

The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, April 2, 2019

*** *The Boston Globe***

The Red Sox are 1-4. Is Alex Cora worried? 'No, not really'

Peter Abraham

OAKLAND, Calif. — Red Sox manager Alex Cora worked for ESPN before he got back in uniform and knew the question was coming after Monday night's 7-0 loss against the Oakland Athletics.

The Sox are 1-4 and have been outscored by 17 runs. Is he worried about his team? "No, not really. It's five games," Cora said. "You go through stretches like this.

"It sucks that it's early in the season. But, yeah, we have to pick it up. We want to play better. We know that."

The Sox have the worst record in baseball and still have six games remaining on their road trip. The pitching staff has allowed 41 runs over 41 innings and given up 15 home runs. The Sox also have committed seven errors.

The big accomplishment on Monday was that David Price was able to go six innings and give the bullpen a break. He gave up four runs but that constituted improvement compared with how Chris Sale, Nate Eovaldi, Eduardo Rodriguez, and Rick Porcello pitched in Seattle.

Aaron Brooks, who was making his first major league start since 2015, held the Sox to two hits over six innings. They finished with four on the game. Xander Bogaerts had two of the hits after celebrating his \$120 million contract extension earlier in the day. The rest of the Sox were 2 for 26.

The Sox have largely the same team that won a franchise-record 108 games and the World Series a year ago. They know they're better than this.

"It's surprising, yeah," Price said. "But this is a hard game. There's a lot of talent everywhere. We did a lot of good things last year and we'll continue to do the same things.

"There's no panic in this clubhouse or in the dugout. Just nothing good is happening right now. I'd rather it happen right now than the last two weeks of September. We'll get through this time and be better for it."

Price allowed the four runs on five hits over six innings with two walks and nine strikeouts. His problem, as was the case for his rotation mates against the Mariners, was the home run ball. He allowed three of them. Price made two particularly bad pitches early in the game and paid for both.

He left a changeup high in the strike zone to Khris Davis in the second inning that was lined over the fence in center field. It was the fifth home run in seven games for Davis.

In the third inning, Price threw a fastball down the chute to Ramon Laureano that flew 428 feet before hitting the window of a suite high above center field.

With two outs in the sixth, Price walked Mark Canha. His next pitch was a high changeup that Chad Pinder drove out to left field.

Heath Hembree gave up three more runs in the eighth inning, two coming after Rafael Devers committed his third error. Red Sox starters have an 11.14 earned run average and 2.19 WHIP after five games.

“It’s tough for us right now,” Price said. “We’re all going through it and we’ll all get through it together. We’ll be fine.”

Brooks overmatched the Sox with an assortment of fastballs and sliders. The 29-year-old righthander allowed two hits, walked one, and struck out six in six innings.

“Not much today,” Cora said. “He moved the ball all over the strike zone, inside to lefties. A lot of strikes, a lot of chasing pitches down in the zone. A little bit of frustration throughout the game.”

Brooks was 3-5 with a 7.53 ERA in 10 previous starts in the majors. He is Oakland’s No. 5 starter, having won the job in spring training. This is his second stint with Oakland after being traded in 2016.

The best chance the Sox had to score against Brooks came in the second inning when Bogaerts doubled to right-center before Mitch Moreland singled to center. Bogaerts went to the plate and was thrown out by Laureano, who has one of the best outfield arms in the majors. The Sox challenged the call and replays seemed to show Bogaerts’s foot crossed the plate before Nick Hundley got the tag down. But the call stood.

Brooks retired 12 of the final 13 batters he faced. J.D. Martinez and Bogaerts had two-out singles off reliever Liam Hendriks in the seventh inning, but Moreland popped to shortstop.

Former Red Sox prospect J.B. Wendelken pitched a perfect eighth inning for Oakland. Wendelken was part of the three-team deal in 2013 that got Jake Peavy to the Red Sox. Oakland acquired him in 2015 from the White Sox.

Sale makes his second start on Tuesday night. He will face righthander Mike Fiers. The Sox have lost six of their last eight games at Oakland Coliseum and 19 of the last 37.

Xander Bogaerts on his extension: ‘I want to stay here. What’s not to like?’

Peter Abraham

OAKLAND, Calif. — Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski was not expecting to sign shortstop Xander Bogaerts to a contract extension before the season started.

“Put it this way: I was not by any means thinking it was going to happen,” Dombrowski said.

The Sox had tried fruitlessly throughout the winter to find common ground with agent Scott Boras, largely because there were no easy comparisons to make with Bogaerts.

At 26, he was already a two-time World Series winner who had been a full-time player for five seasons at a premium defensive position.

It fell to Bogaerts to bring the sides together.

“I finally just said, ‘I want to stay here. What’s not to like?’” Bogaerts said Monday after his six-year, \$120 million deal was announced. “I knew what I wanted to do.”

A large group of teammates and coaches crowded into the small interview room at Oakland–Alameda County Coliseum to watch Bogaerts’s news conference then applauded when it was over. Bogaerts seemed embarrassed by the attention.

“Here’s where I grew up as a kid, a 16-year-old with no facial hair,” he said. “Now I have so much going on.”

Bogaerts will retain his \$12 million salary for this season. The extension runs from 2020-25 and will pay \$20 million a season. A \$20 million option for 2026 will trigger if Bogaerts has 535 plate appearances in 2025.

Bogaerts has the right to opt out of his contract following the 2022 season.

The contract also includes a provision for Bogaerts to provide funding for a baseball academy in his native Aruba in conjunction with the Red Sox.

“It also allowed him to do something that was most important to him, and that was remain with his teammates,” Boras said. “He’s very close to this group. He’s a family guy. He really welcomes and enjoys the opportunity to play with a group of people he was raised with. That’s who Xander Bogaerts is.”

Raquel Ferreira, the team’s senior vice president of major and minor league operations, played a significant role in getting the deal done, having long ago earned Bogaerts’s trust.

She was in Seattle last week as Bogaerts debated what path to take. Had a deal not gotten done by Opening Day, he was prepared to wait until after the season, as were the Sox.

“I talked to a lot of people and I knew what was best for me,” Bogaerts said. “It was a little hectic.”

Bogaerts said he decided last Wednesday night that he wanted to get a deal done and the details were hammered out Thursday night.

“Great for us. Great for him,” Sox manager Alex Cora said. “I was telling somebody he’s a great player [but] he’s a better person. Smart individual.”

Bogaerts is already eighth in franchise history with 696 starts at shortstop. He went into Monday’s game hitting .283 with a .772 OPS over seven seasons.

Since 2015, Bogaerts leads all shortstops in hits, doubles, and RBIs. He is second in games played, extra-base hits, and runs scored.

“You’re talking about elite offensive players and that normally doesn’t come with shortstops,” Boras said.

With Bogaerts and Chris Sale agreeing to deals in the last 11 days, the most prominent Red Sox player in his free agent season is Rick Porcello.

The 30-year-old righthander has expressed a desire to remain with the Sox but has yet to receive an offer.

J.D. Martinez can opt out of his contract following the season.

Martinez, who is represented by Boras, also can opt out following the 2020 season. The sides have not discussed adjusting his contract to make 2020 or beyond guaranteed.

Mitch Moreland and Steve Pearce, who together make \$12.75 million, also can become free agents. Pearce will be 36 and Moreland 34 at season’s end.

Utility players Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt also are in the final season of their deals.

Dombrowski said that, barring something unexpected, no other contract negotiations would take place until after the season.

Lineup switch

Andrew Benintendi’s stint as a leadoff hitter lasted three games. Mookie Betts hit first on Monday with Benintendi second, as was the case most of last season.

“It’s one of those that when you start managing the game and see what’s going on, you start thinking and you have to make adjustments,” Cora said. “With this team, it makes sense.”

Benintendi was 2 for 12 hitting leadoff in Seattle.

Pearce gets closer

Pearce, who is on the injured list with a strained left calf, is “feeling great,” according to Cora, and there’s a chance he could be activated in Arizona on Friday. He played in an extended spring training game in Fort Myers, Fla., on Monday and hit a home run . . . Dustin Pedroia, who is recovering from left knee surgery, is scheduled to play nine innings Tuesday then report to Single A Greenville for their opening day Thursday. He would play second base in that game.

Signing Xander Bogaerts was right move by Red Sox

Dan Shaughnessy

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Red Sox made it official Monday. They have extended the contract of Xander Bogaerts to the tune of six years and \$120 million.

I love this move. It works on every level.

Bogaerts would have been a free agent at the end of this season. The Sox have no ready backup in their system. Letting Bogaerts play out his contract was a big risk. Now they know who’s going to be playing shortstop through 2025, potentially 2026. Ambassador Bogaerts will join Johnny Pesky, Rico Petrocelli, Rick Burleson, and Nomar Garciaparra as Red Sox shortstop royalty.

Bogaerts thanked everyone in a 12-minute press conference (televised live on NESN and attended by just about every teammate) in a cramped room at the old Alameda County Coliseum on Monday afternoon. He thanked John Henry. Tom Werner. Michael Gordon. Agent Scott Boras. Dave Dombrowski. Brian O’Halloran. Raquel Ferreira. Mike Fiore. His mom. His uncle. His brother. His sister. His teammates.

“Here’s where I grew up as a 16-year-old kid with no facial hair and now I got so much going on,” said Bogaerts. “I know how proud they are of me and I’m very thankful for them. I won two rings with this organization and the group we had last year, it goes beyond just regular guys. It’s like a real family. Guys that I grew up playing with the minor leagues — Christian Vazquez, Jackie Bradley, Brandon Workman, Matt Barnes. Just seeing them grow as players, and helping the Red Sox win championships. Mookie Betts. I’m really blessed to have a great group of guys like that behind me, pushing me to be better. Alex Cora, who has helped me become the player that I am today.”

It was like an Oscars acceptance speech. When Bogaerts launched into a list of his minor league coaches, I thought I heard a piano tinkling in the background.

“I’m blessed,” he concluded. “If I forgot someone, sorry, but thank you.”

Boras, famous for encouraging players to get to the open market to find their ultimate worth, acknowledged, “This allows him to do something that was important to him and that was remain with his teammates. He is very close to this group and he really welcomes and enjoys the opportunity to play with a group he was raised with. That’s who Xander Bogaerts is. The overriding theme I heard from Xander was, ‘We have a lot more left with us. I want to be with these guys.’ ”

Bogaerts’s teammates broke into applause when the press conference ended.

In my view there was way too much noise about Betts and not enough about Bogaerts during spring training. Granted, Betts is a super-human talent, a reigning MVP, and he will probably make Mike Trout money when he signs his next deal. But the Sox still have Betts under contract for this season and next.

And Betts sounds very much like a guy who wants to play out his deal and find out what he is worth — like Bryce Harper and Manny Machado.

Machado, a natural shortstop like Bogaerts, was a free agent last winter and got \$300 million over 10 years from the Padres. Bogaerts is going to be making two-thirds of that for the next six years. Any of you think Machado is worth \$10 million per year more than Bogaerts? Certainly Machado has more raw talent, offensively and defensively, but he's become a big league bowser the past three years and has numbers remarkably similar to Bogaerts. From 2016-18, Machado hit .283 with an OPS of .855. Bogaerts was .286, .808.

A player can always get hurt — Dustin Pedroia signed a team-friendly eight-year, \$110 million deal in 2013 that's looking shaky for the final four — but the Bogaerts deal strikes me as particularly team friendly, considering that Bogaerts is a Boras client who'd probably get more on the open market.

We know the Boston Baseball Experience is not for everybody, but Bogaerts seems to genuinely like playing here. He's been with the organization since he signed as a 16-year-old out of Aruba in 2009 — Theo Epstein is the gift that keeps on giving, Sox fans — and the only time he's pouted was when the Sox hired Stephen Drew and moved Bogaerts to third base during the ill-fated, last-place 2014 season.

“The fans of Boston expect winning,” Bogaerts acknowledged.

The Sox have a thin farm system and a lot of big talent coming up for pay raises (or freedom) in the next two years. Rick Porcello can walk at the end of the year and J.D. Martinez can opt out. But at least the Sox know that they've got Bogaerts, Andrew Benintendi, Rafael Devers, Christian Vazquez, Nathan Eovaldi, David Price, and Chris Sale locked up through 2022.

This is important when you have Dave “Win Now” Dombrowski running your team. Dombrowski left the Tigers with nothing when he came to Boston in 2015. You do not want the 2021 Red Sox to look like today's Detroit Tigers. The Bogaerts signing diminishes the chance of that horrid scenario.

Bogaerts may not be Francisco Lindor or Carlos Correa, but he's been an All-Star starter (2016), has two World Series rings, and finished 13th in MVP voting last year. Not bad for a 26-year-old shortstop who on most nights hits No. 5 for the best offense in baseball.

And now he is your shortstop. For a long, long time.

Xander Bogaerts has been underappreciated in Boston

Chad Finn

It seems to me that for much of his career, Xander Bogaerts has occupied a peculiar place in the Red Sox' galaxy of stars.

Just 26 years old, he's just begun his sixth full season with the Red Sox, and his accomplishments are already plentiful.

He's won a pair of Silver Slugger awards at shortstop, no easy task when a trio that also includes Houston's Carlos Correa and Cleveland's Francisco Lindor is poised to become the Yount-Ripken-Trammell or Rodriguez-Garciparra-Jeter of its era.

Bogaerts finished second in the American League batting race (.320) as a 22-year-old in 2015. Last season, when he drove in 103 runs while batting behind RBI machine J.D. Martinez, Bogaerts finished 13th in the AL MVP voting.

He's developed into a dependable defensive shortstop through hard work and dedication. And he already has two World Series rings, the first coming in 2013 when at age 20 he was perhaps the Red Sox' most reliable postseason hitter not named David Americo Ortiz.

The Red Sox would not be planning their fourth ring ceremony since the turn of the century without Bogaerts's immense season-long contributions.

A player of his talent, accomplishment, and determination should be an easy fan favorite. While he's popular, especially with younger fans, and appreciated for the most part, it seems like he's never quite achieved anything resembling exalted status at Fenway.

I've always thought Bogaerts should be more popular than he is.

This newest development might just do the trick.

The news arrived as a pleasant surprise Sunday night: The Red Sox and Bogaerts had agreed on a contract extension that would pay him \$120 million over six seasons beginning in 2020. Including his \$12 million salary this season, he will be locked up the next seven years — presuming he does not opt out after the 2022 season, which colleague Alex Speier reports is part of the deal — for \$132 million.

The deal seems ideal for both sides . . . but perhaps slightly more ideal for the Red Sox. I'll say it: It feels like a steal, inasmuch as paying someone \$20 million per year can be. Bogaerts will become the highest-paid shortstop in baseball annually — the Rangers' Elvis Andrus averages \$15 million per season on an eight-year, \$120 million contract — at least until Lindor signs his next deal. But the Red Sox secure a core player in his prime who plays a premium defensive position capably and is coming off career highs in OPS (.883), extra-base hits (71), and slugging percentage (.522).

