia's knee limited him to just three games in 2018. While the team travels to Tampa Bay, the 35-year-old is staying back in New York to get it looked at tomorrow.

Cora was honest about the situation, and anticipates needing to add a second baseman for the weekend series with the Rays.

"I think so, yeah," Cora said. "Hopefully not, hopefully I'm wrong on this one. And tomorrow he flies to Tampa and is ready to go. But it looks that way."

As Brock Holt's eye is still bothering him, Tzu-Wei Lin is the most likely candidate to fill the void.

### **Five Takes: Red Sox find a new way to lose in New York**

Chris Mason

NEW YORK — The Red Sox found a new way to lose last night.

For the first time this season, the best arms in the bullpen blew a game in the Bronx. Tasked with holding a 3-1 lead in the seventh, Brandon Workman loaded the bases, Ryan Brasier gave up a grand slam, and the Red Sox fell to 6-13 on the season. Three weeks in, they've still yet to win a series.

Here are five takes from a 5-3 loss at Yankee Stadium:

1. Bullpen blows up



Tabbed as an Achilles heel to start the season, the high-leverage relievers had been good — really good — until last night.

Brasier got ahead of Brett Gardner 0-2 before throwing him a fastball right over the plate. Gardner isn't the player he once was, but is still good enough to deposit a pitch like that in the right field bleachers.

Where was Brasier trying to throw the four-seamer?

“Not where it was,” he replied succinctly.

## 2. Pedey's last stand?

In the second inning, Dustin Pedroia told Alex Cora he felt something weird in his surgically-repaired knee, and was removed from the game. He's staying in New York to see a doctor today, but it doesn't sound good.

“I was surprised that he came up to me and told me that, but at least he was honest,” Alex Cora said. “We'll see. We'll see what happens. I really don't know. He was a little bit down. He was down. I haven't seen him like that.”

A day after cutting ties with Blake Swihart, that move looks even worse.

## 3. Bats let Happ off the hook

The Sox took an early 3-0 lead against J.A. Happ, but then hit cruise control and went scoreless in the game's final seven innings. Offensively, they're still not coming close to realizing their potential.

“We did a good job early in the game offensively but we didn't finish them off,” Alex Cora said. “We need to get better in all aspects of the game.”

## 4. What are you swinging at, Nunez?

After the bullpen implosion, the Sox had a chance to strike back.

They had Adam Ottavino on the ropes, and after a Mitch Moreland walk loaded the bases, Eduardo Nunez stepped to the plate.

He decided to swing at the first pitch, a slider down and out of the zone, and popped it into right field. Against a reeling reliever, it was an ill-advised pitch selection that ended any hope of a comeback.

## 5. At least Nate was great?

Prior to the bullpen's collapse, Nathan Eovaldi turned in his best start of the season.

The hard-throwing Texan allowed one unearned run in six innings of work, and was painting with his four-seam fastball. Eovaldi owned the outside corner.

“Nate did a hell of a job tonight,” Brasier said. “Bullpen guys, it's our job to come in and get outs and hold the league and I made a bad pitch on a good count for me and it bit me in the butt.”

**\* *RedSox.com***

**Sox's 7th-inning 'pen stumble costly vs. Yanks**

Ian Browne

NEW YORK -- The bullpen, the heavily scrutinized bullpen, surprisingly became one of the few things the Red Sox could rely on during their stunning early-season slump.

But that all changed in a hurry on Wednesday night at Yankee Stadium, and the timing could not have been worse in what wound up a gut-punch of a 5-3 loss that dropped the defending World Series champions to 6-13.

The Red Sox, off to their worst start since 1996, are in last place in the American League East and trail the first-place Rays by 8 1/2 games. After an off-day in Florida on Thursday, Boston opens an important three-game series against Tampa Bay on Friday night.

“One thing’s for sure, disconnect from this, enjoy Florida and hang out and be ready for Friday,” said Red Sox manager Alex Cora.

There certainly was no enjoyment to be had from the late innings of Wednesday.

Nathan Eovaldi had been stellar, staking the Red Sox to a 3-1 lead after six tremendous innings in which he allowed one unearned run on three hits and one walk while striking out six. It was a much-needed effort from Eovaldi, who had struggled in his first three starts.

But once Eovaldi handed it over to his relievers, the game fell apart. Brandon Workman loaded the bases with one out on a hit and two walks, while facing the Nos. 6-9 hitters in New York’s injury-depleted batting order.

“It’s not good,” said Workman. “We’ve been struggling as a team. As I said, we were in position to win one today, and I came in there and loaded the bases and got one out, so it’s definitely difficult to swallow that.”

On came Ryan Brasier, who left an 0-2 fastball over the heart of the plate, and Brett Gardner smashed it for a grand slam to right that gave the Yankees their first lead of the night.

“Bullpen guys, it’s our job to come in and get outs and hold the lead, and I made a bad pitch on a good count for me and it bit me in the butt,” said Brasier. “So get ready for the series in Tampa Bay.”

The Yankees swept the brief two-game series between the rivals. The Red Sox have yet to win a series this season.

This weekend would be about the perfect time for Boston’s drought to end.

“We’ve got to go down there and win the series, that’s the most important thing. You win two out of three, or you sweep them and you move on,” said Cora. “That’s the goal in every series. We haven’t done it yet. It would be a good time to do it in [St. Petersburg].”

While the bullpen did, in fact, lose the game, Cora saw other team breakdowns before it got to that.

Once again, the Red Sox were inconsistent offensively. The start was good, as J.D. Martinez hammered a solo shot in the first and Christian Vázquez belted a two-run shot in the second to make it 3-0 Boston.

The Red Sox didn’t score again over the final seven innings.

“We haven’t done it consistently,” Cora said. “It looked better today, but if you really look at the game, we had a chance to take the starter out, get to the middle relievers and all that and add on, and we didn’t.”

Meanwhile, Mookie Betts continued to struggle mightily at the plate, going 0-for-4 on Wednesday. He is slashing .200/.305/.371.

“We’ll take a look at it,” said Cora. “Hitting balls off the end. It looked like he expanded the zone a little bit with two strikes again, so we’ll keep working with him.”

The Red Sox have a lot of work to do to dig out of an early hole bigger than anyone could have imagined. After a brief respite, the defending champs will again try to find their way starting Friday.

“Everyone likes an off-day,” said Brasier. “Get a little recharge and get back at it.”

### **Pedroia to have left knee discomfort examined**

Ian Browne

NEW YORK -- As if another loss wasn't tough enough, the Red Sox also lost Dustin Pedroia again on Wednesday night.

At this point, it's hard to say how long Pedroia will be sidelined by the discomfort he felt in his problematic left knee, which led to him exiting in the second inning of a 5-3 defeat to the Yankees at Yankee Stadium.

Pedroia will be examined by a doctor in New York during the Red Sox's off-day on Thursday. At that point, the club will have more information.

“For him to come up to me and tell me how he felt, obviously I know a lot of people think he's going to push and push and push and not be smart about it, but he understands where he's at and how he felt,” said Boston manager Alex Cora. “I've got to do what I've got to do to take care of the player. I was surprised that he came up to me and told me that, but at least he was honest. We'll see. We'll see what happens.”

