

## ***The Boston Red Sox Sunday, April 21, 2019***

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

#### **Red Sox edge Rays for much-needed feel-good win**

Peter Abraham

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Red Sox had blown a five-run lead and were facing Tampa Bay's Jose Alvarado, one of the most fearsome relief pitchers in the game, with the bottom of the order coming up in the ninth inning on Saturday night.

That the result was a 6-5 victory could well have the Sox looking back months from now and saying this was where the season started to turn.

"That was a good one," manager Alex Cora said. "We're getting close. We're getting real close."

If they get there, the Sox will remember that Michael Chavis made his major league debut with a double to the base of the wall in center field off Alvarado to set up the go-ahead run.

And they'll smile recalling the look of complete joy on the face of catcher Christian Vazquez when he picked Tommy Pham off first base to end the game as the Rays were threatening.

Not since Chris Sale forced Manny Machado to bend the knee flailing at a slider to end the World Series had the Sox felt such collective satisfaction.

"Once we hit our stride, it'll be a lot more fun. I'm sure everybody else will be happy, too," said Andrew Benintendi, who drove in five runs, including the game-winner. "Right now we're just trying to go a game at a time."

It was the first series win of the season for the Sox, who now have David Price on the mound Sunday with an opportunity for a statement sweep.

The Sox had a 5-2 lead through six innings. Benintendi's grand slam in the second inning off Charlie Morton allowed Rick Porcello to challenge hitters and he worked a solid 5⅓ innings, giving up two runs on six hits.

Porcello walked one and struck out five, his fastball command markedly improved from his first three starts.

Porcello came into the game having allowed 14 earned runs on 22 hits and 12 walks over 11⅓ innings. He was another stinker away from the Sox at least having a conversation about whether he should say in the rotation.

Instead he took his first step forward of the season.

"Just had more life on everything," said Porcello, who corrected a mechanical flaw that had his right hand trailing too far behind his body.

Porcello adjusted his hands at the start of his delivery and that enabled him to get better speed and movement on his pitches.

"Felt a lot better with what I was doing out there," Porcello said. "It's a good step in the right direction."

But the 5-2 lead was given away. Cora tried to get through the bottom of the Tampa Bay order in the seventh inning with Heath Hembree. It didn't work.

Kevin Kiermaier led off with a triple. With one out, newly recalled Bobby Poyner came on to pitch and walked pinch hitter Guillermo Heredia.

Austin Meadows followed with a triple to the gap in right field and two runs scored.

The Rays had four triples in all, a team record. The Sox had not allowed four since June 9, 1983, against the Tigers at Fenway Park.

Marcus Walden replaced Poyner. He struck out Pham looking at a slider and Willy Adames swinging at a fastball to maintain the 5-4 lead.

Yandy Diaz led off the bottom of the eighth inning with a home run off Matt Barnes. The righthanded hitter went the other way with a high 96-m.p.h. fastball.

Barnes struck out the next three hitters. Then the Rays turned to Alvarado, who had not allowed a run over 9½ innings and stuck out 16.

Jackie Bradley Jr., mired in three-week slump, led off with a single. With one out, Chavis fell behind 1 and 2. He fouled off a cutter than hammered a 99-m.p.h. low fastball.

Kiermaier, a Gold Glove center fielder, got turned around chasing the ball and it landed on the warning track 404 feet away.

Chavis popped up out of his slide and pumped his fist as his new teammates saluted him from the dugout. Benintendi's sacrifice fly to right field gave the Sox the lead.

Chavis had a large group of family and friends at the game, making the moment all the more special.

"I'm going to turn off professional mode. That was awesome," the 23-year-old said. "I need to celebrate. It was really cool."

Chavis faced Alvarado in 2014 in the Gulf Coast League. He told himself to be prepared for high velocity.

"Being in that's situation and off of that quality of a pitcher, it was very special," Chavis said.

Chavis, a former first-round pick, is a good hitter looking for a defensive position. Hits like that will find him a place to play in the field.

"There's no lack of confidence," Cora said. "You see him walking around; he belongs. We saw that in spring training as far as the offensive upside, the way he controls the strike zone."

How the game ended was nearly as improbable as how the Sox took the lead. With runners on first and second and two outs, Ryan Brasier threw a fastball to Adames.

Vazquez whirled and fired to first base and Steve Pearce tagged Pham to end the game.

"I saw he had a big lead and we had a chance there," said Vazquez, who had been told to watch Pham and signaled Pearce the throw was coming.

**'That was awesome, dude!' — Michael Chavis enjoys his Red Sox debut**

Christopher L. Gasper

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — And a child shall lead them from the American League East basement.

Nobody bats 1.000, in life or in baseball, but that's Michael Chavis's average right now and the Red Sox' winning percentage with him in this pivotal early-season series with the first-place Tampa Bay Rays after the kid delivered a Kodak (or Instagram) moment in his first big league at-bat.

In a game built on failure, Chavis's debut Saturday night was an unequivocal success.

In first major league at-bat, he zip-lined a pinch-hit double to center field off filthy reliever Jose Alvarado in the ninth inning, pushing the winning run to third. Andrew Benintendi's sacrifice fly scored Jackie Bradley Jr. with the decisive run as the Sox escaped from Tropicana Field with a 6-5 win and their first series victory.

This was a crucial win for the Sox, and it avoided what would have been a disheartening defeat. The Sox squandered a 5-0 second-inning lead, courtesy of Benintendi's grand slam, as the Rays chipped away, finally tying the game in the eighth on a leadoff homer by Yandy Diaz off Matt Barnes.

That set the stage for the origin story of Fenway's newest folk hero, the 23-year-old rookie from Marietta, Ga., who was called up Friday when Eduardo Nunez went on the injured list with a balky back. He's No. 23 in your program (Blake Swihart's abandoned number) and the No. 1 feel-good story of a Sox season that could use many more.

The Sox' top prospect has arrived in the big leagues metaphorically, but arriving in the big leagues literally turned out to be much more challenging than rocketing a double over Kevin Kiermaier. Chavis endured a bumpy, anfractuous trip from Triple A to the Trop on Friday. He started with a turbulent flight from Syracuse, where the Pawtucket Red Sox were stationed, to Detroit. Then another flight from Detroit to Tampa. When he finally landed, his Uber dropped him off three blocks from the ballpark and he had to lug his luggage and his equipment bag through the streets of St. Petersburg past gawking civilians before finally entering the Sox' clubhouse in the third inning of Boston's 6-4 win.

It was nice of manager Alex Cora to ease the kid in against fire-breathing reliever Alvarado. The Rays lefty hadn't surrendered a run in any of his previous 10 appearances, had allowed just four hits all year, and had whiffed 16 batters in 9½ innings prior to Saturday night.

No matter. It just all adds to the legend. It made a moment he had dreamed of since he was pretending in his garden as a kid all the more memorable. Even with two strikes and his knees knocking he delivered a knock.

"I guess personally it's kind of a reassurance that I belong," said Chavis. "It was my first hit. It's obviously a big deal in a very big moment, but being in that situation and off that quality of a pitcher it was very special."

Chavis's hit was important. His infectious enthusiasm might be equally important to revive and refresh the Sox and provide a jolt of youthful, gee whiz elan to the clubhouse. They need to restore the Joy of Sox. The ebullient and gregarious Chavis is a breath of fresh air. He lacks the hardened, cynical exterior of those well-versed in the Boston Baseball Experience.

Just listen to him describe his hit.

"It was a lot, honestly. I'm going to turn off the professional mode. That was awesome, dude! I just need a second," he said. "Y'all are here in this moment with me. I just need to celebrate this. It was really cool."

Chavis's introduction was just part of an eventful evening in baseball's big top. There was Rick Porcello's high-wire act after he was presented a 5-0 lead. Porcello danced with danger all night. He lowered his 11.12

ERA, but raised the blood pressure of Sox fans in his 5 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings. The Rays had runners on in every inning Porcello pitched. He left the game up, 5-2, but lost his first win.

It was fitting that this bipolar baseball affair ended with Sox catcher Christian Vazquez, who entered after Chavis hit for Sandy Leon, picking off Tommy Pham at first base with the tying run on second. Pham's walk-up music the rest of this series should be "The Wanderer" by Dion.

"We needed that break. [Vazquez] and [Steve] Pearce had a good read on it, backpicked it," said Porcello. "Those little things matter. That's what we got to keep doing. We got to capitalize on the little things and do those things right, and, hopefully, it will turn out with a big difference."

As the best hitter among the Sox pitchers, Porcello vouched for Chavis's first big league hit.

"Yeah, I mean it was awesome to see what he did in his first at-bat against Alvarado. That guy is just flat-out nasty," said Porcello. "We've been grinding so hard. It didn't matter if it was him or anybody else. We needed that hit bad. He stepped up. That's what we need. We need guys to step up. It was huge, huge lift for us."

Chavis was thrilled his hit came with family and friends in attendance. He said he planned to give the ball to his mother, a keepsake to repay a lifetime debt of devotion.

The Sox called up Chavis because he can rake. The Sox' farm system isn't fecund, but it's not barren of barrel guys. His first big league hit had an almighty exit velocity of 109.1 miles per hour, the hardest-hit ball by any Sox batter in the game. The 2014 first-round pick was named the Sox' 2017 Minor League offensive player of the year after he slugged 31 home runs between Single A Salem and Double A Portland.

His fast track to the big leagues was derailed last year when he tested positive for PEDs and was suspended for 80 games. In a Twitter missive, he said that he had no idea how the substance got into his body. The suspension limited him to just 46 games, but he still hit .298 with nine homers, 27 runs batted in, and a .919 OPS.

However, his prospect status was tarnished, as some wondered if Chavis was the product of better hitting through chemistry. The Sox also have to find a position for him. He's a third baseman by trade, but the Sox have experimented with him at first base and second base.

All those questions can wait. On this night, Chavis's debut was a big hit, one that boosted his confidence and that of the Red Sox as they try to dig out from a nightmarish start.

"We'll find a spot for him [Sunday]," said Cora.

### **Red Sox place Nathan Eovaldi on injured list with 'loose body' in his elbow**

Peter Abraham

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — After pitching his best game of the season on Wednesday night, Nathan Eovaldi found himself unable to straighten out his right arm on Thursday.

Now he is on the injured list and could be headed for arthroscopic surgery next week.

An MRI taken on Friday showed a "loose body" in Eovaldi's elbow. He believes it's a broken-off piece of cartilage based on a similar issue last season that resulted in surgery.

Eovaldi will travel to New York on Monday to be examined by Yankees team doctor Chris Ahmad. It was Ahmad who performed Eovaldi's second Tommy John surgery in 2016.

One option is to have a cortisone shot. But Eovaldi indicated he would prefer to have surgery again.

“It worked out really well for me,” he said. “It’s one of those things where we’re at in the year, too. It’s still early in the season; we have a lot of time left. We don’t want anything to get worse towards the end of the season when we’re trying to make a run.”

Eovaldi had arthroscopic surgery last March 30 to remove two loose bodies from his elbow when he was with the Rays. He started a minor league rehabilitation assignment May 4 and returned to the majors May 30 and threw six no-hit innings at Oakland.

The Rays, Eovaldi said, were extra cautious because he had missed the previous season recovering from the Tommy John surgery. He thinks he could return quicker this time.

“The recovery was fast. It was two weeks and you basically have your range of motion back,” Eovaldi said. “Then it’s building back up to a start.”

Eovaldi said the issue was akin to having a pebble in your shoe. It doesn’t hurt unless it’s on your heel. In this case, there’s something jamming up his elbow.

“It’s in a bad spot,” president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said.

Eovaldi was signed to a four-year, \$68 million deal in December. He is 3-3 with a 4.08 ERA with the Red Sox since being acquired from the Rays last July 25.