And his annual salary is less than what they paid Hanley Ramirez last year? I'd guess the Red Sox are pretty happy with these terms.

Red Sox fans should be pleased too — and finally recognize that Bogaerts is a cornerstone player who really does want to be here. I think part of the reason fans might have been slow to appreciate Bogaerts is the perception — based largely on the fact that Scott Boras is his agent — he would hit free agency after this season and probably bolt Boston.

Not all of Boras's clients go for the max money in free agency — Jason Varitek told Boras to get him the best deal he could with the Red Sox upon hitting the market in 2004, and Jered Weaver eschewed Boras's advice and remained with the Angels rather than testing the market in August 2011. But most do, and it was easy to foresee a goodbye in Bogaerts's future. We assumed he was a goner. I mean, he wears No. 2 in honor of Derek Jeter. How loyal could he be?

Turns out, more than we knew.

I understand the other reasons it's taken Bogaerts some time to win over Sox fans. When he came up late in the 2013 season, he was regarded as a can't-miss prospect, a surefire future superstar. That October he went out there in the spotlight, wide-eyed, and he didn't miss, hitting .296 in the postseason (with three doubles and a triple) while playing an unfamiliar position (third base) dependably. It seemed the projections of greatness would be fulfilled imminently.

Then Bogaerts hit .240 in the lost 2014 season, and he was treated as a disappointing player on an enormously disappointing team.

Bogaerts's struggles as an official rookie — and his acknowledgment of frustration when he got moved to third base again when Stephen Drew was brought back to supposedly stabilize shortstop — hurt his public perception. He wasn't necessarily treated like a chief culprit, but he didn't escape blame, either. His image was bruised at least by association.

What we should have recognized, even in the maelstrom of aggravations with that 2014 team, is that it was a natural part of a learning process for a player who had fewer than 700 plate appearances above Single A to that point.

Bogaerts had a fine season in 2015 at 22, finishing second to the Tigers' Miguel Cabrera in the AL batting race and pounding out 196 hits, though just 7 homers. The power came along in 2016, when he hit 21, scored 115 runs, posted an OPS of .802, and made his first All-Star team.

But Bogaerts's 2017 season brought another unexpected hiccup — he hit .273 with 10 homers, and batted just .235 in the second half. But there was a valid reason: He played through a hand injury suffered in early July when he was hit by a pitch from the Rays' Jake Faria.

Still, fairly or not, it made Bogaerts's development path seem uneven. Teammate Mookie Betts had become the superstar Bogaerts was supposed to be.

It should be noted, in the middle of this supposed surprise, that Bogaerts has told us before that he wanted to stay in Boston.

"I enjoy my time here," he said this spring upon arriving in Fort Myers, Fla. "[Boston] is a place that I think anyone and everyone would want to play and stay."

Maybe we didn't believe him then. But Red Sox fans can make up for that by believing in him now. It's already overdue.

*** *The Boston Herald***

David Price allows three homers as Red Sox lose again

Jason Mastrodonato

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Red Sox went from looking tired in Seattle to looking lifeless in Oakland.

Facing 28-year-old journeyman Aaron Brooks, who entered the game with a career 8.01 ERA in 18 games spanning four seasons, the Red Sox were shut out in a 7-0 loss Monday night in Oakland, where they're now 15-36 in their past 51 games.

The feeling in the Red Sox clubhouse after a 1-4 start to the year is "just more frustration, but it's a part of it," Mookie Betts said. "It's a long season, go through your ups and downs, and it's just one of those times you have to continue to fight."

The 2018 Red Sox didn't suffer their fourth loss until April 22, also in Oakland.

Manager Alex Cora remains stoic and said he's not concerned.

"Not really," he said. "It's five games. When you go through stretches like this, it sucks that it's early in the season, but yeah, we have to pick it up."

Five games in a baseball season is akin to one half of one game in football. It's very early.

But the World Series hangover is looking heavy, and the Sox still have six more games in six days on the West Coast before they get a day off and head home.

Pitching coach Dana LeVangie was hoping Eduardo Rodriguez' poor start in Game 3 would be the end of the struggles. Then Rick Porcello gave up nine runs Sunday and David Price gave up four more, and Heath Hembree was tagged for three in the eighth inning.

Price actually looked better than any other Sox starter so far but gave up three homers on three pitches he certainly wants back.

"Three pitches out of 90 something," Cora said. "I do feel that he threw the ball well. Obviously home runs hurt us, like the first few games here, but I do feel that he threw the ball well."

Price began his season with back-to-back strikeouts on seven pitches and finished the first inning on 10 pitches. But he left a changeup over the heart of the plate to Khris Davis (solo shot), a fastball in the same spot to Ramón Laureano (solo shot) and another flat changeup to Chad Pinder (two-run shot).

The three homers were the only damage done to Price, who was good otherwise. His fastball sat at 93-94 mph, same as last year, and his changeup was effective when he threw it down and side to side. He struck out nine in six innings, but the four runs pushed the Red Sox rotation's ERA to 11.14.

"Surprising, yeah," Price said. "This is a hard game. There's a lot of talent everywhere. We did a lot of good things last year. We'll continue to do those same things tomorrow."

"There's no panic in this clubhouse, or in the dugout. Nothing good is happening right now. We'd rather it happen right now than the last two weeks of September. So, we'll get through this time and we'll be better for it."

Perhaps Price was too aggressive. The Red Sox have been pounding the zone with first-pitch strikes through five games. They led the league with 74 percent first-pitch strikes entering the game, then Price threw them to 18-of-25 batters (72 percent). Two of the home runs came on first pitches.

"I mean, we like to pound the strike zone," Cora said. "After that you can expand. Obviously teams are going to make adjustments, but it's not that we're going over the heart of the plate. We're throwing to the edges and we're getting calls. It's something we've been doing all along. We like our pitchers to work ahead, so that's a good job."

Brooks, who hadn't started a game in the majors since 2015, fired six innings, allowing just two hits and a walk while striking out six.

"Mixing it up, in and out, up and down," Betts said. "He threw everything well, kept it out of the middle of the plate. Got to give credit when credit is due."

It looked like it might be a big night for the Red Sox offense early, when Xander Bogaerts doubled and then tried to score on a single by Mitch Moreland in the second inning. But Laureano, one of the strongest throwers in the game, fired an unbelievable strike to home and Bogaerts was called out on the spot.

Replay review indicated Bogaerts was safe, but the call was not overturned and the Sox lost a run. They never had another good chance.

"The play at the plate, the kid made an outstanding throw," Cora said. "I don't know, the call couldn't go both ways I guess. But, it seems like we were putting something together and Laureano changed the game with that throw."

Chris Sale is on the mound for the Sox on Tuesday.

Mookie Betts back in Red Sox' leadoff spot again

Jason Mastrodonato

OAKLAND, Calif. — Mookie Betts is back in the leadoff spot.

Andrew Benintendi was 2-for-12 with two walks in his first three games as the Red Sox' leadoff hitter in 2019, but manager Alex Cora switched it up on Monday, putting Betts back in the leadoff spot and moving Benintendi back to second. Betts also hit leadoff on Sunday, when Benintendi was out of the lineup resting his sore knee.

Why the switch?

“Sometimes you look at the game and you have to manage the game,” Cora said. “And I’m not saying this is set in stone but where we are at right now without Steve Pearce, without Dustin Pedroia, although the two lefties are back to back, now there’s Mookie Betts in front and J.D. Martinez behind. Maybe they bring the lefty earlier in the game so we get it out of the way.”

The Sox scored eight with Betts in the leadoff spot Sunday.

“It’s not that this is going to be our lineup every day,” Cora said. “We’re going to stay with those two on top. But you start watching the game, it’s like OK, this makes sense. With this team it makes sense. We’ll roll with it.”

Cora said he’s communicated with Betts and Benintendi how he plans to handle it.

“They really don’t care,” he said. “When I talk to them, they just want to hit, which is great. You tell them in advance, start talking about it, start looking ahead. I think any combination is good.

“It’s funny because everybody thought the second hitter will get more RBI opportunities. Then in Seattle, the leadoff guy got a lot of opportunities. Those guys in the bottom of the lineup are getting on base too, which is great. Obviously with time we’ll get another on-base percentage guy with the last three spots in the lineup. There are going to be a lot of opportunities there.”

Pearce is still rehabbing his sore calf and could return in time for the series in Arizona that starts on Friday, Cora said.

Pedroia is scheduled to begin his rehab assignment with High-A Greenville on Thursday.

The Red Sox are 15-35 (.300) in their last 50 games vs the A’s in Oakland, and 3-12-1 in their last 16 series here.

David Price is making his 300th career major league appearance in his start on Monday.

Red Sox say Xander Bogaerts the driving force behind new deal

Jason Mastrodonato

OAKLAND, Calif. — Scott Boras clients rarely sign contract extensions before hitting free agency, but with the Red Sox season about to start and no sign of a deal close, Xander Bogaerts stood up and made it happen.

The Red Sox shortstop was the driving force behind the six-year, \$120-million contract extension that will keep Bogaerts in Boston through at least 2025, with a \$20 million vesting option for a seventh season if he hits 525 plate appearances in year six.

That was the team-friendly deal so few Boras clients sign.

But there was one final hitch, one piece of the agreement that made Boras feel comfortable: Bogaerts has the choice to opt out after 2022 and test free agency as a 29-year-old, giving up the final \$60 million over three years if he so chooses.

“I used Elvis Andrus’ structure, where I did opt outs and a vesting option to add a year, but the key thing for me was I wanted him to have the opportunity of free agency at 29,” Boras said Monday. “I told Xander, if we can obtain that, then I think these deals are doable. We came to a good understanding on the AAV, properly placed him, didn’t have much problem reaching that. It was really about the flexibility inside the contract, putting together a format that allowed him to look at the team three or four years from now and allow him to know who the Boston Red Sox are going forward.”

If the Sox don’t look like they’ll be competitive after 2022 — ahem, Mookie Betts, ahem — then Bogaerts can walk at 29, when he’ll likely be one of the most sought-after free agents on the market.

He already would’ve been this season. But he was so excited about the Red Sox’ chances over the next three years that he called up his agent and told him to make something happen.

It was Bogaerts’ desire to win that has always kept him going. And he saw a terrific chance to win in the next three years, though Betts and Jackie Bradley Jr. are eligible for free agency after 2020.

“It’s a very special place to play, man,” Bogaerts said. “The fans and the organization in general expects winning. And I know my teammates know how much I love winning regardless of it’s cards, baseball, dominoes, I don’t care. I just enjoy winning. They know that about me and I think this was a nice place to play.”

Bogaerts knows about winning in Boston, as the only player who was on the Red Sox roster in the World Series in both 2013 and 2018.

And while he very likely would’ve done better on an open market, the fact that he has the opt-out and is making more money annually than any shortstop in since Alex Rodriguez should make Boras feel pretty good.

Assuming Manny Machado continues to play third base for the Padres after he signed a 10-year deal for \$300 million this last offseason, Bogaerts’ \$20 million per season is highest among shortstops other than A-Rod, who only played shortstop for three years after signing a 10-year deal with the Rangers worth \$252 million. Bogaerts’ deal topped Derek Jeter’s \$18.9 million average over his 10-year contract he signed in 2000.

Being among the highest paid shortstops wasn’t too important, Boras said.

“No, these are Bryce Harper questions,” he said. “Well, you got the highest contract for a player. I said, really? (Points to his watch.) Because we all knew, look at Mike Trout’s numbers, it’s pretty obvious where that’s going. These things are only temporary. We have a few shortstops on the way that are pretty good. I never thought about that until you mentioned that he was the highest paid shortstop.”

Shortstops have rarely gotten the mega deals that the best players in baseball get, typically because by the time they reach free agency, they’re in their late-20s, when a shortstop’s range and arm strength can often begin to decelerate, making it a bit risky to lock them into longterm deals.

“As long as I’m here, he’ll probably be my shortstop,” manager Alex Cora said. “I think he can play the position and he can stay in the position physically.”

Defensively, there are certainly better shortstops than Bogaerts. Most defensive numbers paint him as a below average-to-average shortstop. Those who have watched him closely over his time in Boston see a player who had made substantial progress, first with his throwing when moving to his left, then with his ability to make difficult plays become routine.

Last year, for instance, he made just 10 errors, fifth-fewest among shortstops with 1,000 innings, and didn't make a single fielding error until late in the year, with most of his errors of the throwing variety.

"We talked a lot about it but we think he can play shortstop for an extended period," Dave Dombrowski said. "He maybe doesn't have as much range as a couple other guys, but he has much more offense that he brings. He's really taken well to Alex Cora and the staff about positioning. He's done well. We've talked to Alex, Alex thinks he can be the shortstop for an extended period of time. He works hard. He's gone to Arizona to training camp to continue his quickness so he can keep playing shortstop. He's driven to play shortstop. Being a big guy, he's obviously aware of that, but he wants to play shortstop."

Bogaerts' size (6-foot-2, 210 pounds) will leave people to wonder how long he'll stick at the position, but those questions has followed him his entire career.

"Everyone is different," Dombrowski said. "Look how long Ripken played short. Jeter is a big guy, he played it. Everybody is different. His work ethic makes a big difference in that regard. He's athletic. He works well with Alex and he wants to do it. There have been big shortstops that have done it. You can be a big shortstop and lose it. Sometimes it has to do with the type of body you have. The type of work ethic you have. And he's driven. For us it really puts us in a great spot with Devers over there. Pedey is signed a few years. It puts us in an important spot for us."

And if Bogaerts can't play shortstop into his 30s, he has played third base before.

"I think what ends up happening, and the thought process for any player — and we're not anywhere close with him — is he's athletic enough to play a lot of different positions," Dombrowski said. "If he had to switch over to second or first or left or third, it doesn't just have to be third base. Because he's athletic we think he can do that, but that's nothing we're thinking about at this time."

No more contract talks during season

Jason Mastrodonato

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Xander Bogaerts contract extension might have seemed like a surprise.

To Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, it was a surprise.

He made it clear a week before Opening Day the Sox would not continue contract negotiations into the season. At that time, negotiations with Bogaerts' agent, Scott Boras, were ongoing, but Dombrowski was not optimistic.

But Dombrowski bent his rule slightly, extending the team's talks with Bogaerts only because he felt like the deal was so close to being finished that it would be done before the end of Opening Day, which it was, though the final details weren't set in stone and the contract not signed until Monday.

"We really didn't bend it very much because it started Opening Day, the negotiations," Dombrowski said. "They were still taking place during Chris Sale's press conference. I didn't think we'd get this deal done. It started coming into focus a couple days beforehand. So, we had basically said Opening Day it would be done. We did close it off Opening Day. It was opening night. We played the game. Then it was getting the physical done, then we had to wait to get the physical results back because we were on the West Coast."

Going forward, however, the Red Sox are done with contract extensions for the time being, Dombrowski told the Herald.

Asked if he was certain the Sox would not entertain any other contract negotiations during the season — Rick Porcello is among the free agents at season's end and J.D. Martinez can choose to opt out — Dombrowski was firm.