“I really don't know. He was a little bit down. He was down. I haven't seen him like that. So hopefully it's nothing serious, [hopefully] it's something that he just got scared, but we'll know more tomorrow.”

Pedroia felt discomfort when he hit a foul ball in his only at-bat of the night.

“In the first swing of that at-bat, that one he fouled off to right field, he felt something weird in his knee,” said Cora. “He finished the at-bat, he came up to me and was like, ‘Hey, it didn't feel right there.’ I decided to take him out. He'll see the doctor tomorrow, see where we're at.”

Pedroia left the ballpark before speaking to reporters. This was because, in addition to his latest knee woes, he was feeling ill. Several Red Sox players have been dealing with the flu in recent weeks.

“That's going around right now,” Cora said. “That's why he took off. It's not like he's hiding.”

Pedroia is coming off a major left knee injury that sidelined him for all but three games last season. The left knee was also a major hindrance for him in 2017, when he was limited to 105 games.

Boston still has Pedroia under contract for three more seasons, including this one, and owes him \$40 million over that span.

After a productive offseason, Pedroia hoped he had finally turned a corner. He passed every test the Red Sox gave him in Spring Training and in a three-game Minor League rehab assignment to start the season.

Pedroia made his debut for Boston in the home opener on April 9. He also started at second base on Thursday and Saturday. The Red Sox had Pedroia DH on Sunday and Monday, and he was not in the lineup for Tuesday's series opener at Yankee Stadium.

The club had been basing Pedroia's playing time on a maintenance plan in which he could build back up from all the time he missed.

Pedroia is 2-for-20 at the plate, but he has made a few stellar plays in the field. Now his knee has once again left him in limbo.

"That's definitely something tough," said Red Sox right fielder Mookie Betts. "He's worked so hard to make it back to where he is and hopefully it's nothing too serious."

Unless Wednesday's situation winds up being a false alarm, Boston is all but sure to have to call up a second baseman in time for the weekend series at Tampa Bay that begins Friday.

The Red Sox have Eduardo Nunez available, but he's been dealing with tightness in his back. Brock Holt, the team's other option at second base, is on the injured list with a scratched cornea in his right eye. In fact, Holt didn't feel great in the first game of his Minor League rehab assignment on Tuesday and didn't play on Wednesday. Cora said he wouldn't be ready for this weekend.

Tzu-Wei Lin is a likely candidate to be called up. The Red Sox could also make a bolder move and promote No. 1 prospect Michael Chavis, who has been getting some work at second base for Triple-A Pawtucket.

Cora admitted he expected the club would have to bring in a reinforcement by Friday.

"Hopefully, I'm wrong on this one and tomorrow he flies to Tampa and is ready to go," said Cora. "But it looks that way."

### **Red Sox expect Benintendi to return Friday**

Ian Browne

NEW YORK -- In what looms as an important weekend series against the American League East-leading Rays, the Red Sox hope that the return of left fielder Andrew Benintendi can give the lineup a boost, starting with Friday night's game at Tropicana Field.

Benintendi fouled a ball hard off his right foot on Sunday against the Orioles, sustaining a contusion.

Wednesday marked the third straight game the left-handed hitter was out of the lineup.

The timing of the injury couldn't have been worse, because Benintendi was in the midst of a nice hot streak, slashing .394/.459/.606 over his last 38 plate appearances.

The Red Sox struggled in their first two games Benintendi missed, generating a total of one run in losses to the Orioles and Yankees.

"If everything goes well, he should be back on Friday," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "We still can use him today [off the bench], but two more days [including Thursday's off-day] would be good."

**Betts staying up top**

With Benintendi out of the lineup, the struggling Mookie Betts has been hitting leadoff. When Benintendi returns, Betts will again bat second. Cora has no plans to move his best player down in the order during a slump.

"Hit him eighth? No, I'm not hitting him eighth," quipped Cora. "He's just searching right now. We'll keep staying with what we think is going to help and is going to make us a good offensive club, but I don't think it's the order -- leading off, hitting second, hitting third. I don't think it matters. I think it's just him trying to find his swing and I do feel like he's getting closer."

Cora thinks Sale is 'that close'

Now that Chris Sale has regained the velocity on his fastball and the depth of his slider, Cora thinks his ace is at last ready for takeoff.

It has been a difficult start to the season for the lefty, who is 0-4 with an 8.50 ERA.

Sale will get his next chance on Monday night at Fenway Park against the Tigers. After Tuesday's loss to the Yankees, Sale went off on himself, saying that he is embarrassing his family, the team and the city of Boston.

"I read the quotes. I laughed," said Cora. "Because I talked to him after the game yesterday and I do feel he's that close. I think we went from getting the velocity back, getting the slider back. Now yesterday, [he] missed location. If you take a look at the game, there were some fastballs that were mislocated. So now that I think all the ingredients are there, maybe the next one is the one that we take off. And I do feel that he's that close.

"One thing about my players, our players, the organization, I like them to be genuine, transparent and responsible. And if he feels he stinks, hey, he's honest."

## **\* ESPN.com**

### **For scuffling Red Sox, it's getting late early**

Joon Lee

NEW YORK -- For at least a moment, for at least one night, things seemed to be coming together for the Boston Red Sox. With postseason hero Nathan Eovaldi rolling and the offense tallying three runs in the first two innings, the Red Sox looked more like the world champions crowned just 171 days ago. They looked like a team beginning to emerge out of their early-season struggles.

But that hasn't been the story of the 2019 Boston Red Sox. The 2019 Boston Red Sox rank 18th in baseball in total offense. The 2019 Boston Red Sox rank 30th in baseball in team ERA. The back end of the bullpen has been the one area where they could depend on consistency. Relievers Ryan Brasier and Matt Barnes have been among the team's few bright spots in the early weeks of the season, giving up just a run each in 14 combined innings going into Wednesday's game.

For the 2019 Boston Red Sox, it only makes sense on a night when the offense and starting pitching showed flashes that the bullpen fell short of executing to preserve the victory, falling 5-3 to the rival New York Yankees, who celebrated with a fog machine in their clubhouse, an act reserved for big victories.

First to worst

Through 19 games, the Red Sox (6-13) have the worst run differential ever for a defending World Series champion.

2019	Red Sox	-42
1988	Twins	-37
1998	Marlins	-32
1984	Orioles	-25
1940	Yankees	-21

Source: Elias Sports Bureau

"Right now, the results aren't there," manager Alex Cora said. "Like I've said all along, we have to get better. Today, we did a good job early in the game offensively, but we didn't finish them off and [Yankees starter J.A. Happ] was able to go deep into the game. We have to get better in all aspects."

This has been the story of the 2019 Boston Red Sox. At least so far.

The Yankees' comeback occurred in the seventh inning, with Eovaldi fresh out of the game. Cora called upon reliever Brandon Workman, who promptly allowed a Clint Frazier single before walking Mike Tauchman, striking out Gio Urshela and tossing another four balls to Austin Romine, loading the bases.