Eovaldi allowed one unearned run on three hits over six innings against the Yankees and hit 97 miles per hour with his fastball.

“It’s definitely frustrating coming off the start I had and feeling mechanically where I am now,” Eovaldi said. “For it to happen again, it’s just frustrating.”

Eovaldi had been scheduled to start Tuesday against Detroit at Fenway Park. Manager Alex Cora said Hector Velazquez is a candidate for that game unless he is needed in relief before then.

“Somebody has to step up. We’ll see how it goes the next few days,” Cora said.

Velazquez has started two games and allowed one run on three hits over six innings, albeit with four walks. He threw 57 pitches Monday and should be able to get to 75 if he starts Tuesday.

Velazquez has a 3.09 ERA in 13 career starts.

Righthander Mike Shawaryn is 1-1 with a 3.12 ERA in three starts for Pawtucket. Darwinzon Hernandez, a 22-year-old who impressed in spring training, has started twice for Double A Portland and allowed two earned runs over 10 innings.

Lefthander Bobby Poyner was recalled from Triple A Pawtucket to take Eovaldi’s spot on the roster. He faced two hitters in the seventh inning, walking the first then allowing a triple.

Chavis has arrived

Michael Chavis did not arrive at Tropicana Field until the third inning on Friday night after his flight was delayed and his Uber driver dropped him off at the wrong spot.

Christian Furr, a friend who Chavis said is as close as a brother, was texting him from the ballpark while he was still in the air.

“It was a hectic day for sure,” said Chavis, a 23-year-old former first-round pick.

Chavis's double in the ninth inning on Saturday helped produce the winning run in a 6-5 victory against the Rays.

That Chavis spent most of spring training with the major league team should make his transition smooth.

"It's huge," he said. "When I first walked in here, the faces were familiar. It wasn't an uncomfortable situation. I walked in and everyone was super welcoming."

Cora plans to put Chavis in the lineup Sunday afternoon at a position to be determined.

"I think we'll find a place for him," Cora said.

Moreland exits

Mitch Moreland left the game in the third inning with back spasms, but he said he would be ready to play Sunday . . . The Red Sox halted Brock Holt's injury rehab assignment with Pawtucket. His scratched right cornea has not responded to treatment as hoped. It's unclear when Holt will play again . . . Infielder Marco Hernandez, who has not played since May 2017 because of three rounds of surgery on his left shoulder, started a rehab assignment with Single A Salem. He started at second base Saturday and was 1 for 4.

### **Red Sox shouldn't be surprised by injury issues**

Christopher L. Gasper

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — It was obvious this offseason that the Red Sox didn't want to break up their World Series-winning team. They wanted to keep the band together for an encore performance. But there was, as former Red Sox general manager Theo Epstein might say, a fatal flaw in that plan. It led the Sox to commit to players who have a track record of breaking down or wearing down.

Too much downtime for expected contributors leads to a downward spiral.

The 8-13 start to their World Series title defense has been painful for the Red Sox. But what really hurts a baseball team is when players who are part of the grand diamond design spend more time facing health issues than opponents. The Sox' slow start wasn't foreseeable, but players like Nathan Eovaldi, Eduardo Nunez, and Dustin Pedroia landing on the injured list was. So, was ace Chris Sale lacking electric stuff after mild shoulder inflammation truncated what looked like a certain Cy Young campaign last season and reduced his velocity and dominance in the playoffs.

You have to ask if president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski made the right moves by putting together a roster that relied on such players remaining in peak health and peak form. You simply can't be surprised when players with documented injury histories or durability concerns succumb to those issues. You better think twice when counting on those players and letting them count their contract money because it could cost you in the end.

How much did Dombrowski weigh injury history when trying to keep his team intact with players who could fall apart or fall off during the season?

"Well, you always weigh everything. That's one of those things that's included," said Dombrowski. "There's a lot of guys in the big leagues that have injuries, unfortunately, especially when you talk about pitchers. That's just part of the [deal]. This is a very unusual situation, so, hopefully, it's a short-term type of thing."

"Unfortunately, it's part of the game, and you deal with those things. You weigh it. You're as thorough as you possibly can be, you do all the tests that you possibly can. But things happen. Things happen in sports in general."

The ineffective Sox starting rotation absorbed another blow Saturday when the team placed postseason hero Eovaldi on the injured list with a “loose body” in his pitching elbow. The Jake Gyllenhaal doppelgänger is on the IL and might need arthroscopic surgery to remedy the issue.

Eovaldi had a similar ailment last year pitching for the Tampa Bay Rays. Ironically, he was scratched from a start against the Red Sox. He had surgery March 30, 2018 to remove two loose bodies and returned for the Rays on May 30. A decision will be made Monday, when Eovaldi visits a doctor, as to whether he will undergo surgery this time. But he seemed to be leaning that way when he addressed the media prior to the Sox’ game against his old team at Tropicana Field.

Eovaldi said having the free floater surgically removed would provide peace of mind. But the Sox can ill afford to miss a key piece of their starting rotation for an extended period of time. Boston entered last night with the worst starters’ ERA in baseball at 6.61. Plus, the hard-throwing righty was coming off an encouraging outing in New York, where he pitched six innings, allowed one run, and struck out six.

This is why Eovaldi’s four-year, \$68 million deal to return to the Fens came with a Citgo sign-sized caveat emptor. After acquiring him from the Rays as a rental, the Sox got the most out of him they could’ve hoped for. He went 2-1 with a 1.61 ERA in six appearances last postseason. He earned a place in his teammates’ hearts and in Boston baseball lore with his valiant six-inning performance in relief in the Sox’ galvanizing 18-inning loss to the Los Angeles Dodgers in Game 3 of the World Series. At that point, the Sox could have severed a mutually beneficial relationship.

Eovaldi, who has undergone Tommy John surgery twice, is the guy you take as your fun date to a destination wedding. He’s not the guy you marry. The Sox made a long-term commitment to Eovaldi despite an injury history rivaling “War and Peace.”

Overlooking injury history is a pattern under Dombrowski. Do Carson Smith and Tyler Thornburg ring a bell?

Nunez hasn’t displayed the same range since he injured his knee for the Sox in September 2017. You can practically hear Nunez’s knee crunch like oyster crackers when he goes to field a ball. He somehow played in 127 games last year. Now, making \$5 million in the second year of his deal, he was sent to the IL with a balky back on Friday. The scratched cornea of infielder Brock Holt is bad luck, but Holt has his own history with concussions.

This team needs reliable options at second base with Dustin Pedroia recovering from the aftermath of cartilage restoration surgery. We all root for Pedey. He’s a Boston baseball treasure, but he’s a bigger gamble than anything offered at the copper colossus of a casino in Everett.

The decision to give Sale a five-year, \$145 million extension before he threw a pitch that counted this season looks premature. Sale’s velocity was up in his last start against the Yankees, but his ERA remains elevated (8.50). The swings and misses he once easily generated have evaporated. He is winless in four starts and has admitted to being at a loss to explain his struggles. The obvious explanation would be the shoulder issue that sidelined him twice in a month with injury stints.

Forecasting injuries is the final frontier in sports analytics. Dombrowski evoked the Celtics signing Gordon Hayward and then watching him mangle his ankle last season five minutes into his Celtics career. The difference is that Hayward didn’t sport an injury history. He was hurt as the result of a freak accident on an alley-oop. The Celtics shouldn’t have expected that to happen.

The Sox can’t be surprised that Eovaldi, Nunez, and Pedroia are on the IL. They can’t be shocked that they’re not getting Cy Sale. If they are, then they also might be surprised to learn that traffic is horrible heading to the Cape on summer weekends.

The Sox can take solace in the fact their roster isn't as brittle as the Bronx Bombers. The Yankees, a team built to mash is now a MASH unit with slugger Aaron Judge the latest Yankee to be hors de hardball. He left Saturday's win with an oblique injury.

The Patriots have a credo: Dependability is more important than ability.

If you build a team that relies on players you can't depend on then you're hurting yourself.

### **Two pitchers who have been there before explain why repeating as World Series champions is so difficult**

Peter Abraham

For as much as Red Sox manager Alex Cora likes to poke fun at the notion, there is clearly a hangover effect for teams that win the World Series. It's been going on for nearly 20 years now.

Since the Yankees won three championships in a row from 1998-2000, only one World Series champion, the 2008 Phillies, returned to the Fall Classic a year later.

Eight championship teams missed the playoffs the following season with four having a losing record.

The NBA, NFL, and NHL have had repeat champions during that era. So have Division 1 college football and basketball.

What is it about baseball? The Red Sox are the latest team to find the following season a challenging one. As was the case for most of their predecessors, the pitching staff has been the biggest problem.

We asked two experts for answers.

David Cone was with the Yankees from 1995-2000 and played a key role in their back-to-back-to-back championships.

Jake Peavy played for two World Series champions, the 2013 Red Sox and 2014 Giants, who struggled a year later.

He saw the Red Sox fall apart in 2014 and was traded to the Giants. Peavy helped San Francisco to a championship that season, then was part of a team that missed the postseason a year later.

"It's difficult in the wild-card era and that's speaking from experience," Cone said. "I don't personally know what the Red Sox are going through, but it's a short offseason and there's an emotional toll.

"It's not only getting through and winning, but celebrating a little bit. Then spring training is already here? That's how I felt for several years. I fell on my face in 2000 after we won in 1999. I wasn't ready to pitch."

So Cone wasn't surprised the Red Sox rotation was 2-11 with a 6.70 earned run average after 19 games.

"The postseason takes a lot out of you," he said. "Not only physically but emotionally and mentally. It's a combination of everything. Physically you may feel fine but you're not locked in; you're not all there. It becomes harder to be all there."

What enabled the Yankees to get through it, Cone believes, was a deep rotation.

"We had starters take turns being the No. 1," he said. "We took turns being the lead dog."

In 1998, David Wells was the ace with Cone a notch below him. Orlando Hernandez rose to the top in 1999. Then it was Roger Clemens and Andy Pettitte in 2000.



The Yankees also had Hall of Famer Mariano Rivera anchoring their bullpen all three seasons.

“I came to appreciate the back end of our bullpen,” Cone said. “It made all the difference. I say that to [former Atlanta Braves starters] John Smoltz, Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine all the time. They’d have five rings if they had Mariano.”

Related: It’ll be far from easy for Red Sox to repeat

The Red Sox tried to counter the effects of the postseason on their pitchers by cutting down on their workload in spring training. They went as far as not allowing the starters to throw to the bases in some defensive drills.

Nate Eovaldi, David Price and Chris Sale pitched in only two games during spring training. Rick Porcello started three. The Red Sox believed they had compensated with minor league games, but the rotation was a mess to start the season.

“The best-laid plans usually don’t work,” Cone said. “Because it’s not about that; it’s about the residual effect. Any counter measures you take are kind of a shot in the dark in my opinion. The damage is already done.

“Resting pitchers can backfire. I’m not sure that’s the case for the Sox. It was a worthwhile effort to try and figure it out. But ultimately it’s the price you pay for winning the Series and it’s worth it.”

Cone is now an analyst with the YES Network and recently wrote a book about his career with Jack Curry. “Full Count. The Education of a Pitcher” comes out on May 14.

Peavy should write a book about his experiences. Now retired at 37, Peavy won the National League Cy Young Award in 2007 and played 15 years in the majors, winning 152 games for four teams.

The Red Sox acquired him from the White Sox on July 30, 2013, then traded him to the Giants a year later.

Peavy was 1-9 with a 4.72 ERA for the 2014 Red Sox. He then played for a 2015 Giants team that was 9-13 in April. San Francisco came back to finish 84-78 but missed the playoffs.

“Playing that extra month takes something out of you for sure. I lived it twice,” Peavy said.