“No, I am pretty certain,” he said. “We have no ongoing conversations.”

That leaves Bogaerts’ extension as the final contract the Red Sox will negotiate until next offseason.

“There’s a reason behind (closing off negotiations during the season),” Dombrowski said. “It’s not like you’re setting the deadline to be like, ‘Oh gosh, I have to be a hard guy in that regard.’ I think contract negotiations can be a distraction for the players, and when we start playing, we want focus to be on the field. So if we had not made progress at that point, at some point we would’ve had to say, ‘We’ll see what happens at the end of the year.’ I think that’s why it’s really important to set that deadline.”

“There have been times, not here but in other places, where an agent calls and I have the same philosophy but he says, ‘This guy really wants to stay, he’s willing to do this.’ And it’s really not very much of a distraction because he outlines exactly what you had offered. But really the reason is when we get to the season, we want to be focused on what happens on the field.”

Boras said he’s already thinking about Martinez’s situation.

“No question,” Boras said. “This guy is some kind of hitter. He and Anthony Rendon are probably going to be the two focused offensive players on the market as far as guys who are elite offensive players. Yeah ... Not that I think about those things.”

Does he sense that the Red Sox were going down a list and might kick up conversations with Martinez?

“I discuss the clients individually,” Boras said. “Good lawyer stuff. If J.D. wants me to talk with them, I’m usually heading over to (chairman Tom Werner’s) house to get something free out of him during the season. That’s strictly up to him. Obviously it’s a relationship that has gone very, very well for everybody. You love it when players play well. You get contracts because their highest level of execution is when they sign them. It’s great.”

*** *The Providence Journal***

Athletics 7, Red Sox 0: Four more homers sink scuffling Boston

Bill Koch

OAKLAND --- Baseballs thrown by Red Sox starting pitchers continued to be hit over fences Monday night.

David Price was nowhere near as ineffective as his fellow rotation members. The left-hander’s raw stuff appeared quite lively on the whole, as his nine strikeouts would attest.

But the round-tripper, just like four Boston hurlers before him, bedeviled Price at Oakland Coliseum. The Athletics smashed three of them against Price and one for good measure against reliever Heath Hembree to fuel a 7-0 victory.

Khris Davis, Ramon Laureano and Chad Pinder all went deep over the first six innings for the hosts, who treated a sparse crowd to what has become an extended display of power against Red Sox pitching. Pinder’s two-run shot in the sixth doubled Oakland’s 2-0 lead and spoiled what was otherwise a decent outing from Boston’s last remaining starter. Matt Chapman’s leadoff homer in the eighth against Hembree served as the final indignity, as the Red Sox dropped their third straight game of the road trip.

“Obviously the home runs hurt us just like the first few games here,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “I do feel like he threw the ball well.”

“I wanted us to win,” Price said. “Any way I could help us do that today, that’s what I wanted to do. I wasn’t able to do that.”

Three pitches out over the plate spelled doom for Price and Boston, as its starters have now surrendered 11 home runs in just 21 innings of work. He hung changeups to Davis and Pinder and missed his spot on a first-pitch fastball to Laureano that was launched 428 feet to center field. Boston’s offense was quiet as a mouse by comparison, managing a lone extra-base hit against five Oakland pitchers.

“It’s just a matter of putting a few at-bats together, the starters doing things like David did today – give us a chance,” Cora said. “At least we reset the bullpen today. We’re in good shape going into tomorrow. But we need to start winning ballgames.”

Davis and Laureano cracked their solo shots in the second and third, respectively. Pinder’s two-run drive to the bleachers in left came in the sixth after Price issued a two-out walk to Mark Canha. Price left his pitch up in the zone and threw his head back in disgust when Pinder made contact, a knowing gesture regarding where the ball would eventually land.

“I made a couple mistakes and they made me pay for them,” Price said. “If I don’t have that two-out walk there in the sixth inning it could be different.”

Right-hander Aaron Brooks dominated over six innings for the Athletics, making his first big league start since 2015. He worked quickly and efficiently while throwing 86 pitches, facing one batter over the minimum and striking out six against a lone walk. Boston put just one man in scoring position against Brooks, who missed most of 2016 with a hip contusion and made 57 of his last 60 appearances at Triple-A.

“He was just mixing it up – in-out, up-down,” said Red Sox right fielder Mookie Betts, who went 0-for-4. “He threw everything well. Kept it out of the middle of the plate. You’ve got to give credit where credit’s due.”

The lone real threat managed by the Red Sox against Brooks came in the second. Xander Bogaerts hustled for a one-out double to right center and tried to score when Mitch Moreland lined a single to center. Laureano fired a rocket to the plate and Bogaerts was called out despite a Boston challenge and what appeared to be a strong case upon further review.

“The play at the plate, (Laureano) made an outstanding throw,” Cora said. “I don’t know – the call could have gone both ways, I guess. It seemed like we were putting something together and Laureano changed the game with that throw.”

That was the lone inning where Brooks faced more than three batters. He worked 1-2-3 frames in the first, third, fourth and sixth and got Eduardo Nunez on a 1-6-3 double play to end the fifth. Liam Hendriks was the lone reliever who faced and trouble, allowing a pair of two-out singles in the seventh but inducing a Moreland popup to second to escape the jam.

Bogaerts: ‘What’s not to love here?’

Bill Koch

OAKLAND — Xander Bogaerts will remain with the organization where he came of age.

The Red Sox are the only home he’s ever known, and Bogaerts could stay with them all the way through the 2026 season.

Boston officially announced a six-year contract extension for Bogaerts prior to Monday’s series opener with the Athletics. There is a vesting option for a seventh year should Bogaerts reach 525 plate appearances in 2025 and pass his year-end physical. He will command a reported \$20 million annually, a raise from the \$12 million Bogaerts will take home in his final season of arbitration eligibility this year.

“What’s not to love here?” Bogaerts said. “I grew up here. Ownership and the front office approached me. I think I valued what we have in here a lot.”

Bogaerts was an international signing by the Red Sox out of Aruba as a 16-year-old in 2009. He’ll be 33 by the end of the six-year term, spending more than half his life in a place where he’s already won a pair of World Series titles. Bogaerts credited some members of Red Sox management beyond the usual brass – Raquel Ferreira, senior vice president of operations in both the major and minor leagues, drew special praise.

“He’s very close to this group,” said Scott Boras, the shortstop’s agent. “He’s a family guy. He really welcomes and enjoys the opportunity to play with a group of people he was raised with. That’s who Xander Bogaerts is.”

Bogaerts counted Jackie Bradley Jr., Christian Vazquez, Brandon Workman and Matt Barnes among his teammates at Class A Salem in 2012 and Triple-A Pawtucket in 2013. All five players are on the current Boston roster and were on hand during the formal press conference at Oakland Coliseum. Assorted other Red Sox players and staff members were in attendance, and Boras cheekily asked manager Alex Cora to stop a steady stream of text messages imploring the two sides to reach a deal.

“We like the shortstop, but we like the person better,” said Cora, who also suggested Boras was being facetious. “They do love him. It’s fun to be around him. He’s a kid who’s been very successful. In that city that might be dangerous, but not with him.”

Bogaerts set a host of new career highs in 2018, leading all shortstops in baseball with 45 doubles and adding 23 home runs, 103 runs batted in and an .883 OPS. His contract value is significantly below the 10-year, \$300-million mega-deal signed by Manny Machado with the Padres during the offseason – it would be a fair conclusion to draw that Bogaerts gave Boston a bit of a discount.

“We had some conversations that I thought were optimistic during spring training and some conversations I didn’t think were optimistic at the time,” president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said. “At the very end I will say (Bogaerts) was very influential in this. He really made an emphasis on how much he wanted to be a Red Sox.”

Dombrowski said discussions with Bogaerts ran throughout the winter and gained an extra sense of urgency leading into Opening Day. Both the club and the player were lukewarm on the idea of carrying negotiations into the season, and Bogaerts pushed to finish the deal prior to first pitch Thursday in Seattle. The final hurdle was an opt-out clause for Bogaerts following the 2022 season, allowing him to potentially enter free agency as a 30-year-old.

“There was certainty for him that he’d be able to remain here if he so chooses,” Boras said. “He would also be able to get a fresh look at where the team would be a few years down the road as well. Once we were able to accomplish that it made it a little easier.”

Bogaerts has started each of the club’s last 29 postseason games, including 21 straight at shortstop. His six straight Opening Day starts at the position matched Rick Burleson’s run from 1975-80. Bogaerts ranks seventh all-time with 695 career Red Sox starts at short, and he should comfortably pass all-time leader Everett Scott (1,081 starts, 1914-21) by the end of the new deal.

“This was just what was best for me and my family,” Bogaerts said. “All that I’ve accomplished here with the Red Sox – it’s a very special place to play.”

Cora defends his beleaguered starting pitchers

Bill Koch

OAKLAND — It's hard to imagine this can continue much longer for the Red Sox rotation.

Those first four starts in Seattle had to be a statistical anomaly, right? There can't be any way Chris Sale, Nathan Eovaldi, Eduardo Rodriguez and Rick Porcello are going to be pounded like this for a full 162 games.

That's certainly the feeling inside the Boston clubhouse, and you wouldn't expect anything else from a club coming off its ninth World Series title. Sale, Eovaldi and Porcello — along with David Price, Monday night's starter against the Athletics — were among the driving forces as the Red Sox outclassed the Dodgers in just five games last October. That they reentered the baseball landscape five months later with such a thud was jarring, as the Mariners hammered their way to three victories at T-Mobile Park.

"I'll run those guys out there every time," first baseman Mitch Moreland said. "Our starters are some of the best in the league. Just because it didn't go their way for a couple of games doesn't mean that's the way the season is going to go."

Boston's starters completed just 15 innings against Seattle, leaving the bullpen to cover another 18. Brian Johnson worked three times in the series, unusual for someone designated as one of the club's two expected long relievers entering the season. Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier, the two co-favorites to serve as the closer, faced a mere seven batters.

"We didn't get innings from the starters, and that's hard to do," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "The only positive out of the whole weekend was the bullpen. They did an outstanding job."

Cora was on the defensive on Sunday after Porcello was tagged for nine runs in a 10-8 defeat. There was one less trip through the rotation this spring for the starters after their extended run in 2018, with the Red Sox coaching staff hoping to keep them fresh this season. Attempting to connect any lack of sharpness due to an absence of work in Fort Myers was an idea quickly shut down by the manager.

"It was the same plan," Cora said. "Whoever is doubting us, what we did this year — check what happened last year. We did the same thing."

Home runs have been the bane of Boston's existence so far. The Mariners slugged eight round-trippers against Red Sox starters, including three apiece against Sale and Eovaldi. Tim Beckham caught up to a pair of Sale fastballs out over the plate and Edwin Encarnacion crushed a changeup at the belt away.

"Most of the pitches were just out over the plate," Sale said. "You get behind guys, you get even in the count, you've got to attack a little bit more."

Johnson picked up the victory on Friday, striking out the side in the bottom of the eighth and giving Moreland a chance to win it with a pinch-hit three-run homer in the ninth. The left-hander pitched another 2 1/3 innings on Sunday, allowing only a Jay Bruce solo homer to right. That's the lone run conceded by Boston's bullpen over its last 14 innings, and the Mariners went 8-for-48 at the plate against them over the final three games of the series.

"I think it's all part of being ready," Johnson said. "I think that's part of your job. It doesn't matter if it's the first inning or the ninth inning. You've got to be ready. People are going to have off days. When they come, just be ready."

*** *MassLive.com***

With Xander Bogaerts' contract extension, Boston Red Sox secure first franchise shortstop since Nomar Garciaparra

Chris Cutillo

In the 10 years prior to Xander Bogaerts' first full season in 2014, the Red Sox had eight different Opening Day shortstops and 12 players make at least 50 appearances at the position. The carousel that was put in motion by the July 2004 trade of Nomar Garciaparra took nearly a full decade to finally come to a complete stop.

In Bogaerts, the Red Sox have the franchise shortstop they so desperately craved during a 10-year stretch in which they trotted out the likes of Edgar Renteria, Alex Gonzalez, Julio Lugo, Nick Green, Marco Scutaro, Jose Iglesias and Stephen Drew for long stretches at one of the premier positions in baseball. Since taking over full-time, Bogaerts has become a Sox stalwart, averaging 149 starts over the last four seasons and becoming an underrated threat in a potent lineup.

Bogaerts' six-year, \$120 million extension (which was finalized Monday) ensures the Red Sox won't again have to rely on a rotating cast of characters at shortstop anytime soon.

Bogaerts was slated to hit free agency after the season but will instead remain in Boston for six additional seasons.

"As long as I'm here, probably, he'll be my shortstop because I think he can play the position," manager Alex Cora said Monday. "He can stay in the position physically. People think he's going to get bigger. I think he's just going to be a strong shortstop."

The earliest Bogaerts can leave the organization on his own volition is 2022, when he can opt out of the deal following his ninth year with the Sox. If he stays, his deal runs through at least 2025, which would be his 12th full season in Boston.

If Bogaerts is still playing shortstop for the Red Sox as a 32-year-old in 2025, he'll likely go down as the greatest shortstop in Red Sox history. That might seem crazy now, but the other top candidates-- Garciaparra (nine years), Rico Petrocelli (six of 13 seasons at shortstop), Rick Burleson (seven years) and Joe Cronin (seven of 11 at shortstop)-- didn't make it a full decade manning the position.

"As far as the history of the organization, if he plays up to his potential the next six or seven years, he might be one of those special guys," Cora said.

At age 26, Bogaerts already has accomplished more than most. He has already won two World Series rings, both with the organization that took a flier on what he described as a "16-year-old kid with no facial hair" in Aruba 10 years ago.

"It's what the foundation of an organization is all about," president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said. "Having somebody that you sign, then develop and has a chance to remain here."

Bogaerts will remain with the only organization he has known for the foreseeable future, alongside a growing list of Red Sox (Chris Sale, David Price, Rafael Devers, Andrew Benintendi, Nathan Eovaldi and Eduardo Rodriguez) who are in it for the long haul. By pushing agent Scott Boras toward getting a deal done in recent days, Bogaerts has secured his spot at shortstop until it's taken away from him.

"It's a very special place to play," Bogaerts said. "The fans and the organization in general expect winning. And I know my teammates know how much I love winning regardless of it's cards, baseball, dominoes-- I don't care. I just enjoy winning. They know that about me and I think this is a nice place to play."

The Red Sox know all too well what it's like to have uncertainty at one of the most important positions on the diamond. Extending Bogaerts ensures they won't have that problem for many years to come.

Boston Red Sox feel 'no panic' but Alex Cora's starters already have allowed more earned runs than during last year's 17-2 start; club must show urgency

Christopher Smith

OAKLAND, Calif. — David Price said “there’s no panic in this clubhouse or the dugout.” The Red Sox have started the 2019 season with a 1-4 record and the starting pitching staff has an 11.14 ERA after Monday’s 7-0 loss to the Athletics here at Oakland Coliseum.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora said he’s not concerned but he knows his team must begin to play better.