"We were in a position to win one today," Workman said. "I came in and loaded the bases, got one out, so it's definitely difficult to swallow that."

Brasier came coasting out of the Red Sox bullpen, quickly working the count to 0-2 on Brett Gardner. In an attempt to get the Yankees outfielder to chase strike three, Red Sox catcher Christian Vazquez called for a fastball up. The 96.7 mph fastball didn't stay up enough, crossing the heart of the plate, and Gardner deposited a screaming liner over the right-field wall.

"We still gotta finish games, and we didn't," Cora said. "It takes everybody to get out of this, and in the seventh inning, too much traffic in that inning. We didn't do a good job."

The go-ahead grand slam from Gardner punctuated an evening that had seemed to be turning in Boston's favor. When Eovaldi left the game after cruising through six innings, allowing three hits, one run, one walk and striking out six, Boston had a 77.7 percent win probability, according to FanGraphs. For a moment, it looked like the Red Sox might escape New York with a two-game series split. Instead, Boston sits alone, at the bottom of the American League East standings, 8½ games behind the first-place Tampa Bay Rays.

"It doesn't matter if we're 8½, 7½, 6½ games back, we gotta play better," Cora said. "We haven't done it consistently."

An off day comes for Boston on Thursday, but the Red Sox's trip down to Tampa will mark a true test for them, whether they can pull themselves out of a start that can only be labeled as the worst possible outcome, on all fronts. After Wednesday's contest, Cora didn't mince words when underscoring the team's urgency to win the next series.

"We have to go down and win the series," Cora said. "You win two out of three or you sweep them. We haven't done it yet, so it would be a good time to do that in Tampa."

But for the Red Sox, to paraphrase Yankees legend Yogi Berra, it's getting late early.

### **Sox's Pedroia has more knee woes, set for tests**

Joon Lee

NEW YORK -- Boston Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia left Wednesday night's game against the New York Yankees after his first at-bat with left knee discomfort.

Manager Alex Cora said after the Red Sox's 5-3 loss that Pedroia had approached him and told him that he felt "something weird" in his surgically repaired knee. Pedroia will stay in New York and be evaluated by a doctor Thursday.

"For him to come up to me and tell me how he felt, obviously, I know a lot of people think he's going to push and push and push and not be smart about it; well, he understands where he's at and how he felt," Cora said. "I gotta do what I have to do to take care of the player. I was surprised he came up to me and told me that."

Cora said the team likely will need help at second base with Pedroia's injury, although a roster move was not announced after the game. Infielder Tzu-Wei Lin, who has served as organizational depth the past two seasons, appears to be the logical choice to come up from Triple-A should Pedroia, 35, hit the injured list.

Pedroia, who has had issues with the knee since 2017 and missed all but three games during the 2018 season, made his 2019 debut in the team's home opener last week. The longtime fan favorite is just 2-for-20 so far, starting his first three games at second base and two games at designated hitter. He was playing second Wednesday night and was replaced by Eduardo Nunez.

Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski had said Tuesday that Pedroia was exactly where he expected to be offensively and that his three rehab games for Class A Greenville sufficed.

"He felt he was ready to go," Dombrowski said. "To stretch this out over a lengthy period, it would take a long time period to get through the whole time.

"He's not going to be ready to play -- which we've said all along -- every day for a lengthy period. So we're willing to deal with the situation."

After spending 2017 playing through left knee discomfort, Pedroia underwent a cartilage restoration procedure. He told reporters at spring training this year that if he could do it all over again, he would not have had the surgery, which ended up sidelining him for most of 2018.

"I don't regret doing it, but looking back and [knowing] what I know now, I wouldn't have done it," Pedroia said in March.

Pedroia's health struggles have put the Red Sox in a tight position, including having to use catcher Christian Vazquez at second. Vazquez, who totaled 4 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings at the position for Greenville back in 2010, did not own an infielder's glove.

## **\* *WEEI.com***

### **Why does everything seem so remarkably difficult for these Red Sox?**

Rob Bradford

As Nathan Eovaldi was cruising to the Yankees' lineup Wednesday night it struck me.

No, it wasn't a sense of that all was suddenly right with the Red Sox' world with a starting pitcher actually living up to expectations. The feeling I couldn't shake was how mind-numbingly difficult it seemed to carry a 3-1 lead into the seventh inning against a lineup made up mostly of Triple-A players.

As easy as those 108 wins felt a year ago, every little step forward for this six-win team comes with the difficulty of a tractor pull.

And, sure enough, the mud only got thicker after Eovaldi exited.

Brandon Workman loads the bases with a bunch of cutters that can't find the plate and then comes Ryan Brasier. Two breaking balls to a sub-.200 hitter in Brett Gardner allowed for a coveted 0-2 count. This, by the way, is where the 2018 Red Sox mark their territory by laughing in the face of a failed rally. This time? Nope. Brasier grooves a fastball right down the middle of the plate, resulting in a game-changing grand slam.

Never did it seem so difficult to throw a four-seam fastball at the letters. Bizarre.

Then there was the following inning when the Red Sox loaded the bases thanks to two-out singles from J.D. Martinez and Steve Pearce, followed by an Adam Ottavino walk to Mitch Moreland. The 2018 Red Sox? Take at least one pitch and ultimately land with a run-scoring hit. This time around it was Eduardo Nunez lunging at Ottavino's first offering, a slider well off the plate and below the knees, ending the inning and threat.

Truth be told, even to get to that point before Nunez's pop-out to right field seemed improbable. That's probably because a good chunk of the players being counted on to actually supply the kind of offense they have delivered in the past are lost. Jackie Bradley Jr. (.148), Mookie Betts (.200), Steve Pearce (.125), Christian Vazquez (.200) and Nunez (.159) all currently stride the plate looking like players hoping for positive results instead of hitters who are ready to put the opposition on their heels.

And when you take away some semblance of offensive ability in Blake Swihart and replace him with one of the worst hitters in baseball, Sandy Leon, on the 25-man roster it doesn't help matters. Knowing the catcher was the only available bat on the Sox' bench at game's end only adds to that feeling of swimming upstream.

That brings us back to Eovaldi.

I guess there should be some cause for celebration from the Red Sox side of things that a starting pitcher managed to turn in this kind of outing. But it honestly felt like this was the same level of difficulty that might come with a complete game shutout, not 18 outs.

(By the way, there have been 19 starts by Red Sox pitchers. Just two times have any of the starters notched an out in the seventh inning.)

Every pitch is agonized over. Each ball put in play has this team seemingly holding their collective breath. Nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing, is coming easy. Christian Vazquez hits a home run? You're waiting for the umpires to rule he didn't touch second base. Double play grounder? The end result seems so uncertain. Deep fly ball? Wherever it lands it doesn't feel like it will be to the Red Sox' liking.

When you have a run-differential of minus-42 after 19 games -- as USA Today's Bob Nightengale points out a spread never seen before after this many games from a World Series champ -- this feeling of dread is going to be a staple. But what makes the whole image so baffling is that these exact same players represented the exact opposite just six months before.