“While you’re playing, everybody else is resting up or already into their workouts. Once the season starts, you’re behind everybody else. Plus every team is coming at you with everything they have. It’s tough and you have to adjust on the fly.”

The 2014 Red Sox contended with internal dissension over the team’s bad-faith effort to sign Jon Lester to a contract extension in spring training.

They were 27-29 on June 1, then lost five in a row. That sparked the decision to trade Lester, Peavy, John Lackey, Andrew Miller and others.

But Peavy feels this Red Sox team will recover.

“Alex knows what they have to do and they have a bunch of veterans in that clubhouse, especially the pitchers,” he said. “They’ll bounce back. I think that no matter what you do, there’s going to be some struggles after you win. But there’s time for them to catch up.”

Both Cone and Peavy mentioned the Sox could have benefited from a few changes to the roster.

“Sometimes a new player adds a different kind of energy in the clubhouse. That can help,” Cone said. “We had the same core group those years we won. But the Yankees made moves, too.

“It’s how the pieces fit together, not what the metrics tell you. I love the metrics but sometimes you need the right fit.”

Said Peavy: “It’s hard to replicate what you did the year before. Every team is different. The same group expects to win the same way they did before. But that’s not how it works.”

## END OF AN ERA

These doors should be opening, not closing

Going back at least 60 years, the manager’s office at Fenway Park was in the corner of the clubhouse.

In a sign of how baseball is changing, the Red Sox converted that hallowed office into a “Video Coaching Room” over the winter. There are seven workstations with monitors connected to a series of servers. It’s as sterile as you would imagine but nonetheless useful.

Video coordinator Billy Broadbent needed the space, as did the coaches and players. Preparing for games in this era means spending time in front of a computer looking for advantages.

But it’s unfortunate, too, because Cora’s office is now down a hallway that’s off limits to the media.

Reporters no longer can stick their head in after the game to get some little bit of strategy explained outside of the stilted setting of a televised formal press conference. Or even just to chat for a minute.

Things pop up when you cover a team every day from mid-February to October and informal, off-the-record communication that goes beyond a text message is important. It helps everybody.

Is it a big deal? Not really. But generations of reporters learned a little something from time to time in that corner office and readers were the ones who benefited.

As baseball fights to keep its decreasing share of the media landscape, it would do well to open more doors instead of closing them.

Think that’s not a problem? The Red Sox, who won the World Series last season, had only three Boston media outlets cover their series at Arizona earlier this season and two were at this weekend’s series against the Rays.

A few other observations on the Red Sox:

■ We’re about to learn something about Cora.

He was the general manager of Caguas when the Puerto Rican winter league team won the Caribbean Series in 2017. Cora then put together the team from Puerto Rico that finished second in the 2017 World Baseball Classic.

As bench coach of the Houston Astros in 2017, Cora was a valuable part of a World Series champion. Then he managed the Red Sox to 108 victories last season and 11 more in the postseason.

For two years, every baseball team Cora was involved with had great success and he had a major role in making that happen. But he went into this weekend with the worst team in the American League.

Now there are questions from the media about his decisions, complaints from a fan base with notoriously short memories and challenges from his players that have already included a failed drug test and assorted injuries.

Related: What if the Red Sox don't turn it around?

Cora handled success well, deflecting credit to the players and his coaches. Now we'll see how he does in the face of trouble. The Sox haven't been unlucky; they have been terrible and how Cora reacts will say more about his abilities as a manager than last season's success did.

Cora was released several times as a player and always found ways to bounce back. He's also known hard times in his personal life. The guess here is he will find a way to get the Sox going again.

■ Position players can spend up to 20 days in the minor leagues on an injury rehabilitation assignment. The Red Sox do realize this, right?

It remains a mystery why Dustin Pedroia had only a four-day stint with Single A Greenville before he was activated.

Pedroia was on the major league roster from April 9-17 and never played back-to-back days in the field the entire time. Yet Cora and Dave Dombrowski insisted that was part of the plan all along.

"We anticipated that. I think we did an outstanding job of building him back up," Cora said.

Players have collectively bargained rights to limit their rehab assignments, but three Single A games after what was essentially a year away from the game clearly wasn't enough for Pedroia.

Pedroia was 2 for 20 at the plate before he returned to the injured list. He clearly needed more at-bats in the minors. The Sox could have moved him from Greenville to Salem and/or Portland before activating him.

Instead he was rushed back up. When Pedroia tries again, the Sox should give him time to get his swing back and test his knee.

Related: Dustin Pedroia goes back on injured list, but it appears he dodged a bullet

The same was true for Steve Pearce, who returned to the majors out of extended spring training and was 3 for 24 with no extra-base hits and 11 strikeouts in his first seven games.

Managers talk all the time about putting players in a position to succeed. That was not the case for Pedroia and Pearce.

Snell loses fight with table

Let's welcome Blake Snell to the pantheon of weird baseball injuries.

The Tampa Bay Rays ace fractured the fourth toe on his right foot after losing a fight with a granite table in his bathroom.

According to Snell, he got out of the shower and decided to do a little home redecorating by moving a decorative table that was attached to a 3-foot stand.

"It's right outside the shower. I was like, 'I'm moving this; it looks stupid,'" Snell told reporters. "I went to move it, I lifted it up and it wasn't glued to the pole. And the pole came crashing down. Really dumb. That's what happened."

Snell is on the injured list and missed his start against the Red Sox on Friday. He was 3-0 with a 1.08 ERA in four starts against the Sox last season.

“I’m hoping to be back as soon as possible. But I’ve never broken a bone in my body, so this is a first,” Snell said.

From Methuen to majors?

Here’s a name to keep in mind: University of Connecticut righthander Jake Wallace. The junior from Methuen had a strong summer with Bourne in the Cape Cod League and this season has been one of the best closers in college baseball.

Wallace allowed one earned run over his first 22 innings with the Huskies and struck out 32 with three walks. Wallace’s fastball is a steady 94-95 m.p.h. and he throws a hard slider. He should land in the first few rounds of the June draft.

Much like Durbin Feltman, whom the Red Sox took out of Texas Christian in the third round last season, Wallace has been used exclusively as a reliever in college.

Extra bases

It’s good to see Arnie Beyeler back in the majors working for the Orioles as their first base coach. Beyeler, 55, was on the Red Sox staff from 2013-15 after spending nine seasons managing in the organization . . . Middleborough High product Sean Newcomb was 12-9 with a 3.90 ERA in 31 games for the Braves last season. But the lefty lasted only three starts this season before being optioned to AAA. “Inconsistent command,” was the evaluation of one scout. “But all the ability is still there.” . . . The oldest player in the minor leagues is 38-year-old Rajai Davis. The New London, Conn., native is playing for Triple A Syracuse in the Mets organization. Davis has played parts of 13 seasons in the majors with seven teams including the Red Sox in 2017. Davis was a 38th-round draft pick in 2001 . . . Jacoby Ellsbury is such a ghost with the Yankees that his locker at Yankee Stadium was given to infielder Gio Urshela. Ellsbury hasn’t played for the Yankees since 2017 because of assorted injuries and is on the 60-day injured list . . . Through Thursday, Reds reliever Michael Lorenzen had played three innings in center field this season, another inning in right field, and has pinch run three times. Lorenzen was 1 for 5 with a walk, an RBI, and two runs scored . . . The Yankees have played “God Bless America” during the seventh-inning stretch since the 2001 terrorist attacks, something the late George Steinbrenner insisted on. But they have replaced the traditional Kate Smith version with an organ rendition after it was revealed Smith sang at least one song with racist lyrics in 1931 . . . Happy 82nd birthday to Gary Peters. The Red Sox traded for the longtime White Sox lefthander before the 1970 season and he was 33-25 with a 4.23 ERA in three seasons for the Red Sox. He also had 19 home runs and 102 RBIs over 807 career at-bats. Boston native Carlos Castillo, who pitched two games for the Sox in 2001, is 44. And infielder Josh Rutledge is 30. He hit .252 over 104 games with the Sox from 2016-17 and is now retired. His wife, Laura, hosts ESPN’s college football kickoff show.

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

### **Rookie Michael Chavis brings Red Sox alive in 6-5 win over Rays**

Jason Mastrodonato

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Michael Chavis needs to stay.

And after what he did to the most dominant pitcher in the majors on Saturday night, one could argue he needs to start playing regularly.

Rays closer Jose Alvarado entered the day having faced 36 batters this year while allowing just four hits, all singles, while striking out 16 in 9-<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> scoreless innings. His triple-digits sinker has late movement and right-handers have struck out in half their plate appearances against him.

Then up stepped the rookie, making his major league debut in a tie game in the ninth inning. And whack, on a 1-2 count Chavis hit a missile straight off the center-field wall for a double. His helmet came flying off as he slid into second. He pumped his fist and looked into the Red Sox dugout.

That was the spark the Sox have been looking for.

Chavis' key hit pushed Jackie Bradley Jr. to third, Bradley scored on a sacrifice fly by Andrew Benintendi and the Red Sox came away with a 6-5 win over the first-place Rays.

The Red Sox have finally captured a series victory, their first in seven tries this season, and have a chance to sweep on Sunday.

As the cameras turned on for his first career postgame interview, Chavis smiled and said, "I'm going to turn off professional mode. That was awesome, honestly. I just need a second. Y'all are here in this moment with me and I need to celebrate. This is really cool."

After 3-½ weeks of playing mostly dry baseball with only moments of excitement, the Sox, now 8-13, have a 23-year-old rookie who plays the game with the energy and excitement of a Little Leaguer.

"My backyard growing up, in my house we had a garden, and I can't tell you how many times I envisioned that scenario there, pinch-hitting for the Boston Red Sox in the ninth inning off a closer who is nasty and getting a hit," Chavis said. "I've tossed rocks in my backyard pretending I was in this moment. So I looked around and was like, 'Wow.'

"Then with two strikes, thankfully Alvarado called time and I didn't have to. I had two strikes on me and I felt my knee shaking, I'll be honest. But he called time so I had a second to step out, gather myself before the next pitch. Wow. It's been wild. It really has been."

Saturday's game was one of those that felt like it would count as two, with the Red Sox up 5-0 on a grand slam by Benintendi in the second inning, only to give all five runs back and watch the Rays tie the game, 5-5, on a solo shot in the eighth.

Bradley had been stuck in a slump but punched a single off Alvarado to start the ninth. Tzu-Wei Lin couldn't get a bunt down — "I feel for him, that's tough against that guy," manager Alex Cora said — and made the first out.

Chavis fell behind 1-2, then got a low sinker, 99 mph, and smoked it. The ball jumped off his bat at 109 mph, the hardest-hit ball by any Red Sox player in four days. Kevin Kiermaier tried to track it down in center field but it went over his head and hit the wall.

"I know he doesn't get burned much and he's a Gold Glover, and I was like, 'if you catch it, I'm going to fight you,'" a jubilant Chavis said. "I'm just kidding. But I knew I caught it pretty well. I knew he threw hard. I knew I caught a barrel. I was just praying it got over his head."

The double was the first extra-base hit off Alvarado this year. Right-handed batters had previously been 3-for-25 with 13 strikeouts against him.

"He hammered it," said Benintendi. "He can obviously hit a fastball. He took a good swing on a slider and that thing was 93."

Christian Vazquez said of Chavis, "He's got pop. He can hit. No surprise. I think he's going to hit in the big leagues."

It seemed like every Red Sox player in the dugout was on their feet screaming for the rookie.

“And against Alvarado, that guy is flat out nasty,” said Rick Porcello. “We’ve been grinding so hard it didn’t matter if it was (Chavis) or anybody else. We needed that hit bad. He stepped up. That’s what we need. We need more. We need guys to step up. Huge lift for us.”

The Red Sox have been getting nothing out of second base all year. They entered Saturday ranked 30th with minus-1.0 WAR, 30th with a .129 average and 30th with a .319 OPS from the position. They’re hesitant to play Chavis there because he has only five minor leagues games of experience at the position.