“It’s five games. ... You’re going to go through stretches like this,” Cora said. “It sucks that it’s early in the season. Yeah, we have to pick it up. It’s not like we’re saying, ‘OK, we’re going to get ‘em whenever.’ We want to play better. We know that.”

There shouldn’t be panic or much concern. Five games is 3% of the season. But this team needs to show some urgency starting Tuesday with Chris Sale on the mound.

Cora’s team gained so much momentum for the entire 2018 season when it started 17-2. It played with urgency the entire season.

Yes, five games is a small sample size but here’s a revealing stat: Red Sox starters already have given up more earned runs (26) in five games this year than their first 19 games last year when they started 17-2. The starters posted a 2.17 ERA (25 earned runs, 103.2 innings) during that incredible 17-2 stretch to begin 2018.

This year’s rotation has given up 32 runs (26 earned runs) in 21 innings one time through the rotation. It has allowed 33 hits, including 11 home runs.

The Boston Red Sox dropped to 1-4 with a loss to the Athletics on Monday. Dave Price allowed three homers. Red Sox starters have allowed 11 homers in five games.

The 2018 Red Sox didn’t lose their fourth game until April 22, in Oakland. They experienced just one 1-4 stretch when they lost June 15, 16 in Seattle, won June 17 in Seattle and then lost their next two games in Minnesota (June 19, 20).

The offense hasn’t looked very good either. It did nothing against Athletics righty Aaron Brooks, a 28-year-old who entered with a career 8.01 ERA in 18 outings (10 starts) in the majors.

Brooks hurled 6 scoreless innings, allowing two hits and one walk while striking out six.

“Little frustration, but it’s part of it,” Mookie Betts said about the feeling in the clubhouse. “It’s a long season. You go through your ups and downs. And it’s just one of the times you’ve got to continue to fight.”

Red Sox hitters are slashing only .233/.303/.386/.689.

“It’s just a matter of putting a few at-bats together,” Cora said. “The starters need to start doing the things just like David (Price) today: give us a chance, six innings. At least we reset the bullpen today and we’re in good shape going into tomorrow. But yeah, we need to start winning ballgames.”

David Price, Boston Red Sox lefty: ‘Nothing good is happening right now. We’d rather it happen right now than the last two weeks of September’

Christopher Smith

OAKLAND, Calif. — Red Sox starters have given up 32 runs (26 earned runs) in 21 innings for an 11.14 ERA one time through the rotation. They have allowed 33 hits, including 11 home runs.

That's quite a difference from last year when the rotation went 4-0 with a 0.90 ERA (three earned runs, 30.0 innings) in its first five starts.

David Price didn't pitch as poorly as everyone else but he still allowed four runs, five hits (three homers) and two walks while striking out nine in 6 innings. The Red Sox (1-4) lost again Monday, falling 7-0 to the Oakland Athletics here at Oakland Coliseum.

"It's surprising, yeah," Price said about the rotation's first turn through. "But this is a hard game. There's a lot of talent everywhere. So we did a lot of good things last year and we'll continue to do those same things. Hopefully tomorrow."

Chris Sale will pitch Tuesday. He'll look to play the role of stopper. But it's clear from his first start (seven earned runs, three homers, three innings) he and the other starting pitchers weren't prepared entering the 2019 regular season.

It's not surprising Sale and others have lacked command after pitching so few innings during spring training. Sale started only two games and pitched nine innings during spring training. He had started four games during spring training 2018.

Price also made just two spring training starts (6.2 innings total).

Manager Alex Cora understandably limited innings this spring after the staff pitched all the way to Oct. 28 last year. And the Sox expect another deep run into October this year.

But the early returns are ugly. Red Sox starters began 12-1 with a 2.17 ERA during the team's 17-2 run to begin last season. The 2.17 ERA marked the club's lowest starter ERA through 19 games since 1920.

Things are heading in a totally different direction this year, although it's still very early.

"There's no panic in this clubhouse or the dugout," Price said. "Just nothing good is happening right now. And we'd rather it happen right now than the last two weeks of September or whatever. So we'll get through this time. We'll be better for it."

Price allowed just two runs through the first 5.2 innings Monday. But a two-out walk in the sixth to Mark Canha and a 387-foot two-run homer to Chad Pinder gave the Athletics a 4-0 lead.

"I felt like I threw the ball pretty good for the most part," Price said. "I made a couple mistakes and they made me pay for them. But to have that two-out walk there in the sixth inning, it could be different. So keep making pitches."

Price said he executed a lot of pitches.

"It's tough for us right now," Price said. "And we're all going through it. And we'll get through it together. So we'll be fine."

Boston Red Sox starting pitchers have 11.14 ERA, 11 homers allowed first turn through, David Price gives up 3 blasts in loss to Athletics

Christopher Smith

OAKLAND, Calif. — David Price allowed just two runs through the first 5.2 innings against the Athletics here Monday, but he then walked Mark Canha and allowed a 387-foot two-run homer to Chad Pinder.

A 2-0 deficit turned into 4-0 — and the Red Sox's starting pitching woes continued.

Boston lost 7-0 to the Athletics here at Oakland Coliseum to drop to 1-4. The Athletics improved to 4-3.

Red Sox starters have given up 32 runs (26 earned runs) in 21 innings for an 11.14 ERA one time through the rotation. They have allowed 33 hits, including 11 home runs.

Price struck out nine and allowed five hits and two walks.

Chris Sale will pitch Tuesday here.

Chris Sale's four-seamer averaged 92.3 mph and topped out at 94.5 mph in his first Boston Red Sox start of 2019. But he had similar velocity at the start of 2018. In his second start last year vs. Miami, his 46 four-seamers averaged 92.1 mph and he topped out at 95.6 mph.

Boston's offense, meanwhile, did nothing against Athletics righty Aaron Brooks, a 28-year-old who entered with a career 8.01 ERA in 18 outings (10 starts) in the majors.

Brooks hurled 6 scoreless innings, allowing two hits and one walk while striking out six. The Red Sox went hitless from the second out of the second inning until two outs in the seventh.

Xander Bogaerts doubled with one out in the second in a scoreless game. Mitch Moreland followed with a single to center.

Bogaerts attempted to score but center fielder Ramón Laureano threw him out at home plate. It appeared Bogaerts scored, but replay confirmed the call.

Alex Cora said throughout the offseason he planned to use Andrew Benintendi as his leadoff hitter and Mookie Betts as his No. 2 hitter this season. He had Benintendi and Betts batting 1-2 in the first four games. But he flip flopped them Monday.

Betts struck out to begin the ninth. He finished 0-for-4 with two strikeouts. Benintendi followed by flying out to left field. He went 0-for-4 with one strikeout.

Xander Bogaerts contract: Boston Red Sox's Raquel Ferreira, who once helped shortstop replace lost suits, 'very influential' in completing extension

Christopher Smith

OAKLAND, Calif. — If you watched Xander Bogaerts' contract extension press conference on Facebook live or Periscope, you heard the name Raquel Ferreira mentioned several times.

Bogaerts signed a six-year, \$120-million deal.

President of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said Ferreira "was very influential" in getting Bogaerts' extension completed.

"She's been very close to Bogey throughout his career," Dombrowski said.

Ferreira has been with the organization for 21 years. She's the third female senior VP in a baseball operations department in Major League Baseball.

She is invaluable. Many of the young players consider her a second mother.

She's always there to take care of the players. Like when Bogaerts' final Triple-A road trip in August 2013 ended with him losing his luggage. He didn't have any suits to wear on major league road trips when the Red Sox promoted him.

Ferreira contacted Dustin Pedroia to ask him to help Bogaerts. Pedroia hooked up Bogaerts with two new suits when the team played in Los Angeles in late August 2013.

“She’s obviously one of my family,” Bogaerts said about Ferreira.

Xander Bogaerts lost his luggage on his final minor league road trip. He didn't own a suit for road trips when the Red Sox promoted him. Dustin Pedroia came to the rescue.

Bogaerts said she’s been helping him since she was “a little kid” in the organization.

“I know she’s helped a lot of these guys here,” Bogaerts added, referencing his other homegrown teammates who attended the press conference here in Oakland.

According to her bio on RedSox.com, “Ferreira’s work has been focused on overseeing the baseball operations budgets and the club’s major and minor league operations. She actively oversees the daily operations for the team’s major league clubhouse, as well as the daily operations for the organization’s six minor league affiliates, handling issues for all minor league players and staff such as contract tenders, player transactions, payroll, and insurance. In addition, she heads the club’s player immigration program and was instrumental in establishing the Boston Red Sox Rookie Development program, which began in 2004.”

Dombrowski said extension discussions happened throughout the entire winter.

“We had some conversations that I thought were optimistic during spring training and some conversations I didn’t think were optimistic at the time,” Dombrowski said. “At the very end, I will say Bogey was very influential in this. He really made an emphasis on how much he wanted to be a Red Sox.

“It was Opening Day. We had talked about it. We weren’t sure what direction it was going to go,” Dombrowski added. “And things happened Opening Day over really that whole day to get it done. So I wasn’t sure which direction it was going to go. When I say for me, it was really Scott (Boras) talking to (assistant GM) Brian O’Halloran and Raquel Ferreira being involved in it, too. Them keeping me informed.”

*** *The Portland Press Herald***

Red Sox rotation spins off its axis in first series

Tom Caron

Starting pitching was supposed to be a strength of the 2019 Red Sox. Last season Boston’s starting pitchers had the fourth-best ERA in the American League and the fourth-highest strikeout rate in all of baseball.

Through the first series of 2019 the rotation has been the team’s biggest weakness.

Boston takes the field in Oakland late Monday night looking for its second win of 2019. And anything close to a decent start from a pitcher. David Price will be the latest to try to pick up where he left off in the 2018 postseason.

He was also hoping to stop a streak of absolutely miserable starts by the Red Sox rotation in Seattle. Chris Sale, Nathan Eovaldi, Eduardo Rodriguez and Rick Porcello each gave up six or more runs while lasting five or fewer innings. It was a stunningly bad weekend for Red Sox starting pitchers.

On TV, we spent the weekend talking about how little these starters threw in spring training. In Seattle, Manager Alex Cora staunchly defended the plan put into place by him and his staff. They held back the

starters in February and March because of the increased workload they endured last October. This weekend they didn't look ready for the season.

"Check what happened last year," Cora said after Sunday's loss. "We did the same thing."

Cora did hold his pitchers back in 2018, but not to the extent he did it this spring. They got their work in, but it's not just a matter of arm strength. It's about facing big-league hitters and getting command back for the long season ahead. Instead, it seemed like they were doing it in regular-season games that counted.

"We played until October 28," said Cora. "The previous year when I got here everybody was talking about how they were out of bullets in October."

His point is well taken. Cora was brought in to manage a team that had won the AL East in each of the two previous seasons. It was a good team, but a team that seemed wiped out in back-to-back losses in the first round of the playoffs.

His plan worked a year ago. They went deep in October and won it all. This spring he pulled the reins harder. It didn't work out well in Seattle, but the manager believes it will be the best plan for these pitchers in the long run. Cora said he wasn't concerned after Red Sox ace Chris Sale gave up seven runs (three home runs) in just three innings on Opening Day.

"Which one would you take?" asked Cora. "Him throwing 99 (mph) in March and April or him pitching in the World Series?"

Cora's point is clear. He's not sweating out what these pitchers have – or don't have – in their first starts of the season. He wants them to deliver late in the season and, more importantly, in the postseason.

Yet, to get to October teams need to win as many regular-season games as possible. Games in April matter. The Red Sox season is still in its nascent stages – the Red Sox don't play their first home game for another week – and there is plenty of time for things to settle down.

After winning a franchise-record 108 games and a championship last season, Cora has earned the trust of Red Sox Nation. But this is Boston. That trust is being put to the test, even if it's only been five months since the Red Sox rode duck boats through the city.

That's what happens when a rotation gives up 28 runs in 15 innings to start the season.

*** *RedSox.com***

Price's start best of '19 so far for 1-4 Red Sox

Ian Browne

OAKLAND -- At least the Red Sox almost got a good performance from a starting pitcher on Monday night. Considering how low the bar had been set in the first four games, this could be construed as progress in a 7-0 loss to the A's in the opener of a four-game series.

Nonetheless, David Price made a costly mistake in the bottom of the sixth inning -- a misplaced, first-pitch changeup that Chad Pinder put into the seats in left for a two-run homer. With that, the Red Sox completed an unsavory first turn through the rotation in which none of the five starters produced a quality start.

In going 0-for-5, the five starters -- considered to be the strength of the team -- combined to give up 11 homers.

Three of them came against Price in this one -- two of them solo shots to Khris Davis and Ramon Laureano. Overall, Boston's pitching staff has given up 14 home runs. As the Red Sox slipped to 1-4, Price helped to give the bullpen a break, going six innings, the most by a Sox starter this season. The four runs he allowed was also better than his four rotation mates. And he struck out nine.

"I just wanted us to win," Price said. "Any way I can help us do that today, that's what I wanted to do, and I wasn't able to do that. I'll be ready to pitch again in five days."

Price had the Red Sox in it, trailing 2-0 going into the bottom of the sixth. His big regret wasn't the changeup that Pinder smashed, but the two-out walk before that to Mark Canha.

"Yeah, felt like I threw the ball pretty good for the most part. Made a couple mistakes, and they made me pay for them," Price said. "If I don't have that two-out walk there in the sixth inning, it could be different."

What was the same was the result – another loss for the Red Sox. The bright spot for manager Alex Cora is that he only needed to get two innings from his bullpen. Tyler Thornburg had a strong seventh, retiring the A's on 11 pitches. Heath Hembree fell apart after an error by Rafael Devers in the eighth, giving up three runs.

"David was actually good," Cora said. "On three [mistake] pitches, three homers, but I think velocity was good, just, the changeup to Davis kind of cut into the zone. And obviously, the last one, he hung that one. And Laureano ambushed him the first pitch – but we needed six innings. I know it doesn't look great. I know they scored four. But at least he gave us a chance to reset the bullpen. It was good to see him compete the way he did."

But where were the bats?

Aside from the familiar theme of the starter struggling, there was an additional problem for the defending World Series champions on Monday: they didn't hit. Boston's bats were stifled by A's right-hander Aaron Brooks, who allowed two hits over six innings while making his first start in the Major Leagues since 2015.

Perhaps the Red Sox were pressing a bit at the plate, given the way the season has started.

"Not much today," Cora said when asked about the offense. "I think [Brooks] moved the ball all over the strike zone, inside to lefties he had that two-seamer in. Not that much from the offense. A lot of strikeouts. A lot of chasing pitches outside of the zone. Kind of like a little bit of frustration throughout the game."

The Red Sox nearly broke out in the second when Mitch Moreland knocked a one-out single up the middle. But Laureano fired a throw home, and Xander Bogaerts was ruled out at the plate. It was a close play that probably could have gone either way. After a review, the call stood. Clearly, it was a momentum-destroyer for the Sox, who didn't get another hit until the seventh and had just four on the night.