Maybe the Red Sox will remember how easy this game used to be for them to play this weekend. Unfortunately for Cora and Co., their reminder might be coming courtesy the team they now find themselves 8 1/2 games in back of, the Tampa Bay Rays.

Boy, things have changed.

### **Where things stand with Dustin Pedroia's knee, Red Sox second base position**

Rob Bradford

Perhaps this is a hiccup. Maybe it is just part of an unpredictable process.

But when it comes to Dustin Pedroia exiting Wednesday night's game against the Yankees in the second inning due to soreness in his left knee what is undeniable is this should be of some concern for the second baseman. For the first time since kicking off this latest comeback -- which really took root in January when he started his running program -- a curveball has come his way. When you're dealing with something along the lines of this injury, after already going through a year of inadequate medical solutions, you can't have a whole lot of these sort of surprises.

The next step is for Pedroia to have a doctor in New York examine his knee Thursday, although the physician who performed the surgery, Dr. Riley Williams, doesn't appear to be in the picture anymore.

After the Red Sox' 5-3 loss to the Yankees Pedroia was unavailable for comment due to an illness, but the tone struck by Red Sox manager Alex Cora seemed somewhat ominous.



"We'll see," Cora said. "For him to come up to me and tell me how he felt, obviously I know a lot of people think he's going to push and push and push and not be smart about it, but he understands where he's at and how he felt. I've got to do what I've got to do to take care of the player. I was surprised that he came up to me and told me that, but at least he was honest. We'll see. We'll see what happens. I really don't know. He was a little bit down. He was down. I haven't seen him like that. So, hopefully, it's nothing serious, it's something that he just got scared, but we'll know more tomorrow."

There has been some obvious uncertainty when it comes to Pedroia's knee, most notably the twists and turns that took place last season. (For more on Pedroia's uncomfortable 2018 season, [click here](#).)

Pedroia's spring training did progress as well as could be expected, and by the time he began his minor-league rehab assignment in Greenville there was some optimism. After four games in Single-A the second baseman rejoined the Red Sox for the home opener, ultimately starting in six games, two of which were as a designated hitter.

Then came Wednesday when he felt something in the knee during a swing during his first at-bat, ultimately flying out to right field. That's when he approached Cora.

Taking Pedroia's place at second base was Eduardo Nunez, who was supposed to be getting the day off due to an ailing back. Brock Holt continues his rehab assignment with Triple-A Pawtucket where he experienced a setback in his recovery from a scratched eye, delaying his return to the big league club.

The combination of players to man second base for the Red Sox have totaled a major league-worst .136 batting average and .152 OPS.

The likely short-term solution is Tzu-Wei Lin, who impressed in spring training and has gotten off to a solid start with Triple-A Pawtucket, going 5-for-9 in his last two games. Top prospect Michael Chavis has shown good power (4 homers .250 batting average, .954 OPS), but is still acclimating himself to playing the second base position.

## **\* *NBC Sports Boston***

### **It's time to admit the obvious - Dustin Pedroia looks like he's finished**

John Tomase

NEW YORK -- The reeling Red Sox lost in horrible fashion again on Wednesday, Ryan Brasier surrendering a go-ahead grand slam to Brett Gardner in a 5-3 loss that leaves them a staggering 8.5 games behind the Rays in the AL East.

But let us take a break from our nightly bash-fest to focus on the inevitable, melancholy turn the game took in the second inning and what it means in the big picture for one of the most storied figures of our post-2004 renaissance.

Second baseman Dustin Pedroia flied out to right to drop his average to .100 and then did not take the field. The Red Sox removed him because of soreness in his surgically repaired left knee, puncturing the myth perhaps once and for all that he will be a meaningful contributor this season. If ever.

After appearing in just three games last season, Pedroia lasted six this time around, and though no one's closing the door on his return, it's time to face reality.

The surgery didn't work. Pedroia's career might effectively be over.

Given the fearlessness with which he played in his heyday and the serious injuries he overcame -- including dings and dents to his hands and wrists, the lifeblood of any hitter -- it's amazing he lasted as long as he did.

From Rookie of the Year to MVP to World Series champion, all within two years, Pedroia, who turns 36 in August, is destined to occupy a space near Nomar Garciaparra in franchise lore as the superstar whose flame burned at an intensity his body simply could not endure.

A three-time All-Star, an MVP and a Gold Glove by age 26, Pedroia has made just one All-Star team in the eight years since, a streak that will soon reach nine. He gutted through a thumb injury to lead the American League in plate appearances in the world championship 2013 campaign, and three years later he delivered his last great season, hitting .318 and scoring 105 runs before undergoing offseason knee surgery.

The Red Sox seemed willfully blind to his limitations this winter in ways that even Pedroia himself was not, unrealistically banking on him to play 125 or 130 games when it was clear to anyone with two eyes that Pedroia's cartilage restoration procedure had left him diminished.

It's certainly not Pedroia's fault that the front office chose not to sign a backup second baseman, counting instead on the duo of Brock Holt and Eduardo Nunez. But with Holt (scratched cornea) on the injured list and the perpetually creaky Nunez hitting just .159 while battling a sore back, second base suddenly resembles that grainy orange image of a black hole NASA just released.

The Red Sox should've been able to see this coming, given the experimental nature of Pedroia's surgery, the fact that it limited him to three games last year, and the similar struggle to stay healthy befalling knuckleballer Steven Wright, who also underwent the procedure.

But they didn't, and so here we were, watching Pedroia shuttle between DH and the field, unable to play his position with any regularity. His exit from a game under circumstances exactly like Wednesday's was coming sooner rather than later, and everyone knew it, including deep down I'm sure, Pedroia.

And so, he will undoubtedly do everything in his power to return yet again, it's not too soon to start viewing him like Pedro Martinez or David Ortiz, Red Sox greats whose careers reside in the past tense.

While some will argue Pedroia never should've been offered an eight-year contract through 2021, given his size and injury history, it's not like he didn't earn every penny of his relatively modest (these things are relative) \$110 million extension.

He took some heat for signing that deal in the middle of the 2013 season, because it was considered below market for an All-Star in his prime. But Pedroia had a ready-made retort anytime anyone broached the subject.

"Are you kidding me?" he once told me. "I'm rich as f--."

Those of us who got to watch the Laser Show in his prime every day from 2007-2013 considered it a privilege. Watching him leave the game on Wednesday with a grimace is no way for his career to end, but if we're being honest with ourselves, it's hard to envision a Red Sox future that includes him.

### **And it's Ryan Brasier's turn to spin the wheel of despair in another awful Red Sox loss**

John Tomase

NEW YORK -- Ryan Brasier had Brett Gardner right where he wanted him, and then all he could do was turn around and grimace.

Summoned with the bases loaded and the Red Sox clinging to a 3-1 lead in the seventh inning of what felt like a must-win game on Wednesday, Brasier raced to an 0-2 count on the slumping Yankees veteran with a pair of sliders before deciding to come back with a fastball.