Cora said Chavis will be in the lineup somewhere on Sunday. He didn’t say where. But Chavis looks like just what the Sox need.

“There’s no lack of confidence,” Cora said. “You see him moving around and he belongs. We saw that in spring training as far as the offensive upside, the way he controls the strike zone. First big league at-bat against maybe the best closer, him and Josh Hader, amazing they don’t give up anything. To hit a low line drive off the center field wall, that was impressive.”

Chavis made sure to put the baseball in a special place.

“I’m going to give it to my mom,” he said. “She does so much for me. Playing travel ball is expensive and takes a lot of time. My mom picked up extra jobs so she could pay for me to play travel ball. I can’t thank her enough. Her being here, you’re going to make me cry.”

### **Red Sox’ handling of Blake Swihart prompts questions**

Jason Mastrodonato

What has to be the most frustrating aspect of the Blake Swihart saga, which came to an end on Friday when the Red Sox traded him to the Diamondbacks, is that the organization could never come to a clear consensus on his ability.

There was always a disconnect and it existed through multiple regimes in the front office and field staff.

What’s amazing is how often that disconnect was evident, right down until the last few weeks.

The part that seemed to be unanimous was the projection of his offensive ability. Former hitting coach Chili Davis said Swihart could be a .300 hitter in the majors. Many will argue that his swing looked the type that could hit for average, that he just needed everyday at-bats.

But the results were never there. Not at any level. He hit just .255 with a .679 OPS over 626 plate appearances, a full season’s worth, though spread out over parts of five major league seasons. He didn’t do a whole lot better in the minors, where he hit .268 with a .726 OPS over parts of eight seasons.

Those who argue on behalf of Swihart’s ability can point to his injuries and position switches, and how difficult it must’ve been for him to get roped around so frequently. While that’s certainly true, it’s also the life of most ballplayers. Few are given direct paths at a single position with everyday playing time throughout their entire careers. Challenges are part of the journey. For Swihart, it never came together.

Defensively, one has to wonder if the Red Sox made the right decision and read the trends in the game correctly.

Back in spring training 2017, when Travis Shaw had been traded to the Brewers and the Red Sox had no formidable third base depth behind the clearly-fading Pablo Sandoval (Brock Holt and Josh Rutledge were the only other options), an idea was brought to the attention of Dave Dombrowski, who was in his second spring as president of baseball operations since taking over the reigns from Ben Cherington.

Why wasn't Swihart asked to work out at third base over the offseason ahead of 2017? Why wasn't he in camp competing at a position of need

Swihart was always known as an athlete, capable of playing multiple positions, as he did in high school. Part of the reason he was drafted 26th overall in 2011 was because, as former director of player development Amiel Sawdaye long ago explained, "if the guy doesn't catch he has a chance to stay at second or third. He's going to play a position. He's not a first baseman, he's not a DH. So if he hits, you're going to find a position for him."

He looked fine in left field in 2016 before messing up his ankle trying to make a play against the wall. The Sox no longer had a need in the outfield. They had a need at third base.

But they kept Swihart at catcher, despite knowing he had virtually no chance of making the team in 2017 with Christian Vazquez and Sandy Leon both out of options.

They kept him at catcher for the "short- and long-term," Dombrowski explained that spring.

Never did they consider trying him at third base.

"I guess if that's how someone looks at it, that's their prerogative," Dombrowski said at the time. "But we just look at it as a situation where we think he's more valuable to us as a catcher."

They tried to maximize his value and ended up with nothing. Dombrowski said Tuesday that they had been looking at trade scenarios involving Swihart for some time.

The most logical reason it took so long is that 29 other teams don't see him as an everyday catcher. And, as it was revealed this week, neither do the Red Sox.

The game has leaned away from average defensive catchers who can hit and instead focused heavily on defensive-first catchers who have mastered the art and feel of game-calling. Manager Alex Cora has talked about that often, and did again on Thursday, when he said on WEEI it requires a "combination" of ability from the pitcher and catcher to have success on the mound.

No, Swihart wasn't given every chance to succeed in Boston. They moved on from him as their Opening Day catcher after just six games in 2016. They moved on from him after just six starts at catcher again in 2019.

Over and over again, somebody believed he could catch. And every time, others believed it wasn't working.

#### IMPORTANCE OF A LINEUP ORDER

Taking Mookie Betts out of the leadoff spot wasn't going to be a permanent thing.

Cora made it clear in spring training he was playing with the idea of Betts hitting second and Andrew Benintendi leading off, but might mess around with it.

Entering Friday, Betts had hit leadoff seven times and batted second 11 times.

With Betts in the leadoff spot, the Sox are 1-6 and have been shut out three times. They've scored 20 runs, averaging 3.33 runs per game.

When he's hit second, they're 4-7 and have scored 56 runs, averaging 5.09 runs per game.

In the past, Betts has said he doesn't care where he hits in the order, but preferred hitting in the same spot every day. So far, he's hitting .154 with a .636 OPS in the leadoff spot and .227 with a .700 OPS in the two-hole.

Cora wanted more chances for Betts to hit with runners on base, which is why he initially made the switch to second. But Cora didn't change anything without asking the analytics department first.

"I had a conversation with Alex about it," said Zack Scott, the Red Sox assistant general manager in charge of the analytics team, during a conversation in March. "He asked. He's great at reaching out to us. I'm sure he talked to a bunch of people too, but he wanted from a statistical standpoint. I've always said, lineup stuff doesn't move the needle much for me. As long as you're not batting Mookie ninth, I don't really care. It's tiny net gains, which have value because there are 162 games, but you flip those two guys and yeah, you have some more RBI opportunities for Mookie, which I think was his thinking. He's shown more power. There are some guys at the bottom of the lineup that weren't getting on base so it'll create more opportunities for him to drive in runs. I get it. And obviously putting Benny in front of him would increase that too, because he's a good on-base guy. So I get the logic.

"But anytime you move a guy back you're also taking at-bats away from him. Maybe it's a slight gain. I didn't even do analysis on it. I've done it enough in the past to know. Because that was something that we did way too much of in the past, in my opinion. I thought if we were going to pick our spots, that wasn't a great spot to pick. As long as your best players are towards the top, it doesn't really matter. We've always had enough good hitters. I think if you didn't, it might be different. But we've always had pretty good offense, that's the other thing."

#### PATIENCE WITH A PROSPECT

The Red Sox have the right man on the job to help coach prospect Michael Chavis toward learning second base.

Infield instructor Carlos Febles spent his entire career at second base and thinks Chavis, a natural shortstop who had played mostly third base in the minors, has the tools to make it work.

"He's athletic enough to play second base he just needs repetitions there," Febles said. "He signed as a shortstop so it should be easier for him to play second base. Footwork is coming along. It's going to take time but we have to continue to work, put him in a spot where he feels comfortable turning double plays and goes about his business on defense."

Turning shortstops into second basemen is among the most common position switches in baseball. Dustin Pedroia, for example, was a shortstop in college.

"It's easier to go from shortstop to second base," Febles said. "You're already playing up the middle. Knowing where to be on cuts, relays and throws. Think about this, middle infielders have a place to be on every play. For that matter, transition is easier. But now it's against the clock. Left side you go with the clock, everything is in front of you. Now you're against the clock. That's the toughest part. We feel he'll make those plays. It might just take time for him to get comfortable."

#### DEVERS STRUGGLING AT THIRD

At third base, the Sox have another young kid still learning his position.

Rafael Devers entered Friday with five errors, most among all major league third basemen.

"No doubt in my mind he's improving," Febles said. "Think about it, you come up from the big leagues, he's like 20 years old. Now he's a guy that's learning how to play at the highest level. His clock is better. He's playing more under control. He has a better understanding how things play out. We're very happy the way he's improving."



“It was shaky for all of us early on. I think he’s going to different parks, it’s tough in Seattle, the grass, the field was tough. It’s soft, a lot going on there. I don’t try to make excuses for him but that’s the reality.”

#### CONTRACT NO EXCUSE FOR PORCELLO

Rick Porcello is one of the few Red Sox veterans who will be a free agent at the end of the season. But Dombrowski said Friday that contract status is not a reason why Porcello began the year with a 11.12 ERA through three starts entering Saturday.

“I don’t think so,” he said. “I don’t think it’s affected his performance. There’s nothing new. Once we get into the season, we stop all contract talks. The only reason we continued with Bogaerts was because we were down to the last day.

“They told me Rick’s last bullpen session was outstanding, they found some things in his delivery. So hopefully it’ll carry over to the game. I’ve been with Rick a long time, I’ve seen him go through these periods and bounce back and pitch great. I’m thinking it’s more great coming.”

#### **Red Sox notes: Nathan Eovaldi considering surgery to treat loose body in elbow**

Jason Mastrodonato

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Nathan Eovaldi has elbow problems again, but the concern level is almost nonexistent.

It started as an unsettling off day Thursday, when Eovaldi suddenly realized he couldn’t straighten his arm. An MRI revealed loose bodies in his elbow, an issue he also had in March 2018, when he needed arthroscopic surgery to remove them and missed two months while still with the Tampa Bay Rays.

This time, though, he could return even quicker since he’s not simultaneously recovering from Tommy John surgery, which he felt like prolonged his recovery and encouraged the Rays to be more cautious with him.

“It’s very similar to what I had last year,” he said. “I finished my outing in New York (Wednesday), felt great, never had any symptoms. And then it was my off day, later that night, I tried to straighten my arm and couldn’t get it straight. It was sore in there. Told the trainers on Friday and everything, ligament-wise, UCL-wise, it’s all fine. I just have two loose bodies in there.”

Surgery is being considered, and it sounds like Eovaldi is leaning that way, but he won’t know for sure until he visits with doctors in New York on Monday.

“We’ve heard a couple options,” he said. “You could get a cortisone shot. It’s described to be as having a pebble in your shoe. If it’s down in your toes it’s OK, but as soon as it gets in your heel it hurts. For me to not be able to get it to full extension, I can’t throw like that. So I can get a cortisone shot and hope it goes to a little pocket in the back of the elbow, that those pieces go in there. It’s like having it at your toes and it’s not as bad. But it’s only a matter of time that it moves out.”

After a late-March surgery last year, he returned May 30 and threw six no-hit innings vs. the A’s. He finished the regular season with 111 innings and a 3.81 ERA, then dominated in October.

Surgery seems like the most likely option once again.

“I went right into the surgery last time and it worked out really well for me,” he said. “Just one of those things where we’re at in the year, too. It’s early in the season, a lot of time left, so don’t want to let it get worse at the end of the season when we’re trying to make a run.”

The Red Sox don't have to spend much time wondering if the four-year, \$68 million contract they gave Eovaldi was a bad decision just because of this minor operation. There's no structural damage in his elbow, which he said tests revealed to be as strong as ever, and there was no way the Red Sox could've known these loose bodies existed when they signed him in December.

"The doctor is very surprised," said president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski. "We did an MRI when we signed him and it wasn't in there, we didn't see it. It's so small that sometimes MRIs don't pick these things up. Sometimes if you go in for surgery, they could've missed it, when we're talking such a small piece. It's just in the wrong place."

#### OPTIONS TO REPLACE EOVALDI

Without Eovaldi for the near future, the Red Sox could look to Hector Velazquez to fill in.

Marcus Walden will also be considered for the start on Tuesday, manager Alex Cora said, but the Sox don't want to make a habit of using an "opener" type of starter and then relying on the bullpen for a full game.

"We'd like to have somebody that can go five innings," Cora said. "You have to be careful with that (opener strategy). I know the Rays do it, they feel very comfortable with what they have. But for teams that aren't used to it or they didn't do it that often, sometimes it's very uncomfortable."