"The play at the plate, the kid made an outstanding throw," Cora said. "I don't know, the call couldn't go both ways, I guess. But it seems like we were putting something together and Laureano changed the game with that throw."

No panic

This is the first time Boston has started a season 1-4 since 2012. However, this is also almost the exact same roster that won the World Series last year. It's way too early to panic. For perspective, consider that the 1998 Yankees also started 1-4 en route to a 114-48 season.

"There's no panic in this clubhouse, or in the dugout," Price said. "Just nothing good is happening right now. We'd rather it happen right now than the last two weeks of September. So, we'll get through this time and we'll be better for it."

“It’s five games like you said,” Cora said. “When you go through stretches like this, it sucks that it’s early in the season, but yeah, we have to pick it up. I mean, yeah, we need to start winning ballgames.”

No matter how you slice it, it is a far cry from last year’s 17-2 start.

“Yeah, it’s been slow,” center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. said. “It’s not good. We don’t like where we’re at right now. We feel like there’s a lot of room to grow, and we have no choice but to learn from it. We’re not playing really good ball right now.”

Driving force for Bogaerts' deal was the Sox SS

Ian Browne

OAKLAND -- Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski has been in the game for 40 years, and there’s very little that surprises him at this point in his career.

But the fact he was able to secure a six-year, \$120 million contract extension with shortstop Xander Bogaerts less than two weeks after reaching a five-year, \$145 million extension with ace Chris Sale qualified as the joyfully unexpected.

Once Sale signed, Dombrowski didn’t think the club would be able to extend itself enough to get Bogaerts signed before free agency started in November.

As it turns out, Bogaerts was motivated enough to stay with the Red Sox that a deal was able to be consummated.

“I was not by any means thinking it was going to happen,” Dombrowski said. “Today, when I was recollecting, I was riding with [assistant general manager] Eddie [Romero] to the ballpark, I said, ‘When we had the Chris Sale press conference, I did not think we were going to get this deal done.’ We wanted him the whole time. But I would say very strongly it was Bogaerts’ desire to be here.”

Make no mistake about it: the driving force in the extension for Bogaerts was, well, Bogaerts.

“I think this was just what was best for me and my family and all that I’ve accomplished here with the Red Sox,” Bogaerts said. “It’s a very special place to play, man. The fans, and the organization in general, expect winning. And I know my teammates know how much I love winning regardless if it’s cards, baseball, dominoes, I don’t care. I just enjoy winning. They know that about me and I think this is a nice place to play.”

Once it was loud and clear to agent Scott Boras what his client wanted to do, Boras needed a few things from the Red Sox, and they complied.

The first was an opt-out clause, which Bogaerts can exercise if he chooses at the end of the 2022 season. The second is a vesting option for 2026 that kicks in if Bogaerts has 535 plate appearances in ’25. If the deal reaches the maximum length, it will be worth \$152 million over eight years, including the \$12 million that Bogaerts will earn this season from the one-year contract he signed in January.

“It was really a very cooperative effort driven by Xander’s desire to really remain with this team,” Boras said. “I said, ‘Look, if you guys can work on the opt-out thing, I think I can help you’. This is one of those rare instances you have a guy where you kind of have an ability to forecast what his evaluations are. For shortstops to hit 20 home runs is pretty rare. Will he be a 30-home-run guy?”

“Basically, I wanted a scenario where he had eight [years] at \$152 million. That’s his choice. Or at 29, he can hit the free-agent market knowing, ‘I have an [average annual value] of \$20 [million] and I’ve made right around \$100 million in my career.’ When you’re that young, you get those choices. Not many players do.”

Red Sox assistant general manager Brian O'Halloran and Boras were the key negotiators in the deal, and much of it got done on Opening Day, when the Red Sox were playing the Mariners in Seattle.

After winning a World Series in his first year as manager, Alex Cora now sees an even brighter future with Bogaerts and Sale along for the foreseeable future.

"Great," Cora said. "Great for us, great for him. I was telling somebody earlier, he's a great player, he's a better person. Just a smart individual. Hey, what they said in the press [conference] is true. He wanted to stay here."

Still to be determined is whether Mookie Betts will sign a long-term deal with the Red Sox. The American League's reigning Most Valuable Player Award winner is eligible for free agency after the 2020 season.

But Monday was a day to celebrate Bogaerts, who originally signed with the Red Sox as an international free agent out of Aruba at the age of 16.

Many of Bogaerts' teammates packed the small interview room at the Oakland Coliseum to attend the press conference prior to the Red Sox-A's game.

"This is where I grew up as a kid, a 16-year-old kid with no facial hair," Bogaerts said. "I know how proud they are of me. I'm very thankful for them. I see a lot of my teammates over there. I'm very blessed to have teammates like that, a coaching staff. I can say I won two rings with this organization.

"The group we have last year, the group we have this year, it goes beyond the regular guys. It's a family."

Bogaerts, Red Sox complete 6-year extension

Ian Browne

OAKLAND -- Though it wasn't the best weekend on the field for the Red Sox, it was a productive one off of it.

The Sox and shortstop Xander Bogaerts finalized a six-year contract extension on Monday, a deal that will keep him in Boston through at least 2025.

The agreement is for \$120 million, according to sources. Including the \$12 million Bogaerts is making this season, he will earn \$132 million over the next seven years. There is a vesting option for 2026, the club said in its announcement.

This is big news, coming on the heels of the Red Sox signing Chris Sale to a five-year, \$145 million deal at the end of spring Training. The team now has two cornerstone pieces from last year's World Series-winning club secured for the long-term.

Mookie Betts, the team's best all-around player, will be eligible for free agency at the end of the 2020 season. The right fielder indicated recently that it is likely he will get to free agency before signing an extension.

Bogaerts would have been a free agent at the end of this season. The right-handed hitter from Aruba has been with the Red Sox since Aug. 23, 2009, when he was signed as an international free agent.

After bursting onto the scene late in the 2013 pennant race and helping guide the Sox to a World Series championship that year, Bogaerts has emerged into one of the best two-way shortstops in the game. He was also key to the Red Sox's World Series-winning campaign in '18, notching career bests with 103 RBIs and a .883 OPS while hitting behind star slugger J.D. Martinez.

The 26-year-old has posted a .283/.342/.429 slash line with 75 home runs and 387 RBIs across parts of seven MLB seasons. Bogaerts was an All-Star in 2016 and a two-time Silver Slugger Award winner.

* **ESPNBoston.com**

Real or not? Red Sox's cautious approach is costing them

David Schoenfield

The big news from Red Sox nation on Monday was the official announcement of Xander Bogaerts' six-year, \$120 million contract extension that should keep him in Boston through at least 2025 (though there is an opt out after the 2022 season).

The bad news from Red Sox nation was another Boston starter having a less-than-stellar outing, as the A's hit three home runs off David Price in a 7-0 victory that dropped the defending champions to 1-4 with six games to go on their season-opening 11-game road trip.

The final tally for Red Sox starters after one trip through the rotation: 32 runs allowed in 21 innings, including 11 home runs. That homer total is tied with the 1955 Braves and 1978 Blue Jays for the most allowed by a team's starting pitchers through the first five games of the season, according to Elias. Price joined Chris Sale and Nathan Eovaldi in allowing three home runs. That makes three times in five games; last year, a Red Sox starter allowed three or more home runs just seven times in 162 games.

To be fair, Price was one out away from a solid outing, but Chad Pinder pounced on a first-pitch high changeup for a two-run homer with two outs in the sixth inning. Earlier, Khris Davis homered off a changeup left up in the zone. Price threw 31 changeups out of 93 pitches, but that wasn't necessarily a surprise, as the pitch was a big key to his postseason success. (He threw 40 in his ALCS-clinching win over the Astros.)

Red Sox starters worked very little in spring training, at least in official game settings. Eduardo Rodriguez threw 15 innings, the most of the five starters. Eovaldi pitched just seven innings and Price just $6\frac{2}{3}$. Sure, there was work on back fields, but there was a concerted effort from the start of spring training to take a slow ride into 2019. That was an acknowledgment of the workloads Price, Eovaldi and Rick Porcello carried last October, plus Sale's recovery from the sore shoulder that limited him the final two months of the past season.

In fact, the Red Sox were so worried about protecting their starters that at the outset of spring training, Alex Cora announced that the team would begin the season with a six-man rotation. That idea fell by the wayside when Steven Wright was hit with an 80-game suspension for a positive drug test and Brian Johnson remained in the bullpen.

But were the Red Sox too cautious? That was the focus of Peter Abraham's story Monday in the Boston Globe, in which he asked if the Sox focused too much on rest and not enough on preparation. Cora said that wasn't the issue behind the awful outings from the first four starters. "Whoever is doubting us, check what happened last year. We did the same thing," Cora said.

As Abraham pointed out, however, it wasn't the same. Sale, Price and Porcello combined for $42\frac{2}{3}$ spring innings in 2018 compared to $27\frac{2}{3}$ this year. (Rodriguez was recovering from knee surgery last year.) As the Red Sox pointed out, there were live batting practice sessions and minor league games to build up arm strength, but that's not the same as facing major league batters in spring training games.

Is any of this of concern? Not yet. It's one trip through the rotation. These things happen, though admittedly it has been an especially ugly five days, and it's a bit disconcerting compared to last year's 17-2 start that put the Red Sox in control of the division. It's also not without some meaning: According to FanGraphs, the

Red Sox's odds of winning the AL East are about 7 percentage points lower than they were on Opening Day.

Throw of the day: Remember Ramon Laureano, the late-season addition to the A's last year who came up and unleashed several Roberto Clemente-like throws? Or as us kids like to say, Jesse Barfield-like throws. Well, he was at it again in Oakland's win:

Replay reviews upheld the out call at home, though a later replay seemed to show that Bogaerts got his foot in ahead of the tag. The throw was clocked at 96.0 mph, which is impressive though not unique (Marlins outfielder Peter O'Brien had a throw clocked at 96.1 mph earlier in the evening). Still, it solidifies Laureano's growing reputation as the best arm in the game and will make baserunners hesitant to challenge him for the extra base.

For good measure, he later blasted this long home run:

It looks like Peter Alonso can hit the low fastball: The Mets' rookie first baseman made his first major league home run a big one, as he blasted a 444-foot, 112.8 mph rocket out to center field, turning a 4-3 Mets lead in the ninth into a more comfortable 7-3 cushion. Edwin Diaz worked out of a bases-loaded, no-out jam by striking out the side to seal the win.

MLB.com's Sarah Langs, our old ESPN colleague, reported that it was the sixth-hardest home run by a Mets player since the Statcast era began in 2015. That's three doubles and a home run in four games for Alonso, and I love that Mickey Calloway is batting him second, as his minor league numbers from last year suggest he'll take some walks to go with his power. The interesting thing to watch will be his contact rate. At Double-A, he fanned just 18.3 percent of the time, but after a midseason call-up to Triple-A, that rose to 25.9, and it was 25 percent in the Arizona Fall League. If he can keep it under 25 percent, he's going to put up some numbers.

LOL Cubs: Jesse Rogers has the report on another Cubs debacle. They were shut out and made six errors in an 8-0 loss to the Braves, becoming the first team since the 1985 Phillies and just the fifth in the past 50 years to get blanked while making at least six errors. Fun factoid: That 1985 Phillies game actually came on Opening Day at home, with the immortal Steve Jeltz committing three errors at shortstop. Maybe the Cubs need to go back to sleeping less, eating more junk food and taking less batting practice.

Long live the opener: The Rays unveiled the opener for the first time in 2019, and it worked the same way it did much of last season. Ryne Stanek struck out the side, Ryan Yarbrough served as the "bulk guy" -- I talked to Stanek and Yarbrough in spring training, and that was their choice for the name of the guy who follows the opener -- and allowed one run 4½ innings, and four relievers followed to shut down the Rockies 7-1.

My takeaway from this game, however, was Kevin Kiermaier's home run:

Kiermaier is a huge key to Tampa's success. Although he has continued to put up insane defensive metrics, he has averaged just 97 games the past three seasons. He hit well enough in 2016 and 2017 (.261/.335/.430) before struggling in 2018 (.217/.282/.370). A healthy Kiermaier playing 140-plus games and hitting like he did two years ago could be worth three wins over the 2018 version of Kiermaier and the alternate options in center field.

Break up the Orioles! We might not get the chance to write many nice things about the Orioles, so kudos to them for beating the Blue Jays 6-5 and running their winning streak to three games -- their first three-game win streak on the road since August 2017. David Hess started the game and left after 6⅓ hitless innings. He is the first Orioles pitcher to take a no-hitter into the seventh inning since Freddy Garcia in 2013 (the longest such drought in the majors). The bullpen promptly served up a home run to ruin the combined no-hit bid and nearly blew a 6-0 lead. Still, the O's held on, and maybe that over/under line of 59 wins will be in play after all. (Yes, I took the under.)

The first of many: Yes, Fernando Tatis Jr. has some bat speed. Here's his first major league home run:

At 20 years, 90 days, he becomes the second-youngest player in Padres history to hit a home run. Roberto Alomar beat him by five days with his first home run in 1988.

* **WEEI.com**

David Price better, but Red Sox starters keep letting opponents leave the park

John Tomase

As far as the Red Sox starting staff goes, this qualifies as progress: David Price mostly surrendered solo homers.

Don't misunderstand -- Price eventually allowed a two-run blast that basically clinched Oakland's 7-0 victory. But at least he gave the Red Sox a chance.

He still couldn't stop them from falling to 1-4 on a season that is already unfolding very differently than basically any five-game stretch from last year. But even after allowing three home runs, Price surpassed his rotation-mates simply by reaching the exalted level of "not terrible."

Price paid for two mistakes early -- a hanging changeup that defending AL home run champ Khris Davis launched into orbit, and an elevated fastball that Ramon Laureano treated similarly -- before hanging another changeup in the sixth that Chad Pinder pulled down the left field line for a two-run blast.

After four starts of varying levels of horror, however, the Red Sox will take what Price gave them. He became their first starter to throw a pitch in the sixth inning, and also the first to allow fewer than six runs.

He didn't stop the homer-fest, though, and that's a problem. The quintet of Chris Sale, Nathan Eovaldi, Eduardo Rodriguez, Rick Porcello and Price has allowed 11 home runs already. By comparison, the starters didn't allow their 11th homer until Game 24 last year, and half of them came from fill-in starters Brian Johnson and Hector Velazquez, as well as E-Rod.

(It should be noted, by the way, that reliever Heath Hembree allowed another homer as part of Oakland's three-run eighth on Monday, giving the Red Sox an AL-worst 15 allowed through their first 5 games.)

Price went six innings, allowing five hits and four runs, striking out nine and walking two. His final walk ended up being a killer, as he lost first baseman Mark Canha on a couple of borderline calls with two outs in the sixth. Pinder then jumped on his first pitch to put things away.

So what are we to make of the rotation after one turn? Manager Alex Cora has bristled at criticisms of the way the starters were babied this spring, noting that no one complained when the approach worked last year.