In his 12-year career, Gardner had homered just twice on 0-2 counts. This time, though, he lashed Brasier's fat 96 mph offering over the right fence for a game-breaking grand slam that rallied the Yankees to a 5-3 victory that leaves the Red Sox once again wondering what hit them.

If it's not the starting pitching, it's the offense. If it's not the offense, it's the bullpen. If it's not the bullpen, it's the defense.

It's always something, and on Wednesday it was Brasier.

"Had a plan to go after him, got him right where I wanted to get him, and I didn't execute a pitch," said Brasier, who joined fellow reliever Brandon Workman in wasting an excellent start from Nathan Eovaldi. "Nate did a hell of a job tonight. Bullpen guys, it's our job to come in and get outs and hold the lead and I made a bad pitch on a good count for me and it bit me in the butt."

The Red Sox have no strengths so far this year, but the back of the bullpen had kind of been one of them. Brasier entered the game with three saves and a 1.17 ERA in eight outings, pairing with Matt Barnes (1.42 ERA, 17.1 K/9) to give the Red Sox some stability in the final innings, not that the Red Sox have found themselves protecting too many leads.

But it's one of the stories of this season that the reliable can suddenly become unreliable at the worst moments.

"We've still got to finish off games," said manager Alex Cora. "We didn't. it takes everybody to get out of this. Today, in the seventh inning, we didn't do a good job."

## **\* *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

### **Nightmare season continues with lost lead and injury in New York**

Sean McAdam

Remember last April, when everything went right and the Red Sox almost couldn't lose?

That's history now, and this April (and late March, for that matter) are very far removed from that idyllic start. At this point, this isn't a baseball season anymore. It's more like a three-week Murphy's Law come to life.

You name it, and it will go wrong — or already has — for the Red Sox.

When they hit, they don't pitch. When they pitch, they don't hit. And then there are games like Wednesday night, where a little bit of everything seems to go wrong. Just when it seemed the Red Sox were starting to get their rotation in order, another critical part of their game came unglued.

Nathan Eovaldi delivered the third quality start for the Red Sox rotation in the last five games, following soon after Eduardo Rodriguez (Friday) and David Price (Sunday). Eovaldi gave the Sox six strong innings, allowing a solo run on just three hits. Finally, there was reason to believe the starting rotation — a perceived strength, around which the roster was constructed — was, however belatedly, rounding into form.

Unlike his first three starts, he exhibited good control, issuing just one walk. When he left, the Sox were firmly in control, 3-1.

But the following inning, things spiraled downward quickly. Brandon Workman allowed a leadoff single, then walked two of the next three hitters he faced. In came Ryan Brasier, who had been unscored upon in

seven of his first eight appearances this season as one of Alex Cora's two most trusted high-leverage relievers.

Things began well enough when Brasier threw two hellacious sliders to get ahead of Brett Gardner. But on an 0-and-2 count, Brasier threw a fastball over the middle of the plate that Gardner swatted into the seats in right for a grand slam, turning a two-run Red Sox lead into a two-run deficit.

"We tried to go up in the zone and it wasn't up enough," Cora told reporters. "It was kind of like right in his swing path. But before that, we walked two guys and in any ballpark, but especially here, we've got to avoid traffic there and we didn't do a good job in that inning and we paid the price."

"Had a plan to go after him, got him right where I wanted to get him and didn't execute a pitch," confessed Brasier.

It was the first blown save of the season for the Red Sox bullpen, and the timing couldn't have been worse. Just when the Sox were getting a few strong performances from the rotation, the back end sprung a costly leak.

A win would have at least given the Red Sox a split of the series and a chance to regroup with Thursday's off-day before their weekend set with the Tampa Bay Rays. Instead, the Sox are stuck with a demoralizing loss, having allowed what looked like a big win slip away with eight outs to go.

Those kinds of defeats can stick with a team under ordinary circumstances, but the Red Sox have other issues on their mind.

For now, they don't have a healthy second baseman and there are new doubts about Dustin Pedroia's future after the veteran infielder asked out of the game in the second inning after experiencing "something weird" on a swing in his first and only at-bat of the night.

Out came Pedroia, and in went Eduardo Nunez, who has battled a bad back. But playing with just three position players on the bench, the Sox had no other alternatives.

"He was down," acknowledged Cora of Pedroia. "I haven't seen him like that. Hopefully, it's nothing serious and something where he just got scared. We'll know more tomorrow."

With Brock Holt (scratched cornea) on a rehab assignment, the Sox are likely to place Pedroia in the injured list and call up Tzu-Wei Lin for Friday.

It's too soon to jump to conclusion on Pedroia, who will stay behind in New York and visit with a doctor Thursday. But this feels ominous, to say the least, and eerily reminiscent of last May, when, after joining the Sox following a rehab assignment, Pedroia played three games, got scratched from the lineup in Houston and was placed on the DL.

Pedroia maintained at the time that he was merely dealing with some loose scar tissue and that he'd back quickly. He never played another game last season.

The Sox went on to win a franchise-record 108 games and the World Series without Pedroia, so it can't be said that he's indispensable. But clearly, they're better off with a healthy Pedroia at second, and for the foreseeable future, they won't have that.

Maybe Pedroia's recovery won't be long. Maybe the bullpen will overcome a bad night and resume pitching well in high-leverage spots. And maybe the rotation's improvement will continue.

But for now, you'd be hard-pressed to find many positives associated with this team. It's as if they're being given some karmic payback for the way things began a year ago.

## **BSJ Game Report: Yankees 5, Red Sox 3 – Bullpen collapse sends Sox to third straight loss**

Sean McAdam

Bullpen finally costs Sox: Through the first 18 games, the Red Sox' bullpen — identified as a potential weakness in the spring — performed far better than expected. But that changed in dramatic fashion Wednesday when the Sox saw a 3-1 lead in the seventh very quickly turn into a 5-3 deficit. Brandon Workman started the trouble by walking two around a base hit, filling the bases with one out. In came Ryan Brasier, who got ahead of Brett Gardner 0-2 with two quick sliders. But then, inexplicably, Brasier threw a fastball — over the heart of the plate, no less — and Gardner drove it into the seats in right for a grand slam. It marked the first blown save of the season for the Red Sox bullpen.

Eovaldi deserved better: Following in the footsteps of strong starts from Eduardo Rodriguez (last Friday) and David Price (Saturday), Nathan Eovaldi had his best start of the season, limiting the Yankees to a single run on just three hits over six innings. From the beginning, Eovaldi flashed a good fastball, frequently hitting 98-99 mph in the first inning and deftly mixed in his cutter, curveball and split-finger fastball. Eovaldi showed precise control, too. After issuing 10 walks in his first 15 innings — some atypical wildness on his part — he walked just one batter Wednesday while striking out six. Eovaldi finished well, too, retiring the final eight hitters he faced, including three by strikeout. In the fourth, he got himself out of a jam, with runners at second and third and one out, fanning Mike Tauchman and getting Gio Uershela on a grounder to first.