Brian Johnson, on the injured list with a sore elbow, is expected back soon as well.

The Red Sox don't want to call up prospect Darwinzon Hernandez, a hard-throwing lefty who began the season with Double-A Portland.

"He's only pitched twice," Dombrowski said. "His first outing was outstanding but then he went nine days between pitching. He's pitched very well but I would say the answer to that is he's not ready to come up. Maybe you get into emergencies, he'd be a guy we'd consider because we like his stuff and ability, but he's not ready to come up and be in the rotation."

#### BRADLEY'S SLUMP ENDS

Jackie Bradley Jr. entered Saturday 8-for-58 (.138) with two doubles and no homers on the season, but his single in the ninth inning of the Sox' 6-5 win over the Rays snapped an 0-for-2 day at the plate and led to the winning run.

Cora has given Bradley extended periods of rest in the past when he's in slumps like these, but wasn't sure how he would handle it when asked before Saturday's game.

"We'll see how it goes today," Cora said. "One thing about him, his body language doesn't change. He believes in himself, just like we believe in him. Even if he's going for it, you saw the effort yesterday, it was like 20 feet from him and he dove for a ball. The effort will be there. You see him running to first. He's flying to first. Right now he's scuffling a little bit. There are a few things he's working on.

"Hopefully today is the day that clicks like we were saying with Mookie. We were hoping he was very close to getting there and he made us look good. That's the cool thing about having talented guys. You can throw it to the wall and it sticks. We'll see how it goes. He's grinding right now."

#### ODDS AND ENDS

Christian Vazquez ended the game by picking off Tommy Pham on first base.

"I saw on the foul ball, the pitch before, big lead," he said. "Gave the sign to Steve Pearce and we got it..."

Mitch Moreland departed in the third inning with back spasms but said afterward he was fine and expecting to play on Sunday...

Utility man Brock Holt had his rehab assignment with the PawSox stopped because the scratched cornea in his right eye is not improving...

"It's still bothering him," Dombrowski said. "They gave him a contact lense they thought would help. Put it in, still bothering him, so they're just pulling him back..."

Infielder Marco Hernandez, who hasn't played since 2017 due to left shoulder surgery, will begin a rehab assignment with High-A Salem.

### **Red Sox prospect Michael Chavis had a crazy first day in the big leagues**

Jason Mastrodonato

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — When Michael Chavis' locker was still empty two hours before gametime on Friday night, Alex Cora was asked if the player was having travel issues.

"He'll get here in a little bit," Cora said.

But Chavis nearly missed his first at-bat in the big leagues.

He didn't arrive at Tropicana Field until the third inning Friday, when the Sox were already eyeing a pinch-hit situation for Chavis. His driver dropped him off at the wrong gate and the Sox' top prospect had to walk through three parking lots with his baseball bag and personal luggage to find the players' entrance.

By the time he finally walked in, the Sox were ready to use him.

"I walked in wearing jeans and a shirt and they're like, 'hey, get ready to hit in two batters,'" Chavis recalled on Saturday. "I thought they were messing with me. There's no way. I was in jeans and a T-shirt, hadn't stretched, no way. They were being serious. I got ready, took swings off a tee and luckily Christian Vazquez hit a bomb so I didn't have to hit.

"That would've been a tough first big league at-bat, just off a plane, a little arm stretch and get going. It was a hectic day."

The craziness started because the Sox weren't expecting to call up Chavis. They had planned on summoning Tzu-Wei Lin, but when Eduardo Nunez also needed to hit the injured list Friday morning due to a back strain, Chavis was a late addition to the active roster.

"I flew out yesterday at 11 a.m.," he said. "I woke up to three missed phone calls, thought I messed something up. Found out I was going to the big leagues and I was just waking up like, no way.

"My brother actually beat me here because my flight took so long. He drove from Alabama. Because my flight took so long he got here and was like, 'where are you?' I was like, 'I'm in the air.' I had Wi-Fi on the flights and getting texts from people on staff and I'm like, 'I'm literally in the air!'"

Cora didn't seem to care that Chavis had just arrived. The manager was ready to use him off the bench early in the Sox' 6-4 win over the Rays.

"I told him be ready, he might pinch hit," Cora said. "He'll most likely make his first start on Sunday. We'll see where. His family is here. He knows. Hopefully people can see him play. He's very excited. Swinging the bat well. We'll find at-bats for him."

Chavis was hitting .250 with a .954 OPS and four homers in 12 games in Triple-A Pawtucket.

“I don’t really know if I’d call myself a fast starter,” he said. “I just keep the same approach every day, stay consistent. I was hot in the first game, then had a skid there but I feel good about how I’m playing and going about my business every day.

“I think that’s the biggest key is just to contribute. I’m not sure what my role will be. I’m here for a reason and whatever it is, that’s what I’m here for. I’m not going to try to do too much, not going to try and be a superstar or anything like that. Just going to take care of my business and go about my days the way I have my past two years.”

Though he’s played five games at second base in the minors, the natural shortstop has primarily played third base since being drafted 26th overall in 2014. He’s not expected to play much second base with Lin also on the roster.

“Feel pretty good at second,” Chavis said. “We worked on it a lot in spring training. That’s where I started my second base work. And doing early work every day, all the turns, different angle off the bat, just the footwork off the bag, double plays and everything. Just preparing every day, letting it translate to the game. I feel more and more comfortable every day.”

Injured veteran Dustin Pedroia, who was teaching Rafael Devers some things on the field before Saturday’s game, said he’s planning on helping Chavis learn the position.

“We’re all here to help in any way,” Pedroia said. “Everybody here knows the goal is to win and it takes everybody. Anything you can do to help. Everyone here is here to help and give everyone a boost. We just want to make sure whoever comes in, if it’s their first time, we welcome them and they’re comfortable so they can relax and play. We’ll do our best to make it happen. Just play. Have fun. It’s the same game.”

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

### **Sox place pitcher Nathan Eovaldi on 10-day injured list**

Bill Koch

Saturday brought with it more discouraging off-field news for the Red Sox.

Nathan Eovaldi (right elbow) was placed on the 10-day injured list and Brock Holt (right eye) was returned from his rehab assignment in an apparent setback.

Boston said in a release Eovaldi has a “loose body” in the elbow, which is generally a bone chip or scar tissue. His last start Wednesday night in New York was his best of the season to date, as he held the Yankees to an unearned run over six innings. Eovaldi was saddled with a no decision after Ryan Brasier allowed a Brett Gardner grand slam in the bottom of the eighth, giving the hosts a 5-3 victory at Yankee Stadium.

Eovaldi has had a pair of Tommy John surgeries performed on the elbow, the latest costing him the entirety of the 2017 season. The 29-year-old also underwent arthroscopic surgery to remove loose bodies in March 2018 and didn’t make his season debut with the Rays until May 30. Eovaldi was a workhorse both in the rotation and out of the bullpen for the Red Sox following his July trade for left-hander Jalen Beeks, and Boston rewarded Eovaldi with a four-year, \$68-million contract in the offseason.

Holt managed a lone game at Triple-A Pawtucket on Tuesday, striking out twice and drawing a walk in three at-bats. He was kept out of the PawSox lineup on Wednesday didn’t make another appearance with the club. Holt is suffering from a scratched cornea, and Red Sox manager Alex Cora sounded a bit concerned during his postgame remarks on Wednesday.

“Yesterday was three at-bats, and two of them he didn’t feel great about,” Cora said.

Left-hander Bobby Poyner was summoned from Pawtucket to take Eovaldi’s place on the roster. Tzu-Wei Lin was in the Red Sox lineup at second base against on Saturday against Tampa Bay, as Dustin Pedroia (left knee) is also currently on the injured list. Michael Chavis earned his first Boston call on Friday and gives the club more infield depth on the 25-man roster.

The Red Sox also announced infielder Marco Hernandez (left shoulder) will begin a rehab assignment with Class A Salem. Hernandez hasn’t appeared in a game at any level since May 2017 after a left shoulder injury forced three subsequent surgeries. The 26-year-old posted a .783 OPS in 114 combined games with Double-A Portland and Pawtucket in 2015 and appeared in 61 games with Boston in 2016 and 2017.

## **\* *MassLive.com***

### **Michael Chavis doubles in first major league at-bat to help Boston Red Sox beat Rays; Andrew Benintendi with 5 RBIs**

Christopher Smith

Michael Chavis doubled in his first major league plate appearance when he pinch hit for Sandy Leon with the game tied 5-5 in the ninth inning Saturday at Tropicana Field.

With Jackie Bradley Jr. at first base and one out, Chavis connected on a 99 mph sinker from Rays reliever José Alvarado. He belted it 401 feet to center field with a 109.1 mph exit velocity, per Baseball Savant.

With two runners in scoring position, Andrew Benintendi hit a sacrifice fly to right field and put the Red Sox ahead 6-5.

Boston won 6-5 over the Rays to earn their first series win of 2019.

The Rays had runners at first and second and two outs in bottom of the ninth. But catcher Christian Vazquez picked Tommy Pham off first base to end the game.

Benintendi delivered five RBIs for Boston at Tropicana Field on Saturday.

Rays starter Charlie Morton loaded the bases with two outs in the second inning. But to escape the jam he only needed to retire No. 9 hitter Sandy Leon, who batted .177 last year and batted .120 (3-for-25) at Triple-A Pawtucket to begin this season.

That didn’t happen though.

Morton’s first pitch cutter hit Leon in the foot to force in the game’s first run.

Benintendi then connected on Morton’s next pitch, a 96.1 mph four-seamer, and sent it 405 feet to left-center field for his first grand slam.

A fan appeared to slightly reach over the wall while catching the ball. The play was reviewed but the home run stood.

Rick Porcello pitched 5.2 innings, allowing two runs, both earned, six hits (one homer) and one walk while striking out five.

It was clearly his best start of the season. He had entered 0-3 with an 11.12 ERA in his first three starts. He had given up 19 runs, 14 earned runs, 22 hits and 12 walks while striking 10 in 11.1 innings.

The Rays scored two runs in the seventh against Heath Hembree and Bobby Poyner. Yandy Diaz homered off Matt Barnes in the eighth inning to tie the game.

### **Nathan Eovaldi injury: Boston Red Sox RHP placed on injured list with 'loose body' in right elbow**

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox placed starter Nathan Eovaldi on the 10-day injured list due to a "loose body" in his right elbow, according to the team. Lefty Bobby Poyner was recalled in his place.

Eovaldi's IL stint is retroactive to April 18. The righty pitched six strong innings Wednesday night in New York and showed no signs of injury.

Eovaldi was scheduled to pitch Tuesday against the Tigers but the Sox will have to make an adjustment in that spot. With Brian Johnson on the injured list, Hector Velazquez is the top candidate to make a start with a couple others (Chandler Shepherd and Mike Shawaryn) waiting at Pawtucket.

Like the rest of Boston's starters, Eovaldi has gotten off to a rocky start this season. He owns a 6.00 ERA and 1.524 WHIP through four starts.

Poyner has not yet appeared for the Red Sox this season. He was 1-0 with a 3.22 ERA in 22.1 innings last year.

The timetable for Eovaldi's return is unknown. He dealt with a similar problem last March and underwent arthroscopic surgery that delayed his attempt to come back from Tommy John surgery with the Rays.

Eovaldi joins a growing list of Red Sox on the IL, with Johnson, Brock Holt, Eduardo Nunez and Dustin Pedroia all out as well.

### **Mitch Moreland leaves Boston Red Sox's game vs. Rays because of back spasms, status is day-to-day**

Christopher Smith

Mitch Moreland left the Red Sox's game against the Rays on Saturday because of back spasms. He's day to day.

Steve Pearce replaced Moreland at first base to begin the bottom of the third inning.

Moreland, who homered during the eighth inning Friday, went 0-for-2 with two strikeouts before exiting. Pearce struck out swinging in his first at-bat.