Cora went easy on his starters in recognition of the load they carried last year, right through pivotal relief appearances in the playoffs. If you're looking for an explanation of early-season diminished velocity and command, don't underestimate the impact of the postseason.

Porcello basically admitted in Los Angeles last October that Red Sox starters were gassed. No one complained, because they were doing what it took to win a title.

They might be paying the price now, however, and while it's too early to panic, it's never too soon to be concerned.

Baseballs are flying out of the park on their watch, and the Red Sox have been powerless to stop it. If they wanted to prove that 2018 is indeed history, this is one way to do it.

The game might've turned out differently had shortstop Xander Bogaerts not been called out at home on a perfect throw from Laureano in the second. Though replays seemed to show Bogaerts sliding in safely, the out call was upheld on challenge and the Red Sox barely threatened to score thereafter. They were limited to only four hits.

How and why Xander Bogaerts decided to stick around for a while

Rob Bradford

OAKLAND -- When Alex Cora got the call in his Seattle hotel room Thursday night, it probably caught the Red Sox manager a bit off guard.

Why not? That was certainly the case when his boss learned of the news that Xander Bogaerts had agreed to a six-year, \$120 million contract extension.

"I was not by any means thinking it was going to happen," admitted Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski. "Today when I was recollecting, I was riding with Eddie (Romero) to the ballpark, I said, 'When we had the Chris Sale press conference, I did not think we were going to get this deal done.' ... We wanted him the whole time. But I would say very strongly it was Bogey's desire to be here."

This press conference that took place in the decay of the home of the A's never seemed like a logical endgame. Bogaerts was a Scott Boras client. Those guys almost always go to free agency. And as uncertain as the market may be, this was still a 26-year-old who was in line to represent the top tier of next offseason's free agent class. Cora knew how it worked, as did Dombrowski.

"Only a year away, Scott usually isn't very open to having his guys sign," the Sox baseball boss said. "Usually when it happens, my experience with Scott's clients is that it's driven by the player. They stand up and they say, 'I want to get it done.' Doesn't mean it's going to get it done."

But it did get done. And this is how and why ...

Almost every offseason the routine when Boras emerged at the GM or winter meetings included Boston media members asking about a Bogaerts' extension. But as time ticked by, such queries seemed more and more pointless. Or so we thought.

"They had made some proposals," said Bogaerts' agent of his client's arbitration years. "But the thing about it for me was I wanted to make sure Boston knew where we thought Xander was going to go offensively. Last year kind of established for us. We were kind of able to say this is what he's capable of. It allowed us to put a range where he would sit knowing he had those kind of numbers. ... When he had the season last year I said to myself I thought he had a chance to get something done in the range he belonged."

OK. So Bogaerts put up the kind of numbers in 2018 that would allow for a different kind of financial conversation. But that would have seemed to be pricing the shortstop out of an extension even more than before. This past December, however, the tone started to change a bit. Bogaerts had clearly sent the message to his representatives that he wanted to prioritize sticking around with the Red Sox as long as something could get done before the start of the regular season.

Perhaps some of the motivation involved an uneasiness involving how baseball's free agency has been shaking out. Maybe in that respect, it was the right place at the right time for the shortstop so many thought would be a lock to hit the open market.

Still, as serendipitous as the landscape had become to getting a deal done this was going to come right down to the wire.

The Red Sox could keep their shortstop at a reasonable rate. But only one condition: Bogaerts got to have another go-round with this free agency thing in three years.

"The real key of all of this was trying to finally get the opt-out involved where he can get a chance to look at the team a few years down the road," Boras explained. "Plus he's so young. He's going to be a 29-year-old free agent. Ninety percent of the free agents are 30 or above. He will be 29 because he's so young.

"He was saying to me (he wanted to stay) all along. I kept on saying, 'Xander we can't move that to where we put you there in seven years because you're going to end up in a time-frame at 33, 34. We want you to have a look at the market prior to that.' Then we had to look at the AAV part of it. Getting those things integrated into it and finally with the help of Tom and John and such, I said, 'Look, if you guys can work on the opt-out thing I think I can help you because this is one of those rare instances you have a guy where you kind of have an ability to forecast what his evaluations are.' For shortstops to hit 20 home run is pretty rare. Will he be a 30 home run guy? You kind of do the calculus of where he's going on the OPS and the metrics and you look at all the other things.

"He had a great season last year. You're able to get some clarity as to where the player is going performance-wise. But the real thing was to put him in a situation where they get some assurance as to how they handle their middle infield, which is a bigger problem in today's game. You may have some corner guys with things you can do, but for them it was something of a priority. I think that drove them from a standpoint where it was something they wanted to get clarity on. And from Xander's point of view, he loves Boston and certainly wanted to continue with this group of players. But I said, 'Three or four years from now there are some real decisions to be made on this team. We'll have to take a look then.' Once we were able to answer those two things for him he was like, 'I can do that or I can do that.'

"We finally agreed (the opt-out) would be put in the contract and that allowed us to go forward."

Right place. Right time. All things involved, seemingly the right move ... for all involved.

Scott Boras hints that J.D. Martinez may be ready to explore free agency

Rob Bradford

OAKLAND -- Chris Sale. Then Xander Bogaerts. Who's next?

When it comes to contract extensions/restructuring it doesn't appear as though J.D. Martinez is close to even being on-deck.

According to a source familiar with the situation, the Red Sox and Martinez haven't held any discussions when it comes to reworking the slugger's current deal. Martinez has an opt-out at the conclusion of the 2019 season, in which he is making \$23.75 million. He also can opt-out after next season (which is also a \$23.75 million payday). But if the designated hitter/outfielder chooses not to use either option the last two years of the deal drop down to \$19.375 million in each season.

Listening to Martinez's agent Scott Boras at the press conference to announce Bogaerts' extension it certainly seems like the player might be getting ready for another round of free agency after 2019.

"This guy is some kind of hitter," Boras said. "He and (Washington's Anthony) Rendon (also a Boras client) are probably going to be the two most focused on offensive players on the market as far as guys who are elite offensive players. Yeah ... Not that I think about those things."

Martinez told WEEI.com in spring training he would be open to discussing a new contract during the season, an approach Boras would be open to.

"I discuss the clients individually. Good lawyer stuff. If J.D. wants me to talk with them ... I'm usually heading over to Tom's house to get something free out of him during the season," said Boras of Red Sox chairman Tom Werner. "That's strictly up to him. Obviously it's a relationship that has gone very, very well for everybody. You love it when players play well."

Alex Cora explains why he moved Mookie Betts back to leadoff

Rob Bradford

OAKLAND -- Four games. That was the extent of Mookie Betts locking himself into the No. 2 spot in the batting order with Andrew Benintendi leading off. Now the pair is flip-flopping again, at least for the time being.

With Benintendi back in the starting lineup after starting on the bench Sunday due to a sore right knee, the left fielder is back in the No. 2 spot he inhabited for much of 2018 with Betts sliding back up to leadoff.

Benintendi said prior to the series opener against the A's that Alex Cora had given him notice via a text Sunday night that such a dynamic would be in play. He also noted that the Red Sox' manager warned the pair in spring training such a change might be made at some point.

"The most important thing is to stay in tune with them and let them know," Cora said prior to the series opener. "They really don't care. When I talk to them they just want to hit which is great. You tell them in advance, start talking about it, start looking ahead. I think any combination is good. It's funny because everybody thought the second hitter will get more RBI opportunities. Then in Seattle, the leadoff guy got a lot of opportunities. Those guys in the bottom of the lineup are getting on base too, which is great. Obviously, with time we'll get another on-base percentage guy with the last three spots in the lineup. There are going to be a lot of opportunities there."

Here is the rest of the Red Sox' batting order with right-hander Aaron Brooks on the mound for Oakland:

Mookie Betts RF

Andrew Benintendi LF

Rafael Devers 3B

J.D. Martinez DH

Xander Bogaerts SS

Mitch Moreland 1B

Eduardo Nunez 2B

Jackie Bradley Jr. CF

Christian Vazquez C

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Three thoughts on the Xander Bogaerts contract extension

Sean McAdam

For the second time in the last 10 days, the Red Sox have given out a nine-figure contract extension to a player who had been hurtling toward free agency this November.

In the waning days of spring training, Chris Sale was the beneficiary of a five-year, \$145-million deal. On Monday, the Red Sox made official their six-year, \$120-million extension for shortstop Xander Bogaerts.

Some thoughts on the deal:

1. The left side of the infield is locked down, joining the rotation as areas the Red Sox have solidified. But at a price.

Sale's deal means every starter except Rick Porcello is under control for a minimum of three more seasons, with Sale, David Price and Nathan Eovaldi under contract for at least the next four years.

It's the same for the left side of the infield. Third baseman Rafael Devers is under control through 2022 and Bogaerts, who has an opt-out after 2022, could conceivably be under control through 2026 if he vests with 525 at-bats in 2025.

That kind of continuity is good, especially for talented young players like Devers, who has yet to fully hit his stride at 22, and Bogaerts, just now entering his prime.

The right side of the infield is far less accounted for. Dustin Pedroia has a contract for this season and two more years after this one, but given his physical issues and the state of his surgically-recovered left knee, that might be a good thing. Meanwhile, first base is rather temporary for now — both Mitch Moreland and Steve Pearce can be free agents after the current season.

The Sox could fill first internally, choosing from Michael Chavis, Sam Travis and perhaps even Bobby Dalbec, the latter of whom was drafted as a third baseman but is currently blocked at his own position by Devers.

Of some concern: assuming for the moment that J.D. Martinez doesn't exercise an opt-out this fall the Sox have just shy of \$135 million committed to five players already for 2020: David Price, Nathan Eovaldi, Pedroia, Martinez and Bogaerts.

Now add in — rounding off for mathematical purposes here — approximately \$30 million for Mookie Betts and his final year of salary arbitration and the Sox are at \$164.95 million for six players, or, less than a quarter of their 25-man roster.

2. Don't underestimate the impact of Alex Cora in retaining players.

Typically, Scott Boras' clients don't sign away their right to hit the free agent market. Boras advises them — not incorrectly — they retain more leverage when they allow as many as 29 other teams to get into the bidding. That's perfectly reasonable, and an obvious matter of supply and demand.

The fact that Bogaerts directed Boras to get a deal done — and done early — speaks volumes. Bogaerts mentioned the Sox winning tradition — they've won two World Series in his first six years and won the division on two other occasions — as a big motivating factor.

"My teammates know how much I love winning," said Bogaerts at the press conference to announce his signing, "regardless of it's cards, baseball, dominoes, I don't care. I just enjoy winning. They know that about me and I think this was a nice place to play."

Part of the "nice place to play" element, however, is the relationship he enjoys with Cora. It's no secret Bogaerts didn't mesh as well with former manager John Farrell. But as a former middle infielder, Cora made Bogaerts one of his first-year projects — insisting Bogaerts could improve defensively, then working

with him to achieve that, while also recognizing the room for offensive upside by taking a more aggressive approach at the plate.

Sale, too, was partly motivated by Cora. Sale appreciates that Cora has made preserving the health and well-being of the staff as a true priority of the organization. That comfort level — coupled with the affection he has for his teammates and the proximity of his Naples home to the team's spring training base in nearby Fort Myers — was part of the reason Sale stayed.

And as an added bonus, the Sox got team discounts on both players, making them sensible deals for the club.

3. The pay window is closed for now.

When Sale signed, Dave Dombrowski noted that it was his belief that shutting off contract negotiations by Opening Day was an unofficial team policy, so as to ward off distractions. As it happened, the Bogaerts talks went a few days beyond, but that was mostly due to finalizing the deal and getting a physical done; the framework for the deal was in place when the Sox began the season in Seattle.

But that's it. Dombrowski told the Boston Herald Monday that, "I am pretty certain (the Sox are done with contract talks). We have no ongoing conversations."

That means four other potential free agents — Moreland, Pearce, Brock Holt and Rick Porcello — will have to wait until after the season to work out possible deals to remain.

Moreland and Pearce, as players in their mid-30s, could be viewed as expendable and Holt, while a valuable member of the roster thanks to his versatility, is not an everyday player.

But Porcello has been left out. He told WEEL.com that he was interested in engaging in talks to remain with the Sox during the spring, but that the Sox never countered with any proposal.

Given the money invested in Sale, Price and Eovaldi in the rotation — Rodriguez is year-to-year as an arbitration-eligible — the Sox might want a younger pitcher to step into the staff for 2020, or, at the very least, find themselves a less expensive veteran on a short-term commitment.

Red Sox offense joins the list of woes for the night

Sean McAdam

We interrupt this full-fledged panic about the state of the Red Sox pitching staff — and starting rotation, in particular — to remind that you pitching wasn't all that ailed the Sox on Monday night.

Shifting their road trip to Oakland, some things remained the same. Red Sox starters again failed to deliver a quality start. The bullpen, which had been mostly excellent in Seattle, allowed the A's to tack on three late-inning runs. And there was the requisite error in the infield ... for the fourth time in five games.

So, more of the same.

But there was also this: the offense, which had produced 24 runs in four games against the Mariners, became an issue in the 7-0 shutout loss to the A's.

Facing journeyman Aaron Brooks — the fifth starter on a mediocre staff, making his first big league start since 2015, and hanging on to a roster spot tenuously — the Red Sox barely made any noise with their bats.

In the second inning, a double to the right-center gap by Xander Bogaerts followed by a single to center by Mitch Moreland, appeared to set up the Sox for a quick run. But A's center fielder Ramon Laureano fired a missile from center, on the fly, and cut down Bogaerts at the plate.

(The Sox challenged the call, and some angles appeared to indicate that Bogaerts got his front leg to scrape across the plate before he was tagged out by Oakland catcher Nick Hundley. The original call stood).

Either way, the Red Sox, who came oh-so-close to scoring the first run of the night, never came within 90 feet of scoring again the rest of the way. In fact, after Moreland's almost-RBI single, the Sox didn't muster so much as another hit until J.D. Martinez lined a sharp single to left with two out in the seventh.

Against Brooks, the Sox had just one more baserunner for the rest of his outing.

Brooks hardly qualifies as dominant. His fastball sat in the low 90s most of the night. But the Sox still couldn't solve him. In his six innings, the second inning rally-that-wasn't marked the only time the Sox sent more than three hitters to the plate in the same inning against him.

Again, this wasn't Justin Verlander or Corey Kluber. This was Aaron Brooks, who came into Monday's start with three big league wins to show for his parts of five seasons and a bloated career ERA of 8.01.

The Sox made it easy for him. Advocating for your hitters to attack early in the count when they see good pitches is one thing, but the Sox were downright impatient at times. In four of the first five frames, Brooks needed 13 pitches or fewer to record three outs. It wasn't until the sixth, his final inning of work, that the Sox forced him to throw more than 20 pitches in an inning.

At least in the four games in Seattle, the Red Sox offense — with the help from a poor Mariners bullpen, and, on one occasion, the defensively challenged rookie third baseman Dylan Moore — gave the team a chance in the ninth inning. And for most teams, averaging six runs per game — as they did at T-Mobile Park — is going to produce at least as many wins as losses.