Pedroia exits: It can't be good news that Dustin Pedroia came out of the game after an inning and a half Wednesday night. Pedroia, who was the second baseman in the starting lineup, had one at-bat — an innocuous flyout to right that saw him jogs two-thirds of the way down the first base line as the ball was caught, then turn around and head to the dugout. But when the Sox took the field in the bottom of the inning, Pedroia was out and Eduardo Nunez was at second. Later, the Red Sox announced that Pedroia had come out of the game because of "discomfort" in his surgically-repaired left knee. He told Alex Cora that he felt "something weird" in the knee after the at-bat and will visit with a doctor Thursday in New York. The Sox had been managing Pedroia carefully in the early going. He was used as the DH Sunday and Monday to reduce wear-and-tear on the knee, then was given the day off entirely when the series opened Tuesday. The fact that he had to come out after a half inning in the field and one at-bat raises all sorts of flags about his future — both the short-term and long-term. Perhaps this is just a temporary setback. But remember, Pedroia played just three games last year before going on the DL, all the while maintaining that he would be back relatively soon. He never played another game.

### **TURNING POINT**

In the eighth inning, the Red Sox had a chance to counter what the Yankees had done in the seventh. With two outs, the Sox managed to load the bases against Adam Ottavino. But Nunez, being overly aggressive, went after the first pitch and flied to right, stranding three baserunners. The Sox were done.

### **TWO UP**

Christian Vazquez: Vazquez gave the Red Sox an early 3-0 lead in the second when he hit a pitch out to the opposite field for his third homer of the season.

J.D. Martinez: Martinez continues to be the most consistent force in the lineup, with a homer in the first, a walk in the sixth and a single in the eighth. He's hit safely in 18 of the 19 games.

### **TWO DOWN**

Mookie Betts: Betts was again missing in action in the offense, going 0-for-4 at the top of the lineup, making him 3 for 32.

Jackie Bradley Jr.: Bradley's struggles at the plate continue with an 0-for-4 night at the bottom of the order, including two strikeouts.

#### STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

Gardner became the fourth Yankee to hit a grand slam for his 100th career homer.  
Until Wednesday, the Red Sox were one of two AL teams without a blown save. The Angels were the other.  
Martinez has reached base safely in all 19 games.  
The Sox managed just four hits after the third inning and three never left the infield.  
Boston was 0-for-3 with runners in scoring position.

#### QUOTE OF NOTE

"We were in position to win one today and I came in and loaded the bases and got one out, so it's definitely to swallow that." — Brandon Workman.

#### UP NEXT

After an off-day on the schedule, the Red Sox begin a three-game series at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg against the Rays. It will be LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (1-2, 7.98) for the Red Sox at 7:10 p.m.

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

### **In an April when nothing goes right, add the bullpen to list of Red Sox problems**

Jen McCaffrey

NEW YORK – Boston's end-game pairing of Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier haven't had many chances to play the closer's role this season largely because the Red Sox haven't held many late-inning leads.

On Wednesday, an opportunity presented itself against the Yankees and manager Alex Cora turned to Brasier in a high-leverage spot with the bases loaded in the seventh. But Brasier didn't get the job done, serving up a grand slam to Brett Gardner — one that turned a 3-1 Red Sox lead into a 5-3 deficit en route to another loss.

The Red Sox fell to 6-13 through 19 games, a far cry from their historic 17-2 record through the same number of games a year ago.

Until now, the back end of the bullpen has been one of the few areas that hasn't been an issue for this team; the problems have generally come earlier, with the starting pitching or the middle relief. Against New York, however, Nathan Eovaldi gave the Red Sox as strong a start as they've had from any member of the rotation this season, allowing just an unearned run on three hits and a walk over six innings. But then Brandon Workman, who had allowed just one hit in eight scoreless appearances this season, loaded the bases with one out in the seventh before Cora turned to Brasier.

Why Brasier? To this point in the season, Barnes had gotten the bigger spots. He'd picked up their only save opportunity of the year and had pitched when the team was ahead by one or tied in four of his six outings. Brasier had pitched in such situations (ahead by one or tied) in four of eight outings thus far.

"We felt that was a matchup," Cora said of using Brasier against Gardner. "We recognized it before the series — top of the order, Gardner, (Aaron) Judge, we felt his fastball could play there, the slider. So we decided to go with that one."

A quick glance at the numbers doesn't favor Brasier in that spot. Gardner was 1-for-5 in his career against Barnes while 2-for-3 with a triple against Brasier. But Cora and his staff don't like to use such small sample sizes. Instead, they'd prefer to look at the types of pitches Gardner hits in certain situations.

Brasier relies on a heavy fastball-slider combination. Over the last two seasons, Gardner has hit just .183 in 104 at-bats against right-handed pitchers throwing sliders, according to BrooksBaseball.net. Brasier's first two pitches to Gardner were sliders that Gardner took for a called strike then fouled off. But then Brasier tried to come up with a fastball and Gardner knocked it out of the park.

"Gardner did a good job staying with that pitch," Cora said. "It kind of was right in his swing path. He hit the grand slam. Before that, we walked two guys, in any ballpark but especially here, you've got to avoid traffic there. We didn't do a good job in that inning and we paid the price."

Gardner was hitting just .200 (12-for-60) entering Wednesday's game, so while Brasier didn't have much room to work with considering the bases were loaded, he likely thought he could get the fastball by without harm. The missed location left the ball right over the plate for Gardner.

"(Brasier's) ability to run some balls in on some guys, that's one of his strengths being right-on-right and I thought (that would be) important," pitching coach Dana LeVangie said. "Not that Barnesy doesn't do it but he has a different approach so that was one of the reasons with Judge and those guys coming up."

After the grand slam, Brasier got Judge to strike out looking and Luke Voit swinging, but the damage was already done.

"We just try to put our guys in the best situations to have success and it didn't work out," LeVangie said. "It doesn't mean we're not going to do it again. We have those two guys at the back end to, one be the closer and one to put out that big fire when that top of the order is coming up, so we'll try and work on matchups."

The Red Sox entered the game as one of two teams without a blown save on the season. It had been one bad stat they'd managed to avoid thus far, but Workman's rough night set up Brasier for their first blown save of the season.

After Thursday's off day, the Red Sox will play 20 straight without a break. Not much has gone right through the first 19, and the Red Sox sit 8.5 games out of first place already. More of the same over the next 20 might prove too deep a hole to dig out of.

## **\* *The New York Daily News***

### **Gardner crushes grand slam to right field as Yankees sweep Red Sox**

Kristie Ackert

When the Yankees decided to buy out his contract last fall, Brett Gardner just wanted to find a way back. He'd never played with another team and didn't want to try. So the 35-year-old agreed to a one-year deal for less money to play what the Yankees expected to be a lesser role this season.

But in a young season that has been shaped by injuries, Gardner has been forced into a bigger role. Wednesday, he played a huge part in what could be a defining win for the Yankees. His seventh-inning grand slam gave the Bombers a come-from-behind 5-3 win over the Red Sox at the Stadium.

"It was a big feeling," Gardner said. "Obviously the season really hasn't gotten off to the start that I would have liked or envisioned for myself and for the team. (But) to be able to come through in a big spot like that, in a big game for the middle of April, it felt good."