Moreland is batting .250 with a .314 on-base percentage, .609 slugging percentage, six homers, five doubles and 13 RBIs in 19 games.

The Red Sox lead 5-2 in the fifth inning.

### **Nathan Eovaldi injury: Boston Red Sox pitcher leaning toward elbow surgery**

Chris Cotillo

Red Sox starter Nathan Eovaldi is leaning toward undergoing minor elbow surgery, he told reporters in St. Petersburg (including Pete Abraham of the Boston Globe). Eovaldi was placed on the 10-day injured list Saturday morning due to a "loose body" in his right elbow.

Bobby Poyner was recalled in his place.

Eovaldi will visit Dr. Chris Ahmad in New York on Monday to determine if he will undergo the procedure.

Eovaldi pitched six strong innings in Wednesday's loss to the Yankees without issue but couldn't straighten his elbow out Thursday, according to president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski (via the Boston Herald). The loose body was then discovered and he was placed on the IL on Saturday.

Eovaldi dealt with a similar issue last season with the Rays, undergoing surgery to remove loose bodies in late March. Because he was coming back from Tommy John surgery at that time, he missed two months as Tampa Bay brought him along cautiously.

"I went right into the surgery last time and it worked out really well for me," he said. "Just one of those things where we're at in the year, too. It's early in the season with a lot of time left, so I don't want to let it get worse at the end of the season when we're trying to make a run."

Eovaldi was able to throw two weeks after surgery last year and told reporters he expects to be back in the rotation quicker if he undergoes surgery this time around. An exact timetable will be known after his meeting with Dr. Ahmad on Monday.

Boston figures to slot Hector Velazquez into the rotation on a full-time basis. Velazquez and Marcus Walden are the two top candidates on the big-league roster with Brian Johnson out indefinitely with elbow inflammation.

### **Nathan Eovaldi replacement: Boston Red Sox plan to use Hector Velazquez, other internal options with Eovaldi on injured list**

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox will have their starting pitching depth tested early this season, with righty Nathan Eovaldi likely to miss at least a few weeks with loose bodies in his right elbow. Though nothing is set yet, manager Alex Cora told reporters Saturday that righty Hector Velazquez is the leading candidate to slot into Eovaldi's spot starting Tuesday against the Tigers.

"We've got (Marcus Walden) and we've got Hector (Velazquez) who can give us length," Cora said. "Hector has thrown the ball well. He just struggled with command in the last one (against the Orioles). The way he threw in Arizona, the stuff is a lot better. We'll see how it goes today and tomorrow and we'll make a decision."

Velazquez has made two starts for Boston so far, going three innings in each game while serving as a sixth starter to give the team's rotation an extra day of rest. He's now the top candidate to assume one of those five spots, at least through the next four turns through the rotation.

With Brian Johnson out indefinitely due to elbow inflammation, Velazquez and Walden are the only members of the active roster who are capable of starting. Mike Shawaryn, Chandler Shepherd and Erasmo Ramirez (if he clears waivers) are the top candidates at Pawtucket with top prospect Darwinzon Hernandez unlikely to be summoned from Portland.

Cora downplayed the idea of Boston using a "bullpen day" in Eovaldi's spot until he returns, citing how taxing games like that can be for the team's relievers.

"We would like to have somebody that can go five," Cora said. "Obviously, we have to see where we're at. It's not easy."

Boston is two games into a 20-game stretch without an off day, so Cora won't have the luxury of re-setting his rotation until May 9. Eovaldi's spot will come up four times before the next off day-- Tuesday against Detroit, next Sunday against Tampa Bay, May 3 against the White Sox and May 8 against Baltimore.

The spot will likely belong to Velazquez, though Cora could get creative and turn to an unexpected option. The manager is comfortable with the organization's depth at this point.

"We'll figure it out," Cora said. "We'll find ways."

### **Brock Holt returned to Boston Red Sox from rehab assignment without being activated; a setback?**

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox have returned Brock Holt (scratched cornea) from his rehab assignment but they did not activate him. That means he can't start another rehab assignment for five days.

Holt started his rehab for Pawtucket on Tuesday. Position players receive a maximum of 20 days on rehab assignment. He certainly didn't need to be returned now without being activated. That indicates this could be a fairly significant setback.

Boston Red Sox prospect C.J. Chatham is 13-for-42 (.310 batting average) with a .388 on-base percentage, .476 slugging percentage, .864 OPS, seven doubles, six RBIs, five walks, seven strikeouts and six runs in 11 games for Double-A Portland.

Michael Chavis, therefore, should remain on the 25-man roster longer than initially expected. Chavis, who has started five games at second base for Triple-A Pawtucket this season, is expected to play mostly third and first base when he does receive a chance to play for Boston here during his first major league stint. The Red Sox promoted Chavis on Friday when they placed Eduardo Nunez (mid-back strain) on the IL.

Chavis never played second base in a professional game before this season.

Boston placed Holt on the injured list April 6 in Arizona. But Holt has been dealing with a scratched cornea since Opening Day in Seattle.

"It was actually a play at the hotel," Holt explained April 6. "It was the morning of Opening Day. I went and got (son) Griff up out of bed, and I was bringing him back to our bed and one of his fingernails got me good. I thought at the time he just poked me in the eye. But the first two days in Seattle were rough and I was wearing sunglasses inside. And I couldn't open my right eye."

### **Marco Hernandez injury: Boston Red Sox utility infielder begins rehab with Salem**

Christopher Smith

Boston Red Sox utility infielder Marco Hernandez began a rehab assignment for High-A Salem on Saturday.

This is a significant milestone for Hernandez who has undergone three shoulder surgeries since last playing in a big league game May 3, 2017.

Salem's game already is underway. Hernandez is playing second base and is 1-for-2.

"It's been a tough road for me," Hernandez told MassLive.com in February. "It's been a long road. Injuries. Dealing with all these injuries. I've never been in that position. My whole career (until then) was a healthy career. But it was it is. Things happen in baseball. We're human. I got hurt. I'm working for success and trying to come back to help this team win."

The 26-year-old batted .284 with a .328 on-base percentage, .349 slugging percentage, one homer, four doubles and seven RBIs in 61 games for Boston in 2016 and '17.



## **\* *RedSox.com***

### **Benintendi sets Red Sox up for sweep**

Dawn Klemish

ST. PETERSBURG -- It was clear the Red Sox enjoyed the taste of victory enough Friday to want to stretch it out the whole weekend.

Enter Andrew Benintendi, who did his part to get the festivities started on Saturday by unloading his first career grand slam in the second inning. He then kept the party rolling late by plating the eventual game-winning run with a ninth-inning sacrifice fly.

The Red Sox, who earned their first series victory of 2019 with Saturday's 6-5 win over the Rays at Tropicana Field, can earn their first sweep of the year on Sunday.

"It was a good one. We're getting close; we're getting really close," Boston manager Alex Cora said. "I know everyone is talking about, 'It's early, it's early, it's early,' well, we've got a pretty good chance to [make up] a big chunk of three games."

Tampa Bay starter Charlie Morton was clearly in trouble by the time Benintendi stepped to the plate, having already walked two batters and hit a third in the frame, the latter of which forced home the game's first run.

Benintendi pounced on the opportunity immediately, driving the first pitch he saw to deep left-center field. The pro-Boston portion of the crowd roared as the left fielder circled the bases and was greeted by a mob of teammates at home plate.

The moment was not without a little drama, as replay appeared to show a fan leaning slightly over the rail in the outfield to catch the ball. After a review of 1 minute, 5 seconds, the call on the field stood, leaving the Red Sox to enjoy a 5-0 lead.

Benintendi now has four extra-base hits in his past five games.

"That was a good swing," Cora said. "Little by little, we're feeling better offensively, for how bad we felt in New York. Guys have put in good at-bats and done their jobs."

The left fielder's knock not only was the essential piece of Boston's five-run second inning, it proved the catalyst that powered the beleaguered Red Sox to their fifth win in nine games.

"We knew [the Rays] were not going to give up or roll over," Benintendi said. "I think the last two days, we've grinded out at-bats, and fought them tough, and we were able to come out on top both times. We'll try to finish this thing off [Sunday]."

On Thursday, Boston sent its star second baseman, Dustin Pedroia, to the 10-day injured list with left knee discomfort. Brock Holt (scratched cornea, right eye) has been out since the season-opening series.

On Saturday, Nathan Eovaldi joined Pedroia on the IL after an MRI revealed loose bodies in his elbow, and later in the day, Mitch Moreland left in the third inning with back spasms and is now day to day.

Benintendi even narrowly escaped time off after sustaining a right foot contusion during an at-bat Sunday against Orioles. With the rash of recent injuries, the remaining Red Sox are cobbling the offense together as best they can.

“It was tough for a week, as far as our health,” Cora said. “That’s why we have to reset. We need to get healthy and, at least for the last two days, we feel that we can use the whole team. It feels good that way.

“The guys are going to grind it and going to try, but sometimes you’re playing shorthanded, and that’s tough to do.”

Michael Chavis is one of the few positive products of Boston’s injury bug. The Red Sox’s No. 1 prospect per MLB Pipeline earned his first Major League callup following Pedroia’s move to the IL. After travel difficulties surrounded Chavis’ journey from Triple-A on Friday, the 23-year-old made his MLB debut as a pinch-hitter in the ninth inning and doubled to deep center field to push Jackie Bradley Jr. to third and set up Benintendi’s sacrifice fly.

Chavis’ knock had an exit velocity of 108.1 mph per Statcast, the hardest-hit Boston ball of the evening.

“I knew [Rays closer Jose Alvarado] threw hard, I knew he’s got a hard slider and everything’s pretty much firm from him, so I was just ready for velocity, looking for a heater and didn’t try to do too much with it,” Chavis said.

Tampa Bay threatened in the ninth inning, with runners at first and second and two outs and Willy Adames at the plate, but catcher Christian Vazquez caught Tommy Pham taking too big a lead off first base for the game’s final out.

“I saw on the pitch before and gave the sign to [first baseman] Steve Pearce, and we got it,” Vazquez said. “We had a chance there, why not? If Adames got a hit, it’s a tie game.

“It was fun to win the game like that.”

### **'Definitely a chance' Eovaldi may need surgery**

Dawn Klemish

ST. PETERSBURG -- Boston's rotation took another hit on Saturday, when Nathan Eovaldi was placed on the 10-day injured list after an MRI revealed two loose bodies in his right elbow.

Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said there was a “definitely a chance” Eovaldi would need surgery, but he cautioned that there are various methods of treatment for the ailment. Eovaldi will be re-evaluated Monday after his appointment in New York with Dr. Christopher Ahmad, who operated on the starter’s elbow and forearm in 2016.

“There’s just a very small piece in there, but it’s in the wrong place,” Dombrowski said. “We won’t know [the prognosis] until Monday. That’s when the doctor will see him, and we’ll kind of go from there.”

Eovaldi echoed the wait-and-see mentality, but also hinted that surgery would be the likely route -- as he’s been in this situation before, when an MRI also revealed loose bodies in spring 2018. Although a cortisone shot was offered as an alternative method of treatment at the time, Eovaldi opted for arthroscopic surgery.

“It’s very similar to what I had last year. We’ll know more on Monday, but possibly, [I’ll] have the surgery like I had last year,” said Eovaldi. “It’s a short amount of time on the IL.

“I went right into the surgery [last year], and it worked out really well for me. It’s one of those things where we’re at in the year, too. It’s so early in the season, we have a lot of time left, we don’t want anything to get worse toward the end of the season.”

Eovaldi, who was instrumental in Boston's march to the World Series championship last season, was re-signed this offseason to a four-year deal. He has a 0-0 record and a 6.00 ERA in four starts this season.