But you could almost see this coming. The lineup, knowing that the pitching staff is scuffling and realizing that the bullpen is already overworked after just four games, begins to press, intent on getting an early lead. What happens next is what happened to the Red Sox Monday night — not much.

For the entire night, the Red Sox had exactly three at-bats with runners in scoring position. In the first one, they came through, only to (possibly) be robbed by home plate umpire Kerwin Danley, and then again by the replay crew. But the next two times, the Sox got a force play and a pop-up to second for their efforts.

Like the pitching difficulties, the offensive scuffling isn't likely to last long. There are too many good hitters in the lineup for that to happen.

For now, however, the Red Sox are masquerading as a bad team and the accompanying profile. When they hit, they don't pitch. And when they pitch even a little bit, they don't hit at all.

BSJ Game Report: Athletics 7, Red Sox 0 – The beat goes on as Red Sox shutout

Sean McAdam

Starting pitching better, but not by much: In his first start of the season, David Price was at least competitive. He kept the Red Sox in the game through the first five innings, which is more than could be said about his fellow starters in the first series in Seattle. Price allowed two homers in the first three innings, but both were solo shots. He also racked up strikeouts — two in the first, three in the second and two more in the fourth. His four-seam fastball was touching 94 mph and he was able to bury some pitches inside against righthanders. But just when it seemed like the Sox might get a quality start from someone in their rotation, Price stumbled in his final inning of work. After a two-out walk to Mark Canha, he threw a first-pitch changeup to Chad Pinder, who drove it out to dead center, doubling the A's lead and putting the game effectively out of reach. In five games now, Red Sox starters have yielded 11 homers. Price's stuff was the best any Red Sox starter has flashed to date — an admittedly low bar to clear — but the long ball did him in, accounting for all four runs against him.

Red Sox get nothing from the top third of order: Alex Cora had Mookie Betts leading off again Monday, explaining that he wanted to break the left-right balance because of the A's bullpen matchups. But if the move was also designed to get the lineup going, it didn't work. Betts was hitless in four at-bats with two strikeouts, and Andrew Benintendi, returning after sitting out a game after fouling a ball off his right kneecap Saturday, wasn't any better, also 0-for-4 with one strikeout. Finally, there No. 3 hitter Rafael Devers who didn't get on base until he worked a two-out walk in the ninth inning against closer Fernando Rodney. Devers struck out three times prior to that. When you're 1-2-3 hitters are a combined 0-for-11 with one walk, it's not likely to be a good night for your team offensively.

Bullpen also suffers an off-night: Coming into the game, Red Sox relievers had allowed just one run in the previous 14 innings. That run got extended when for an inning thanks to Tyler Thornburg's scoreless seventh, but Heath Hembree failed to retire any of the first five hitters to face him in the eighth. He was tagged for a leadoff homer by Matt Chapman, then allowed three base hits sandwiched around an infield error, resulting in three more runs by the A's. Given the fact that the Sox had so little going offensively, the 4-0 deficit Hembree inherited was unlikely to be overcome, but allowing three more didn't help the team's confidence, either.

TURNING POINT

The Red Sox briefly hinted at some offensive life in the seventh, trailing 4-0. With two outs, they got consecutive singles from J.D. Martinez and Xander Bogaerts, which brought Mitch Moreland to the plate. Moreland has 15 career homers at Oakland Coliseum and another one of his three-run specialties might have been just what the Sox needed to get back into this one. Instead, Moreland popped out meekly to second, ending the threat and the inning, stranding two.

TWO UP

Tyler Thornburg: Thornburg, whom the Red Sox are trying to get right, had his best outing of the entire spring, retiring the A's in order while notching a strikeout. This time, there were no two-out walks or hard-hit balls to extend the inning. Thornburg looked sharp and confident.

Xander Bogaerts: It's always a good day when you formalize a six-year, \$120-million contract extension, but then Bogaerts made it even better with a second-inning double to right-center and later added a sharp single to center for a two-hit night.

ONE DOWN

Rafael Devers: In addition to going hitless and striking out three times in the No. 3 hole, Devers committed his third error in four starts. He made an outstanding play on an in-between hop, then gave himself time to set his throw across the diamond, but still yanked it, pulling Moreland high off the bag at first.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

The Sox have four losses by April 1. Last season, they didn't lose their fourth game until April 22, in their 21st game.

Boston's pitchers have allowed 41 runs in 41 innings.

The Sox have lost 36 of their last 51 games in Oakland.

QUOTE OF NOTE

"It's only five games." Alex Cora on the team's slow start.

UP NEXT

The Red Sox and A's continue the series Tuesday night, with LHP Chris Sale (0-1, 21.00) vs. RHP Mike Fiers (1-1, 5.00) at 10:05.

* *The Athletic*

The annotated guide to Xander Bogaerts' heartfelt extension press conference

Chad Jennings

OAKLAND, Calif. — When it was his turn to speak, Xander Bogaerts hesitated. It seemed he didn't know what to say, or maybe he wasn't sure how best to say it. On either side of him were more polished speakers. Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski sat on his right, outspoken sports agent Scott Boras was on his left, but Bogaerts was the man in the middle and the man of the hour at a press conference to announce his six-year, \$120 million extension.

It was Bogaerts who had passed up the opportunity to hit the open market this winter. It was Bogaerts who, at the final hour, had asserted himself to make the deal happen. It was Bogaerts who needed to speak and explain what it all meant.

Dombrowski had gone first, saying the usual stuff about being excited to get a deal done, and then Bogaerts leaned into the microphone and tried to pass the buck.

"I think Dave said everything," he said.

But as he smiled, Bogaerts continued, and he spoke for a full two and a half minutes before anyone had a chance to ask a question. He mentioned 22 different people, 18 of them by name. He spoke of two championships in the big leagues and four years in the minors. He rubbed his perfectly manicured facial hair and talked about the day he signed with no hope of growing a beard.

Those two and a half minutes told the story of this player, his place within the organization, and the reason this contract came together.

What follows is Bogaerts' opening statement, annotated with the details that made this particular business decision so intensely personal to the player and the organization alike.

"I want to start by saying thank you to John Henry, Tom Werner, Mr. Gordon and the Red Sox ownership group (1) for making this happen. Obviously, thank you to my agent, Scott Boras (2), for making this possible and working hard with Dave Dombrowski, and BOH (3) and everyone that was involved getting this done. I also see Mike Fiore in the back there (4). I know how close I am with him."

1. The current Red Sox ownership group — Mr. Gordon is a reference to Mike Gordon, president of Fenway Sports Group — purchased the team in 2002 when Nomar Garciaparra seemed entrenched as the defining shortstop of the era. Instead, Garciaparra was traded away two years later, and it's Bogaerts who's become this group's stalwart at the position. At \$20 million per year, the Red Sox ownership group has given Bogaerts one of the largest contracts ever for a shortstop, and within the next three years, Bogaerts will likely be the franchise's all-time leader in games played at the position.

2. Boras famously does not often advise his clients to sign extensions. He likes hitting the open market for maximum value. Bogaerts, though, wanted to stay with the Red Sox. The crucial element, from Boras' point of view, was an opt-out after the 2022 season. "The key thing for me," Boras said, "was that I wanted him to have the opportunity for free agency at 29. I told Xander, 'If you can attain that and do that, I think this deal is doable because we came to a good understanding on the AAV.' We properly placed him and didn't have too much reaching for that. It was really about the flexibility inside the contract and putting together a format that will allow him to look at the team for three or four years to really know who the Boston Red Sox are."

3. BOH is Brian O'Halloran, the Red Sox's executive vice president and assistant general manager, who handles a significant portion of the team's contractual issues. He is lead negotiator for the team. "There's been prolonged discussions throughout the whole winter time," Dombrowski said. "And now, finally, we had some conversations that I thought were optimistic during spring training and some conversations I didn't think were optimistic at the time. At the very end, I will say that Bogey was very influential in this. He really made an emphasis on how much he wanted to be a Red Sox, and really right around Opening Day — it was Opening Day — we had talked about it, weren't sure which direction it was going to go, and things happened at Opening Day really over that whole day to get it done. I wasn't sure which direction it was going to go in. When I say for me, it really was Scott talking to Brian O'Halloran and (senior vice president) Raquel Ferreira being involved in it too and keeping me informed."

4. Outside observers actually filled the press conference room before Bogaerts, Dombrowski and Boras arrived. Two members of Boras' group — including Fiore — stood in the back alongside the television cameras, while nearly every active Red Sox player and coach filled the back corner of the room, much like they did when Chris Sale had a similar press conference to discuss his own contract extension.

"I want to thank my family back at home. I know my mom, my uncle, my brother (5) and obviously my sister, they're so close to me. I know how proud they are of me (for) being able to do this (6). They know this is where I grew up as a kid — 16-year-old kid with no facial hair (7). Now, I got so much going on. I know how proud they are of me, and I'm very thankful for them."

5. Bogaerts signed out of Aruba in 2009, and it was kind of a two-for-one deal. He signed for \$410,000, while his twin brother, Jair — a catcher and first baseman — signed for \$180,000. It was Jair who initially interested the Red Sox. Their scout, Mike Lord, nearly missed Xander because he was sick with chickenpox. While Xander quickly became one of the top prospects in all of baseball, Jair's career stalled in the Dominican Summer League, where he hit .227 across two seasons. He was ultimately traded in March 2012 as part of the unusual compensation package that sent general manager Theo Epstein to the Cubs. The Cubs released Jair a month later.

6. By the end of his first full season in the United States, Bogaerts was being hailed by Baseball America as "the most intriguing prospect to play for the Red Sox's rookie-level Dominican Summer League team since Hanley Ramirez." At the end of the 2011 season, he was ranked the No. 2 prospect in the entire Red Sox system. After the 2012 season, he was the eighth-ranked prospect in all of baseball. In 2013, he became the 11th youngest position player to start a World Series game. By that point, Baseball America was quoting an evaluator saying, "They may end up making a statue of this guy."

7. Bogaerts was 18 years old by the time he came to the United States for his first full season with Class-A Greenville. On that roster was the Red Sox's second-round draft pick from the previous summer: a 22-year-old hard-throwing Texan named Brandon Workman. "I'd never seen (an 18)-year-old hit the ball like he did," Workman said. "It came off his bat differently than everybody else. You could tell he was going to be a special player back in A ball." But surely you expect things to be different when you're just getting into pro ball. "No, he was better," Workman said. "He was better than everybody."

"I see a lot of my teammates over there (8). I'm very blessed to have teammates like that, (and the) coaching staff. I can say I have won two rings with this organization (9), and the group we had last year and the group we have this year, it goes beyond just regular guys (10). I think it's a real family. Guys that I grew up playing with in the minor leagues, Christian Vazquez (11), Jackie Bradley, Brandon Workman, all those guys. Matt Barnes (12). Just seeing them grow as players and helping us, the Red Sox team, win championships. Mookie Betts, I mean, I'm really blessed to have a great group of guys like that behind me and pushing me to become better."

8. The room was packed with players, who made Bogaerts laugh when he first sat behind the microphone. Rafael Devers literally sat on the floor like a little kid. Eduardo Núñez stood with his arms crossed the whole time, a look that must have been designed to make Bogaerts laugh again and again. When the press conference was over, Mitch Moreland literally lifted Devers off the floor, and Bogaerts did a pair of one-

on-one interviews, first with NESN and then with WEEL's Joe Castiglione, who Bogaerts hugged first. Not 15 minutes after the media blitz was over, Bogaerts was back in the clubhouse, playing cards with Devers, Núñez and Vazquez.

9. Bogaerts won his first ring in 2013, a season that started with him hitting .171 through 10 games in Double A. By the middle of June, he was in Triple A, and on Aug. 19, the Red Sox purchased his contract from Pawtucket, R.I. He was 20 years old and played just 18 regular-season games down the stretch, only six of them as at starting third baseman. In the World Series, though, he started every single game at third and hit .455 during the three road games in St. Louis. Bogaerts won his second ring last year, when he had a hit in 11 of 14 playoff games.

10. The Red Sox have focused on keeping this group together. Not only did they re-sign midseason additions Nathan Eovaldi and Steve Pearce, but in the past two weeks, they've also signed both Sale and Bogaerts to extensions. The Boston Herald reported that Dombrowski made clear, though, that he does not expect to negotiate any more extensions during the season. Opening Day was a soft deadline, and the team got a Bogaerts deal in place that day.

11. Bogaerts' first professional roster was with the Red Sox's Dominican Summer League team alongside his brother, but he's the only position player from that roster to have made it to the big leagues and the only player on that roster, period, still in the Red Sox's system. His first full season in the states, though, Bogaerts played with Workman, Travis Shaw, Bryce Brentz, Bradley Jr. and Vazquez, who led the team in home runs and RBI. Bogaerts, Workman, Bradley and Vazquez were together again with Class-A Salem in 2012, joined this time by Barnes. In 2013, Bogaerts made his Triple-A debut in an infield with Brock Holt.

12. Here's Barnes on Bogaerts: "You could always tell that he was going to be a good ballplayer. He had the tools. He had the knowledge of the game of baseball. And he was a great teammate. I mean, he's a guy that I spent a bunch of years in the minors with, and obviously up here for a bunch of years now. As good of a baseball player as he is, he's an even better dude. Great teammate."

"Alex Cora (13), who has obviously helped me a lot to become the player I am today. I want to thank all my coaches in the minor leagues that I had. I see Febles. I see Goody. I've had them in the minor leagues (14). Rags. I'm very thankful for all you guys. I mean, I'm blessed, and thank you. Thank you. If I forgot someone, I mean, sorry, but thank you. Eddie Romero (15). I mean, wow. Raquel Ferreira (16) — I think she's obviously one of my family while I'm here in Boston. She learned me when I was a little kid; I know she's helped a lot of these guys here. Also, thank you to her, and, I mean, it's very special to be here (17)."

13. Since he became manager, Cora has routinely said that Bogaerts belongs in the discussion with Francisco Lindor, Carlos Correa and Corey Seager as one of the top young shortstops in baseball. "It's funny," Cora said on Monday. "Because at one point, people didn't believe he could play shortstop on a daily basis, and I think that's something that drives him, and as long as I'm here, you know, probably, he'll be my shortstop."

14. Febles is third-base coach Carlos Febles. Goody is first-base coach Tom Goodwin. Rags is bench coach Ron Roenicke. But it was hitting coach Tim Hyers — the Red Sox's minor league hitting coordinator when Bogaerts was coming up through the system — who had this memory: "I'll tell you a quick story from Double A," Hyers said. "I had gotten there on a Saturday, and they had just come off a long bus ride — I don't know if you know about Portland, but they do these long bus rides — so everybody was complaining, like, 'Man, that bus ride was forever to come back.' So the guys were tired, right? It was an exhausting series. Just so many things compounding. So, us coaches, we get there early, right? So I got there real early on Sunday, and he's right there. He's walking in with me. As a young guy, as energetic as you know Bogey is, and I said to myself, 'This guy wants to play. This guy's in it for the right reasons.'"