“Overall, I thought we played a pretty good game. J.A. did a great job of settling in after the second inning, putting up zeroes and giving us a chance to come back. Guys did a good job of stringing at-bats together and getting on base.”

That’s the role the Yankees envisioned for him this year: clubhouse leader to a group of talented but young players. Wednesday he also had to play the role of game hero too.

After Nathan Eovaldi held the Yankees to one run in six innings, Brandon Workman, who relieved Eovaldi at the start of the seventh, loaded the bases with a single and two walks. He exited having recorded just one out. Workman’s replacement, Ryan Brasier, promptly gave up the go-ahead home run to Gardner.

The home run, a shot to right field in the seventh inning, was the 100th home run of the 35-year-old’s career. It was his fourth career grand slam and his first since June 30, 2017.

After he rounded the bases, one of his biggest cheerleaders was waiting for him. The 5-foot-11 Gardner had to leap, to give the 6-foot-7 Aaron Judge, a proper fist bump.

“Bases loaded against Boston, he was just waiting for the right time,” Judge said of Gardner getting his 100th home run. “That was a special moment, a special swing. Over the years, you guys saw it when we played Cleveland in the ALDS, he came up so many times for us in that and other series.

“It’s who you want at the plate in a big situation like that.”

Actually, Gardner went into Wednesday night’s game hitting .200/.304/.400 with three home runs and four RBI, so most people would have preferred to have Judge in that spot. The young player’s words, however, tell you how well Gardner plays that most important role of clubhouse leader and mentor to a young team.

“I think it matters. It’s an asset that we take advantage of,” Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. “His presence in that room means a lot and his experience that he shares with guys rubs off on other guys, the way he communicates and talks in the course of a game are all things that guys who are here for the first time, young players coming up benefit from. There’s no question.”

After Tuesday night’s win, Gardner gathered the young team to remind them that despite their injuries and struggles there are still big wins to be had. Wednesday night, the Yankees let loose. They celebrated J.A. Happ overcoming a rough start -- allowing two homers and three runs in the first three innings -- to get through seven and Gardner’s big blow.

The strobe lights and a fog machine in the clubhouse were put on high as they relished a win over their division rivals, the team that ended their 2018 season.

“It was a nice feeling. It was good. We deserved the fog because we won a hard game out there,” said Clint Frazier, whose RBI-double was the only run the Yankees scored off Nate Eovaldi. “That was a good game. Everybody played a part in it in some way and it’s huge to beat the Red Sox right now.”

## **\* *The New York Post***

**Brett Gardner couldn’t have drawn up this milestone blast any better**

Ken Davidoff

Did Yankee Stadium play host to another notable milestone on Wednesday night?

The best career 100th home run ever?



Who can even remember when others reached such a modest round number? Coming off the veteran bat of Brett Gardner, though, amidst baseball's greatest rivalry, it couldn't have felt much more grandiose.

"Yeah, it was a big feeling," Gardner acknowledged after No. 100, a seventh-inning grand slam off Boston's Ryan Brasier, catapulted the Yankees to a 5-3 victory over — and a series sweep of — the defending champions.

"Hoo, that was big," Aaron Boone echoed.

Big, in that it wiped out six innings' worth of frustration as the Yankees flailed against old pal Nathan Eovaldi. Big, in that it rewarded the home team for withdrawing 104 pitches out of Eovaldi in only six innings, thereby getting to the gargantuan Achilles' heel that is the Red Sox's bullpen. Big, in that it dropped the Red Sox to a stunningly bad 6-13.

And big, in that Gardner, the revered team leader who agreed to a pay cut in order to remain a Yankees in 2019, delivered one of the most dramatic hits of his long career.

"That's why I'm 35 and it took me this long to get to 100," said Gardner, who now has a .203/.301/.438 slash line on the season. "I never could have envisioned playing this long and hitting this many. Obviously I'm not a home-run hitter. I've just been very fortunate to be able to stay healthy and be surrounded by a lot of great teammates, a lot of great coaches to continue my game and work on my approach at the plate as I get older."

Man, did the Yankees need that vintage Gardner, as it would have been quite the buzzkill to follow Tuesday night's 8-0 rout with a loss.

Starting pitcher J.A. Happ hung in there after a tough beginning and provided his best start of the season, and Tommy Kahnle relieved Happ in the seventh and escaped a jam to keep the Yankees' deficit at 3-1. Then the Red Sox lifted Eovaldi for Brandon Workman, who promptly served up a single to Clint Frazier, walked Mike Tauchman and, after a Gio Urshela strikeout, walked Austin Romine to load the bases.

In came Brasier to go after Gardner, who hadn't notched a hit with the bases jammed since 2017 and who fell into an 0-and-2 hole. Then he smoked the third pitch, a 97 mph, navel-high fastball, over the right-field wall.

"He went slider, slider [with the first two pitches]," Gardner said.

"I didn't think he'd throw another slider in the zone right there. I thought he might waste a pitch. But I don't know if he was trying to come up and in with the heater, but I don't think that's where he was trying to put it. Thank goodness, I was ready for it."

He conducted his postgame interview holding the milestone ball in his right hand, having completed a transaction with the young fan, "Will from Greenwich," who swapped it in return for some photos and autographed balls.

"I'm sure my kids will appreciate it," Gardner said. "They'll probably be in the driveway playing catch with it tomorrow."

Often stoic by design, Gardner didn't try to downplay what this one meant for both the team and himself.

"Obviously the season hasn't gotten off to a start that I would have liked for myself or the team," he said. "So to be able to come through in a big spot like that and what was a big game for the middle of April, it felt good."

As for that milestone?

“I told him it’s about time,” said Aaron Judge, who has 87 career homers in 4,170 fewer career plate appearances than Gardner.

Actually, it was the perfect time. And if the Yankees are truly awake now, their myriad injuries be damned, it’ll be remembered like no other century mark of its kind.

## **\* *The USA Today***

### **Brett Gardner's grand slam lifts Yankees past Red Sox**

Pete Caldera

NEW YORK — As he approached first base, Brett Gardner shot his right arm in the air and glanced back toward the Yankees dugout.

His teammates had already rushed to the top step, cheering along with the Yankee Stadium crowd at Gardner’s go-ahead home run in Wednesday night’s seventh inning.

Not just a homer, but a grand slam.

And the 100th homer of Gardner’s career, a blast to right, lifted the Yankees to a 5-3 victory and sunk the Red Sox to another unimaginable depth in this awful April for the defending world champs.

The injury-riddled Yankees (8-9) were stumbling around as well, failing to take advantage of a soft schedule before the Red Sox (6-13) arrived in town for a two-game series.

But lefty James Paxton’s sharp effort on Tuesday and Gardner’s late heroics on Wednesday have suddenly sparked the Yankees.

Now, Aaron Boone’s club has a golden chance to keep that momentum going as the Kansas City Royals – residing in last place in the AL Central – enter the Bronx to play a four-game series beginning on Thursday night.

Gardner party

Red Sox starter Nathan Eovaldi yielded just one unearned run over six innings, but he threw 104 pitches. Brandon Workman began the home seventh, on to protect a 3-1 Boston lead. And the reliever found himself instantly in trouble.