“I felt like the procedure went really smoothly last year and the recovery was fast,” Eovaldi said. “It’s two weeks until you have your range of motion back.

“I would say [it’s better to have the procedure].”

The right-hander has had Tommy John surgery twice -- once in high school, and again in 2016, while with the Yankees.

Boston summoned left-hander Bobby Poyner from Triple-A Pawtucket to fill his roster spot.

Holt removed from rehab assignment

Working his way back to the Red Sox, Brock Holt was removed from a game at Triple-A Pawtucket on Friday as his scratched right cornea continued to irritate him, Dombrowski said.

The Red Sox utility man tried out a contact to aid his sight and comfort on Friday, but his situation did not improve.

“The eye is still bothering him,” Dombroski said. “So we’re just pulling it back and reassessing.”

Hey, I know you

Marco Hernandez has dealt with his fair share of adversity during his short baseball career. Left shoulder injuries have limited the 26-year-old, who hasn’t played in a game since May 3, 2017.

Hernandez appeared to turn a big corner on Saturday, when the Red Sox announced the third baseman would begin a rehab assignment at Class A Advanced Salem.

Hernandez, who was drafted by the Cubs as an amateur free agent in 2009, appeared in just 61 career games for the Red Sox between 2016-17 and hit a combined .284 with four doubles, a home run, seven RBIs and six walks.

### **Chavis' arrival delayed in air, and on ground**

Dawn Klemish

ST. PETERSBURG -- Michael Chavis’ excitement was palpable as he entertained the media throng gathered around his locker on Saturday afternoon, animatedly describing his path to the big leagues.

Only this story wasn’t so much about Chavis’ journey through the Minors en route to his first Major League callup as it was about Friday’s trip to the ballpark.

“I’ll be honest,” Boston’s top prospect per MLB Pipeline said before the Red Sox played the Rays, “I don’t even know what day it is.”

And for good reason. The whirlwind began Friday morning, when Chavis, who had been playing for Triple-A Pawtucket, awoke to a trio of missed calls. Concerned he had “messed something up,” he instead learned of his promotion and hurried to catch a flight from Syracuse, N.Y., to St. Petersburg for the series opener.

Here’s where things get fun: Because of severe thunderstorms and tornado watches in the Tampa Bay area, Chavis’ flight spent an hour longer in the air than scheduled, leaving many to wonder what was going on. Chavis was so late, in fact, that his brother -- who drove from Alabama -- beat him to Tropicana Field.

“I was getting texts from staff and they were like, ‘Where are you?’” Chavis said with a chuckle. “And I’m like, ‘I’m literally in the air. I don’t know what you want me to do.’”

From there, an Uber transported baseball's No. 75 overall prospect from the airport to Tropicana Field ... well, almost. It seems the driver actually dropped his charge three blocks away, leaving Chavis to hump the final distance laden with several equipment and personal bags as onlookers stared.

But that wasn't all.

"I showed up [to Tropicana Field] in like the third inning, walked in literally in jeans and my shirt, and they were like, 'Hey, you're getting ready to hit in two batters,'" he said. "I thought they were messing with me. I was in jeans, just off a plane, haven't even stretched, I'm wearing a T-shirt ... there's no way. But they were being serious, so I went in and took some swings off the tee."

"Luckily, [Christian] Vasquez hit the bomb so everything was good, and I didn't have to hit, because that would've been a tough first big league at-bat."

Chavis, who Red Sox manager Alex Cora said will likely start Sunday's finale, got a pinch-hit double in his first Major League at-bat Saturday, lining a 99 mph pitch from Rays left-hander Jose Alvarado over center fielder Kevin Kiermaier's head in the ninth inning.

"He's in a good place," Cora said. "There's a very good chance he'll play. His family's here, he knows already ... and he's very excited."

"He's swinging the bat well. Good work at second, third, first, a little DH. We'll find the at-bats for him. That's what he's here for."

Chavis' observation that the last two days were "a little bit hectic" seemed quite the understatement. The important part to him was that he was finally where he needed to be.

"I'm not really sure exactly what my role will be, but I'm here for a reason, and whatever that reason will be, that's what I'm here for," he said Saturday.

## **\* *ESPN.com***

### **Michael Chavis' mad scramble to reach The Show**

Joon Lee

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- As he packed for a quick, three-game road trip to Syracuse, New York, on Thursday, Michael Chavis stared at his bag, then his locker, and again at his bag.

He'd packed too much stuff. He didn't need all those gloves, bats and knickknacks, he thought. Just three T-shirts and a pair of jeans. After all, the Triple-A Pawtucket Red Sox were scheduled for only three games out of town, just a quick weekend getaway. He figured he'd be back in Pawtucket on Monday.

But a phone call, a turbulent flight, a hectic trip into an airport clothing store and a quick ride to the ballpark later, Chavis found himself standing in front of a locker at Tropicana Field, home of the Tampa Bay Rays. So he was very much not in Syracuse, let alone Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He was more than 1,300 miles away and not even knowing the day of the week off the top of his head.

"I should've brought all that stuff," Chavis said with a chuckle. "I need that now."

Everything started a little over 24 hours earlier, when Chavis woke up at 10:45 a.m. on Friday in Syracuse to three missed calls from PawSox manager Billy McMillon, who told him he'd been called up to the big leagues. As he began to gather his stuff, Chavis FaceTimed his mom, Dorothy, who immediately began crying. She'd taken up a second job at night to help pay for Chavis' travel baseball as he was growing up.

"I knew she was going to be the first person to call 'cause she's done so much for me," Chavis said. "I honestly think the headlines should be more about everything she's done for me until this point more than anything I've done."

Then came phone call after phone call after phone call, from friends to family. As the news broke, text messages began piling up, nearly 600 by the end of the night.

"You don't even remember everything you said," Chavis said. "The next person, you're repeating everything."

Chavis quickly packed his stuff at the hotel and the ballpark before dashing to the Syracuse airport to catch his 1 p.m. flight to Detroit, where he'd make a connection to his flight to Florida to join the Red Sox. The plane, a small jet, hit turbulence on the short, hourlong flight.

"They couldn't even do drinks or snack service 'cause everyone was falling," Chavis said. "I felt like I was in 'Snakes on a Plane' going to my debut."

When he landed at the Detroit airport with 45 minutes to spare before his next flight, Chavis realized he didn't want to walk into his first big league call-up wearing a T-shirt and sweatpants. "I need something to look nice," he told himself. Frazzled and hungry, he hustled into a clothing store, not even checking what store he was entering, and immediately sought help from the retail employees. He had 10 minutes to find a button-up shirt, jeans and shoes that fit him.

"What's going on?" one employee asked.

"I'm going to the big leagues, dude," Chavis responded. "I don't know what's happening."

The store's employees shuffled him into the storage room, the closest thing they had to a changing room, so he could try on the impromptu business-casual uniform. Chavis pulled out his phone and turned on the front-facing camera to make sure everything fit and rushed off to his flight.

Texts kept pouring in as Chavis anxiously waited to touch down in Florida. His brother, Fuzzy (real name: Christian), was driving down from Alabama along with five other close friends and family. Meanwhile, Red Sox officials kept texting, asking where he was as the game was about to begin.

"I'm literally in the air right now," Chavis thought to himself. "I don't know what you want me to do. I need to fly."

After landing, Chavis called an Uber, which dropped him off three blocks from the stadium. With his backpack, suitcase and a bag full of personal items on him, Chavis walked toward the stadium. His phone buzzed -- a text from Fuzzy.

"Hey, where are you?" the text read. "I'm sitting at the gate waiting for you."

"You beat me here," Chavis said.

Chavis arrived in the Red Sox clubhouse in the fifth inning. And before he had a moment to appreciate his arrival in a big league clubhouse for the first time, Boston coach Ramon Vazquez told him that the team might need him to pinch hit in two batters.

"That's impossible," Chavis said.

Rookies, he'd heard, always get messed with during their first stint in the big leagues. There he stood, in jeans and a shirt. He hadn't stretched. He didn't know what pitcher the Red Sox were facing. He hadn't seen a single scouting report. But Vazquez wasn't joking.

"I didn't even get to tell him congratulations," Vazquez said.

The state of baseball in 2019

From labor talks and new rules to some different spending habits, it was an unsettling offseason. So where does the game stand as a new campaign begins? Jeff Passan

Panic set in.

"Where are my cleats? Do I need a cup? Where are my batting gloves?" Chavis asked himself. "Where are my bats?"

As Chavis quickly warmed up in the batting cage, catcher Christian Vazquez knocked a two-run homer to center field, giving the Red Sox a 4-1 lead and negating any need for Chavis to pinch hit, giving him a night to rest.

On his second day in the big leagues, Chavis went through his normal routine, trying to stay in the moment and not overthink things just because he's now in the majors. For the past few years, Chavis had slowly started to see the other high school players from the 2014 draft make their major league debuts. But now that he has made it here, Chavis is trying to keep things as normal as possible, which is much easier said than done.

"Holy crap," Chavis said before Saturday's game. "Now I'm in the big leagues. That sounds weird right now."

When Rays outfielder Tommy Pham hit a solo homer off reliever Matt Barnes to tie the game 5-5 in the eighth inning, Chavis knew he would be hitting in the ninth. And he knew that in Rays star reliever Jose Alvarado, he had a big challenge ahead of him.

"Facing Alvarado in the [Gulf Coast League], he was a starter and he absolutely just destroyed us whenever he faced us," Chavis said. "I was just joking with [Fuzzy] before today's game and all, if I get my first AB late in the game today, let's just not have it be Alvarado."

With outfielder Jackie Bradley Jr. on first base and the score tied 5-5 with one out, the count on Chavis tallied to 1-2, and Alvarado called timeout. Chavis, feeling his knees literally shaking, took a moment to gather himself before driving a 99 mph slider from Alvarado straight over the head of center fielder Kevin Kiermaier. His first big league hit -- a double -- set up the go-ahead RBI sacrifice fly from Andrew Benintendi for a 6-5 Red Sox victory and put Boston in position to sweep the series with a win on Sunday.

MJ's brief but promising baseball career

Nowadays, fans look upon Michael Jordan's foray into another sport 25 years ago as a whim and conclude that his baseball career was a bust. They could not be more wrong.  
Steve Wulf

That's why Chavis, the No. 5 prospect in the Red Sox farm system according to ESPN's Keith Law, is up in the big leagues in the first place -- his bat. In 12 games and 40 at-bats this season in Triple-A, Chavis had four homers and was hitting .250/.354/.600. Manager Alex Cora said Chavis will make his first major league start on Sunday in the series finale. Ultimately, Boston will look to its top prospect to fill multiple positions, including first, second and third base.

"There's no lack of confidence," Cora said.

Chavis said he'll be giving the ball from his first major league hit to his mom, as a thank-you for the sacrifices she made for him. And as the night of his first game wound down, the rookie infielder stood in the Tropicana Field visitors clubhouse, trying to absorb everything that had just happened.

"I can't tell you how many times at my house, in the backyard we had a garden, how many times I envisioned this exact scenario, pinch hitting for the Boston Red Sox in the ninth inning off a closer who's nasty and getting a hit," Chavis said. "I tossed up rocks, pretending I was in this moment. When I was on deck, I looked around, and I was like, wow."

### **Eovaldi (elbow) to see doctor, may face surgery**

Joon Lee

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- Boston Red Sox pitcher Nathan Eovaldi is "at ease" after being placed on the 10-day injured list with a loose body in his right (throwing) elbow, he said Saturday.

The injury, similar to the one he suffered while with the Tampa Bay Rays last season, will be evaluated by Dr. Scott Ahmad in New York. From there, a decision will be made whether Eovaldi needs to undergo surgery that would keep him out for nearly two months.

However, both Red Sox president Dave Dombrowski and manager Alex Cora expressed they were not overly concerned that Eovaldi, who has had two Tommy John operations, would miss that much time.