15. Romero oversees the Red Sox's international scouting and player development. He's been working in that department since 2006. It seems nearly impossible for him to speak of Bogaerts from a purely objective point of view. "It's an interesting dynamic," Romero said. "Because we've all known him since he was 16, you know? Us in the organization have grown in the organization as he became a minor leaguer

and into his pro career and into his big-league career. It's amazing. ... These relationships in baseball are kind of difficult because you start from when he signs and helping develop him, and it just happened that we had (current front office) people focused (on player development) when he was around and just grew up with him, so this is really cool. This is a neat one. This is a neat one."

16. Ferreira is a senior vice president of major- and minor-league operations, but she's been referred to as the "organizational mom" for her work with young players coming up through the system. The Athletic happened to be working on a profile of Ferreira last postseason when Bogaerts paused his infield drills before an ALCS game to wave and yell to her. "She was my mom away from home," Bogaerts said.

17. At his age, playing his position, Bogaerts might have been the most desirable free agent on the open market this offseason. MLBTradeRumors.com had, in fact, ranked him No. 1 on its 2019-20 free-agent power rankings. Players often speak of waiting their whole careers for that open-market opportunity. Bogaerts turned it down for the chance to stay where he knew he'd be comfortable, where he knew he'd have a chance to win. "It's a very special place to play, man," Bogaerts said. "The fans and the organization in general expect winning. And I know my teammates know how much I love winning, regardless of (whether) it's cards, baseball, dominoes, I don't care. I just enjoy winning. They know that about me, and I think this was a nice place to play."

*** *The New York Post***

This isn't how Red Sox were supposed to get exposed

Greg Joyce

There were plenty of questions about the Red Sox on the mound entering this season.

They were just supposed to be about the bullpen, not the starting pitchers.

The Red Sox have been unable to find out much about their unproven relievers because their rotation has been the unit blowing games early, allowing 22 earned runs over 15 innings through a 1-3 start to the year.

"It starts with the rotation. If they can go six [innings], we can go from there," manager Alex Cora told reporters Sunday after dropping the opening series to the Mariners. "The bullpen did an outstanding job. ... If you told me coming into the series it was going to be this way, I'd say no chance. But it's baseball."

Chris Sale (3 IP, 7 ER), Nathan Eovaldi (5 IP, 6 ER), Eduardo Rodriguez (4 1/3 IP, 5 ER) and Rick Porcello (2 2/3 IP, 7 ER) were all tagged for six or more runs in their debuts, becoming the first Red Sox quartet to start the season in such dubious fashion since at least 1902, according to the Boston Globe. They combined to allow eight home runs to a Mariners lineup that was hardly projected to be a crushing one by any means.

Last year's October hero, David Price, is tasked with stopping the bleeding Monday night against the A's.

The Red Sox rotation had been sturdy on the way to the World Series title a year ago and combined to throw some heavy innings. Cora limited their workload in spring training — just as he did in 2018 — though it remains to be seen how quickly they can get back to form.

"I didn't rethink about it last year, you saw what happened. It was the same plan," Cora said. "Whoever's doubting us [after] what we did last year. I mean this year? Check what happened last year."

*** *The East Bay Times***

Ramón Laureano's bat, arm back Aaron Brooks' gem in A's win over Red Sox

Martin Gallegos

OAKLAND — Ramón Laureano sensed his breakout was coming after a quiet slump through the A's first six games of the season.

He announced his presence in the seventh game.

The A's center fielder provided a reminder about the type of arm he possesses in the second inning of Monday's 7-0 win over the Boston Red Sox. Laureano fired a seed from center to home plate to nail Xander Bogaerts trying to score from second base on a single by Mitch Moreland. It was the most impressive throw of the young season and an early candidate for Play of the Year.

"It's like a three-point shot where you're going, 'No, no, no, yeah!'" A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He's done that before, so we should know to never count out his arm.

"When it was hit, I didn't think he had a chance."

Laureano appears to be getting an early start to his 2019 defensive highlights mixtape after his 2018 rookie year featured numerous incredible defensive plays, including arguably the top play of the season in Anaheim when he fired a throw from left-center field to Mark Canha at first base to nail Eric Young Jr trying to race back to first after a flyout by Justin Upton.

The throw Laureano made Monday night may not have been as jaw-dropping as the one in Anaheim, but it was still impressive. With little momentum as he paused mid-run to get to the ball in the outfield, Laureano took a short hop before firing a strike to Nick Hundley at home that was clocked at 96 mph.

"Those are moments where the adrenaline gets you going," Laureano said. "But it's the same thing we practice every day."

Laureano said he knew off the crack of the bat Moreland was not going to try for second base on the hit, so he made the decision right away to try and get Bogaerts at the plate. It was a big play at the time as it kept the game a scoreless tie.

"You don't know sometimes how the rhythm of a game is going to go," Laureano said. "Plays like that are always big."

Laureano also showed off his bat an inning later as he led off the top of the third inning with a solo home run off David Price to increase the A's (4-3) lead to 2-0. It was his first home run of the season after entering the night in a 3 for 20 slump with a MLB-leading nine strikeouts.

Khris Davis has been showing off his bat quite often in 2019. He belted a pitch from Price into the left-field bleacher in the second for a solo home run. Davis leads the majors with five home runs, and he joined elite company as one of three players in A's history to hit five home runs through the first seven games of the season. The other two? Mark McGwire and Reggie Jackson.

"Sometimes I stay up at night trying to think of more superlatives to say about Khris Davis because I know I'm gonna have to when I come in here after the game," Melvin said. "I'm kind of all out of them. It's amazing."

Davis' teammates are no longer surprised by what the slugger continues to do on a regular basis.

"He's just being Khris," Laureano said. "He's having his second half from last year right now to begin the season. When he's hot, he hits the ball like that."

Laureano's throw and Davis' blast had the Coliseum buzzing, but perhaps just as impressive was the start turned in by Aaron Brooks. The right-hander held the Red Sox (1-4) scoreless through six innings of work, allowing just two hits and a walk with six strikeouts.

"Amazing," Melvin said of Brooks' outing. "He goes up against the defending world champions and pitched way better than we could expect. You could see the confidence build as the game went along."

Brooks was not guaranteed a rotation spot for 2019. He battled with several other pitchers in spring training and did not earn a spot on the roster until an impressive final exhibition start against the San Francisco Giants just two days before Opening Day sealed the deal.

Brooks had not started a game since his Oct. 2, 2015 in his original stint with the A's. He was grinding through the minors for four years in the Chicago Cubs and Milwaukee Brewers organizations and found himself back in the majors at the end of 2018 pitching out of the bullpen for the A's after they claimed him off waivers.

"Being in the right spot at the right time helps," Brooks said. "The mental side of the game has also taken a turn for me. Now I just need to stick with it."

The six scoreless turned in by Brooks made it five consecutive six-inning outings by A's starting pitchers. The starters have allowed only one earned run in that time, combining for 21 strikeouts over 30 innings pitched.

"When the first four go that well you have to keep the roll going," Brooks said. "It worked out for us tonight."

Matt Chapman blasted his second home run of the year in the eighth with a solo shot over the wall in center off Heath Hembree. Kendrys Morales also recorded his first RBI as a member of the A's in the same inning with a pinch-hit single to center.

Fernando Rodney hit a milestone in his 17-year big league career by making his 900th career appearance. He capped it off with a scoreless ninth inning to complete the shutout.

"We needed a game like this today," Melvin said. "We didn't score a ton in the last series. To get a lead on them, there's really not enough cushion against these guys. Really good all-around game for us."

*** *The San Francisco Chronicle***

Ramon Laureano sparks A's in 7-0 victory over Red Sox

John Shea

Ramon Laureano charged the ball like a shortstop and threw the ball like a pitcher.

An impressive feat considering Laureano is a center fielder.

With the reigning Series champion Red Sox in town for the opener of a four-game series, Laureano showed off his mighty arm and bat in the A's 7-0 victory at the Coliseum.

Khris Davis hit his daily home run, this one a solo shot off David Price, and Aaron Brooks was the latest starting pitcher to compile a collection of scoreless innings.

But the man who stood out the most before a crowd of 12,477 was Laureano, who showed signs of an all-around game as a rookie last year and did so again over a two-inning sequence Monday.

Laureano prevented a run in the second when fielding Mitch Moreland's base hit on two bounces and throwing a strike to catcher Nick Hundley, who tagged Xander Bogaerts. Laureano threw on a fly, guessing Moreland (without much speed) wouldn't take second on the throw, and that's exactly what happened.

"Those ones are kind of like in the moment," Laureano said. "The adrenaline gets you going."

Initially, from his view, Laureano thought Bogaerts was safe, but umpire Kerwin Danley called him out, and a two-minute review supported Danley's claim.

It was the second time in the inning Laureano made a powerful throw in pursuit of Bogaerts. His sidearm heave from the gap in right-center was in time to catch Bogaerts at second base, but Marcus Semien didn't handle a tough short-hop attempt.

An inning later, Laureano smacked his first home run of the year to center field. Along with Davis' homer, his fifth in seven games, the A's led 2-0 and moved ahead 4-0 on Chad Pinder cleared the wall in the sixth, and Matt Chapman hit the team's fourth homer during a three-run eighth.

Davis became the third A's hitter with five homers in a season's first seven games, following Reggie Jackson in 1974 and Mark McGwire in 1992.

"Sometimes I stay up at night trying to think of superlatives to say about Khris Davis because I know I'll probably have to when I come in here after the game," manager Bob Melvin said, "but I'm kind of all out of them. ... It's amazing. He just keeps getting better and better."

In a development that no one expected, the A's rotation is out-pitching Boston's this year. By far. In Boston's first five games, their starting pitchers posted an 11.14 ERA, giving up 26 earned runs in 21 innings.

That's once through the rotation with the likes of Chris Sale, Nathan Eovaldi, Eduardo Rodriguez, Rick Porcello and Price — the men who dominated in October.

Compare that with how Oakland's starters have pitched the past five games: one earned run in 30 innings, an ERA of 0.30 — with the likes of Mike Fiers, Marco Estrada, Brett Anderson, Frankie Montas and Brooks.

"Obviously, when the first four (starters) go that well, you have to keep the roll going," Brooks said. "Obviously, they're not the easiest lineup to face, and keeping them off balance and guessing is the way to go. It worked."

Brooks won the final rotation spot because of the way he finished spring training, giving up one run in his final 12 1/3 innings. That included a strong outing against the Giants in the Bay Bridge Series.

The competition was between Brooks and Chris Bassitt, who sustained a knee injury in an exhibition game during the A's trip to Japan, where they dropped their first two regular-season games to Seattle. Monday's start was Brooks' first in the majors since 2015.

Brooks has earned a rotation spot, and Bassitt is preparing for Thursday's rehab start with Class A Stockton.

The A's have beaten the Red Sox 10 times in 15 games and seven of nine at the Coliseum.

*** *Associated Press***

Davis hits fifth home run in 7 games, A's beat Red Sox 7-0

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Pitcher Aaron Brooks reminded himself to hustle and back up home, even though he had zero doubt strong-armed center fielder Ramon Laureano would throw out the runner at the plate.

Brooks didn't have to do a thing. And a run got saved, at an early stage of the game when momentum means so much.

Khris Davis hit his fifth home run over Oakland's first seven games, Laureano connected and also saved the run with a perfect throw, and the Athletics scored their first five runs on homers to beat the struggling Boston Red Sox 7-0 on Monday night.

"Those ones are kind of like in the moment so adrenaline gets you going," Laureano said. "It's the same thing we practice every day."

Davis led the majors with 48 homers last season, and he went deep again leading off the second against David Price (0-1), who then struck out three straight before giving up Laureano's leadoff drive the next inning.

"Sometimes I stay up at night trying to think of more superlatives to say about Khris Davis because I know I'm probably going to have to when I come in here after the game," manager Bob Melvin said. "But I'm kind of all out of them. Go ask him, go ask his teammates. It's amazing. He just keeps getting better and better."

Chad Pinder added a two-run homer in the sixth for the A's to back Brooks (1-0) in his first start since 2015.

The right-hander tossed six scoreless innings with six strikeouts and a walk to continue a stretch of stellar outings by A's starters. They have given up just one run over 30 innings the past five games since the team returned from an 0-2 trip to Tokyo, all allowing three hits or fewer. There has been a pair of shutouts, too.

The ERA during this span? 0.30.

"Obviously when the first four go that well you kind of have to keep the roll going, or at least try," Brooks said.

Pinder's first home run of the year was the 11th surrendered by Red Sox starters in 20 innings to begin 2019. Matt Chapman homered leading off the eighth before pinch-hitter Kendrys Morales' RBI single.

Xander Bogaerts went 2 for 3 with a double after Boston's shortstop signed a \$120 million, six-year contract covering 2020-25, a deal that raises his guarantee to \$132 million over seven seasons.

He doubled and went home on Mitch Moreland's single, but Bogaerts was out at the plate on a 96 mph throw home by Laureano. The call stood after going to replay review, although it appeared Bogaerts' foot beat the tag by catcher Nick Hundley.

"It seems like we were putting something together and Laureano changed the game with that throw," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said.

The tarp was on the infield more than three hours before first pitch because of rain, and neither team took batting practice on the field. There was a short drizzle before Fernando Rodney pitched the ninth for his 900th career appearance. It tied him for 25th all-time with Arthur Rhodes.

Price struck out nine with two walks over six innings, tagged for four runs and five hits -- with the three homers. It was the left-hander's 300th major league appearance, 290th start.

It has been a slow start for the defending champion Red Sox, who lost three of four at Seattle to open the year and begin 2019 with an 11-game road trip. It is the most road games to begin a season in franchise history.

"There's no panic in this clubhouse or the dugout. Just nothing good is happening right now," Price said. "We'd rather it happen right now than the last two weeks of September or whatever. We'll get through this time and we'll be better for it."

Boston has struggled at the Oakland Coliseum, 15-36 in the last 51 games while going 3-12-1 in their previous 16 series here.

CAFARDO TRIBUTE

A pregame tribute and applause, instead of a moment of silence, was held in honor of late Boston Globe baseball writer Nick Cafardo, who died at age 62 in February while at spring training in Florida. A bouquet of flowers sat on the table at his press box seat.

CHAMPS GALORE

On Tuesday night, the reigning World Series champs will play next-door at the same time the two-time defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors host the Denver Nuggets at Oracle Arena.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Red Sox: 2B Dustin Pedroia, on the injured list with left knee inflammation, was scheduled to play nine innings in his second extended spring training game Tuesday before beginning a rehab assignment with Class A Greenville on Thursday.

Athletics: RHP Chris Bassitt will start for Class A Stockton on Thursday as he works back from the injured list for a bruised right lower leg.

UP NEXT

Red Sox: LHP Chris Sale (0-1, 21.00 ERA), tagged for seven runs in three innings pitching opening day at Seattle, makes his second 2019 start.

Athletics: RHP Mike Fiers (1-1, 5.00) looks to build off six scoreless innings in the home opener Thursday against the Angels.