Clint Frazier led off the inning with his third hit of the game and Mike Tauchman – who drove in four runs the previous night, and hit his first career home run – drew a walk.

With one out, No. 9 hitter Austin Romine walked to load the bases and Boston manager Alex Cora brought in Ryan Brasier to face Gardner, the Yanks’ longest-tenured player.

There are no lefties in Cora’s bullpen.

Ahead 0-and-2, Brasier watched his next delivery go screaming into the lower right field seats.

Gardner’s personal milestone homer – also his fourth of the year and fourth career grand slam – gave the Yankees an instant 5-3 lead and set off a Stadium-wide chorus of derisive Boston chants.

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

### **Price knocks MLB for light Jackie Robinson slate**

NEW YORK -- Boston Red Sox pitcher David Price thinks Major League Baseball made a mistake by having just 10 games Monday on Jackie Robinson Day.

"Hey (at)mlb every year on April 15th we celebrate Jackie Robinson Day," Price tweeted Wednesday. "EVERYONE plays on that day next year deal? No one should have an off day let alone 10 teams!!"

African American players dropped from 18 percent of the majors leagues in 1991 to 7.7 percent in 2017, then rose to 8.4 percent in 2018, according to The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at Central Florida. Price, who won the 2012 AL Cy Young Award, thinks more efforts on Jackie Robinson Day are needed.

Jackie Robinson broke the major league color barrier for the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947.

"1/3 of (at)mlb teams had an off day on Jackie Robinson day," tweeted Price, who is black. "I just can't wrap my head around that. We've had a problem for a while and this couldn't make it any more noticeable."

This year, April 15 fell on a Monday. Most teams' scheduled off days are on Mondays and Thursdays.

"In a perfect world, all teams would play on Jackie Robinson Day," Major League Baseball said in a statement. "Unfortunately, there are some scheduling challenges when April 15th falls on a Monday, which is a heavy travel day for clubs. MLB worked with the clubs who were not playing on Monday to ensure that their players would wear 42 and have festivities on Tuesday to celebrate Jackie Robinson Day. While it is not ideal, one benefit is that this extends the celebration and awareness of Jackie Robinson Day over two days and guarantees that every one of our players participates."

Red Sox manager Alex Cora agreed with his player.

"It makes sense to play that day," Cora said. "In my opinion, yes, he's right about that."

### **Gardner slam lifts Yanks over Red Sox 5-3 for 2-game sweep**

NEW YORK -- Brett Gardner smiled through the fog left from a gaudy celebration in the New York Yankees clubhouse, part of the new postgame routine that includes the razzle-dazzle of a smoke machine and strobe lights.

"I think the idea was to play it after we win big games," he said.

This was as big as an April game gets.

Gardner hit a grand slam off Ryan Brasier in the seventh inning for his 100th career home run, and the Yankees rallied to beat the Boston Red Sox 5-3 Wednesday night for a two-game sweep of the reeling World Series champions.

"About time. I think he was just waiting for the right moment," teammate Aaron Judge said with a mischievous grin.

J.D. Martinez hit a first-inning home run off J.A. Happ, just like he did in the AL Division Series opener last October, and Christian Vazquez's two-run homer in the second built a 3-0 lead. The Yankees were on the verge of failing to win any of their first four home series for the first time since 1913, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Clint Frazier started the comeback with an RBI double in the fourth against former Yankee Nathan Eovaldi, and New York loaded the bases in the seventh against Brandon Workman on Frazier's single and walks to Mike Tauchman and Austin Romine.

Brasier got ahead 0-2 as Gardner took a slider and fouled off another. Brasier left a fastball up that Gardner drove 364 feet over the right-field scoreboard.

"It was chaos. The Stadium was rocking. Our dugout was going crazy," Judge said.

Tommy Kahnle (1-0) got two outs for the win, Adam Ottavino retired Eduardo Nunez on a bases-loaded flyout that ended the eighth and Aroldis Chapman got three straight outs for his third save as the Yankees improved to 8-9, including 5-6 at home.

Gardner's hit led to the postgame vapor, technology installed after general manager Brian Cashman had heard about young players on other teams embracing flashier jubilation.

"We kind of need a little kick start," Gardner said. "Obviously, these first couple of weeks we've been dragging."

Frazier had three hits and raised his average to .333 in 45 at-bats with 12 RBI. He proclaimed before spring training he hoped to take away Gardner's job -- some day.

"He's been like a dad at the field for me," the 24-year-old Frazier said. "He's always led me in the right direction. He's let me be myself around him regardless of how ridiculous at times I've acted. So he's a great guy to come in here and be good to the young guys."

Boston dropped to an AL-worst 6-13, the poorest start for a World Series champion since the 1998 Florida Marlins opened 5-14. The Red Sox did not lose their 13th game last year until May 14 and face daunting math: No team has lost 12 or more of its first 18 games and reached the playoffs since the 2002 Anaheim Angels, who won the World Series.

"I made a bad pitch on a good count for me and it bit me in the butt," Brasier said.

Boston dropped eight games behind AL East-leading Tampa Bay.

"We always have a sense of urgency," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "We need to get better in all aspects of the games."

Gardner's home run ball was retrieved in the bleachers by 16-year-old Will Clemens of Greenwich, Connecticut, who traded it for a signed ball, photos with Gardner and a clubhouse tour with his friends.

"It's always good to get a cool memento like this, and it's something that I'm sure that my kids will appreciate," Gardner said. "They'll probably be in the driveway playing catch with it tomorrow. That's all right, too."

#### GLOVE GEM

Boston 1B Steve Pearce saved two runs, diving for a backhand snag of Gio Urshela's two-out chopper with runners on second and third in the fourth, then throwing to Eovaldi covering first.

#### STARTERS

Eovaldi allowed an unearned run and three hits in six innings, while Happ gave up three runs and six hits in 6 1/3 innings. Happ has allowed six home runs in 18 2/3 innings over four starts.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Red Sox: 2B Dustin Pedroia left in the middle of the second because of left knee discomfort he felt while fouling off a pitch on his first swing of the top half. He was to stay behind in New York and be examined Thursday. "He was down. I haven't seen him like that," Cora said. ... OF Andrew Benintendi missed his

third straight game after fouling a pitch off his right foot Sunday. Cora said he expects him to start Friday. ... Utilityman Brock Holt (scratched cornea) was to see an eye doctor again and perhaps get a new lens. He did not play for Triple-A Pawtucket on Wednesday.

Yankees: C Gary Sanchez (strained left calf) hopes to play in Sunday's homestand finale against Kansas City, the first day he is eligible to be activated from the IL. ... OF Giancarlo Stanton, who hasn't played since March 31 because of a strained left biceps, started hitting off a machine Tuesday.

#### UP NEXT

Red Sox: LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (1-2) starts Friday, beginning a stretch of 20 games in 20 days for Boston.

Yankees: RHP Domingo German (3-0) is scheduled to start Thursday's series opener against Kansas City and RHP Homer Bailey (1-1).