Eovaldi said he didn't experience any symptoms after his start against the New York Yankees on Wednesday, when he tossed six innings while allowing one unearned run, walking one and striking out six. The 29-year-old knew something was wrong when he could not straighten out his arm during the team's off day in Tampa Bay.

It's just frustrating when you're coming off a good outing and you're taking the right steps forward, and you have to have this and you just can't throw," Eovaldi said. "For me to not be able to get full extension, I can't throw like that."

Dombrowski said there was a chance the loose body, described as cartilage, was there when Eovaldi underwent surgery in March 2018.

"We did an MRI when we signed him and we didn't see it," Dombrowski said. "It's so small that sometimes MRIs don't pick these things up. And sometimes, if you went in there for surgery, it could've been in a place where you couldn't see it. You're talking such a small piece, but it's just in the wrong place at this time."

Eovaldi's move to the injured list is retroactive to Thursday. Cora said the team will fill the gap in the rotation internally.

"We'll see how it goes the next few days," Cora said. "We've got Rick [Porcello] today, David [Price] and [Chris Sale] on Monday. We've got [Marcus Walden] and Hector [Velazquez] has thrown the ball well. He struggled with command in the last one, but the way he threw in Arizona, the stuff is a lot better. We'll see how he goes today and tomorrow and then we'll make a decision."

Eovaldi signed a four-year, \$68 million deal in December. He is 3-3 with a 4.08 ERA in parts of two season in Boston. So far this year, the hard-throwing righty has a 6.00 ERA in four starts, allowing 14 runs in 21 innings pitched, striking out 16 and walking 11.

To fill Eovaldi's spot on the active 25-man roster, Boston recalled left-hander Bobby Poyner from Triple-A Pawtucket ahead of Saturday night's road game against the Rays.

In other Red Sox updates, infielder Marco Hernandez, who didn't play last year following left shoulder surgery, is set to start a rehab assignment with Class A Salem. Infielder Brock Holt, out with a scratched right cornea, will meanwhile remain on the injured list after his rehab assignment with Pawtucket.

## **\* *WEET.com***

### **Red Sox place starting pitcher Nathan Eovaldi on injured list**

Ryan Hannable

The Red Sox' injured list is getting quite crowded.

Starting pitcher Nathan Eovaldi was placed on the 10-day injured list Saturday morning with a loose body in the right elbow retroactive to April 18. To fill his spot on the roster, left-hander Bobby Poyner has been recalled from Triple-A Pawtucket.

In four starts this season, Eovaldi has a 6.00 ERA, but the Red Sox have gone 3-1 in his outings. He gave up one run in six innings against the Yankees in his last start.

The Red Sox have an extended stretch of games without an off-day, so they will need to find a fifth starter for as long as Eovaldi is out. Hector Velazquez has made two spot starts this season, so he's a potential option.

More will likely be known later Saturday when Alex Cora meets with the media in St. Petersburg.

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

### **Red Sox take a strange path to clinch their first series of the season**

Sean McAdam

It took until the 21st game of their season for the Red Sox to assure themselves of a series win, and even then, it hardly looked like a sure thing until the very last out.

It took, in fact, in no particular order: a grand slam made possible by two walks and a hit batsman; an improbable bullpen savior in the seventh; a rookie, making his major league debut, coming off the bench to smoke a double off a reliever nearly hitting triple-digits on the radar gun; and finally, the final out recorded as part of a pickoff by the catcher.

It was that kind of victory.

Then again, it's been that kind of season — most of it negative.

The very fact that it took longer than three weeks to notch that first series win tells you everything you need to know about how things have been going.

“If you have told us before the year that it would take this long to win a series, we'd probably laugh,” conceded Andrew Benintendi.

Or cry.

But when Christian Vazquez fired down to Steve Pearce — neither player had been in the starting lineup, in yet another example of how unorthodox the night was — to nab Tommy Pham to seal a dramatic 6-5 win over the Tampa Bay Rays, it was finally achieved.



The Sox had scored five runs on a weirdly constructed rally in the second, aided and abetted by Charlie Morton, who momentarily lost the strike zone, and with perhaps some help from home plate umpire Tim Timmons, whose strike zone was hardly the picture of consistency all night.

The game being what it was, Benintendi's grand slam wasn't official until an umpires' crew review determined whether an overzealous fan, seated in the first row of seats in left-center, had interfered with play. He hadn't and the Sox' runs stood up — all four of them, adding to the first one which had come on a hit batsman.

But after the second inning outburst from Benintendi, the Red Sox offense virtually disappeared. From the third through the eighth, the Sox managed just three more hits. And when Tampa Bay second baseman Mark Lowe leaped to get his glove on a line drive from Xander Bogaerts that seemed ticketed to center, the Rays turned a 4-6-3 double play as Pearce could only advance from second to third. He was stranded there when Rafael Devers popped to short for the final out of the inning.

It was all trending the wrong way for the Sox, a pattern confirmed in the bottom of the same inning when Matt Barnes allowed a leadoff homer to Yandy Diaz to tie things at 5-5.

No one said it would be easy.

But in the ninth, the Sox showed some resilience. Jackie Bradley Jr. poked the first pitch from fireballing Jose Alvarado into right field and after a failed bunt attempt from Tzu-Wei Lin, the Sox opted to have Michael Chavis make his major league debut, pinch-hitting for Sandy Leon.

Sit for eight innings, then go face one of the game's hardest-throwing relievers.

Good luck, kid.

But Chavis wasn't intimidated.

"There's no lack of confidence," Alex Cora told reporters about Chavis. "You see him walking around; he belongs. We saw that in spring training as far as the offensive upside and the way he controls the strike zone."

And how. Chavis put a hellacious swing on a strike from Alvarado and turned it around at 109 mph, hitting it so hard that it managed to confound center fielder Kevin Kiermaier, who turned around as the ball zipped over his head for a double, sending Bradley to third.

"What a way to start your big league career," gushed Cora. "That ball was hammered. That was pretty impressive."

Next up came Benintendi, who had supplied the last runs some seven innings earlier. This time, he was less spectacular but no less efficient, getting a ball in the air deep enough to right to deliver Bradley with the go-ahead run.

And still, the drama wasn't over. The Rays put two on against Ryan Brasier before Vazquez caught Pham napping with too big of a lead off first for the game's final out.

How many games end with a pickoff at first base?

Then again, how many seasons have begun like this one?

Perhaps, then, that's why such a modest accomplishment — the first series one — was hardly routine for the Red Sox.

It's been that kind of year.

## **MLB Notebook: Rough start won't result in Red Sox teardown**

Sean McAdam

The first three-plus weeks of the 2019 Red Sox season have been hugely disappointing. On that, there would seem little debate.

The starting rotation face-planted for the first two weeks, the offense has been strangely inconsistent, and the defense an abject disappointment, leading to almost three-quarters of an unearned run every game.

Say what you will about the team's offseason roster construction and stubborn refusal to upgrade its bullpen in the wake of Craig Kimbrel and Joe Kelly's absence, but few — if any — saw this coming.

Heading into Saturday night, the Red Sox already found themselves a full seven games out of first place. By comparison, the 2018 Sox never were more than two games out the entire way.

Such ineptitude has, perhaps predictably, led to some doomsday scenario and full-on panic button pushing, including the theory, advanced by David Price, that further sinking in the standings will lead to an inevitable wholesale sell-off of the roster.

If things don't get better, Price told Alex Speier of the Boston Globe, Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez and perhaps Price himself would all be traded away with the Sox throwing in the towel on 2019 and beginning from scratch.

Balk!

In the unlikely event that things don't eventually improve for the Red Sox, no such sell-off will take place.

Let us count the reasons why (not):

1. The Sox are poised to remain competitive for a while.

Even if this indeed becomes a lost season — a determination that will require weeks of wretched play combined with the Rays (or someone else) establishing further distance between themselves and the Sox — the team's window to compete in the near future is hardly closed.

As underwhelming as the performance of the rotation has been, its current members are all under control through at least 2021, with the exception of Rick Porcello. That alone should guarantee a competitive club going forward, even as the group's failings are chiefly responsible for the current crisis. Chris Sale, Price, Nathan Eovaldi and Eduardo Rodriguez alone should make the team playoff-worthy when they pitch to their capabilities. (Eovaldi's setback Saturday morning for a loose body in his elbow is mildly troubling in the relative short-term, but hardly cause for long-term concern).

Moreover, the team is set at third base, shortstop and left field for several more seasons and controls the other two-thirds of its outfield through the end of 2020. Any suggestion that the team would be better off dealing off Betts in exchange for a passel of prospects couldn't be more wrongheaded. Betts, his slow start notwithstanding, is one of the three best players in the game, in the prime of his career and hasn't ruled out re-signing with Boston despite putting such talks on hold for the time being. (The franchise, meanwhile, has enough resources to retain/extend Betts when the time comes and make him the highest-paid player in the game if necessary).

And while the minor league system is still rebuilding, there are enough position players (Michael Chavis, Bobby Dalbec) near-ready to augment the roster and fill holes.

2. Dave Dombrowski has a legacy to protect.

Dombrowski will turn 63 in July. He has a contract in place through 2020, though, there have been intimations that, at some point, he'll get a contract extension of his own before the calendar year ends.

He has two titles to his credit — one in 1997 in Miami and another last year with the Red Sox. He would like to add at least one more before he retires and isn't about to go elsewhere in search of one. A team-wide sell-off would push back any hope of another World Series win for years, something that would not interest Dombrowski.

3. Red Sox ownership doesn't do rebuilds.

The Sox finished last in 2012. They did so again in both 2014 and 2015, the latter two in the immediate aftermath of a World Series win in 2013.

Do you recall veterans dealt off for 20-year old future stars? Certainly not.

While the Red Sox did unload veterans such as Jon Lester, John Lackey and Yoenis Cespedes, the targets weren't the cream of someone else's prospect crop. Instead — rightly or wrongly — the team made deals for established players: Joe Kelly, Allen Craig and Rick Porcello. (Admittedly, the Andrew Miller for Rodriguez swap was the lone exception to the rule).

Boston, it was theorized, wouldn't stand for a total rebuild. (I happen to disagree with this theory, but that's beside the point and an argument for another day. The point is that ownership believes it, and since they would have to sign off on any teardown and tanking program, the voices and beliefs of John Henry and Tom Werner are the only ones that count in this debate).

It's unclear why Price voiced his worst-case-scenario publicly. Perhaps it was meant to get the attention of his teammates and scare them straight. Price is among the most thoughtful and perceptive of the veterans in the Red Sox clubhouse and is certainly entitled to his opinion.

But it remains only that. And, based on all evidence, a misguided one at that.

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It's 2019, right?

Because sometimes, it sure feels like baseball is stuck somewhere in the 1950s, unwilling or uninterested in acknowledging any changes or evolution in the game.

Arguing about genuine displays of emotion? Clearing dugouts and bullpens because someone had the temerity to celebrate a well-struck home run?

Are we sure it's 2019?

For the past year, baseball has marketed a "Let the kids play" campaign, seemingly encouraging flair from their players and decrying the stubborn adherence to an outmoded "unwritten rules" that discourage any show of enjoyment. TV spots — produced by Major League Baseball, mind you — mocked the long-held belief that shows of personality were inherently disrespectful to opponents and the game itself.

It was a step forward for baseball and overdue recognition that things had, indeed, changed. Getting thrown at in a subsequent at-bat for reveling in the success of a previous one? That idea suddenly seemed as archaic as flannel uniform, team travel by train and scheduled doubleheaders.

But then, earlier this week, Chicago White Sox shortstop Tim Anderson incurred the wrath of the Kansas City Royals for flipping his bat too early in the game, or with too much emotion, or too much something. So, naturally, Anderson got thrown at in his next at-bat. The benches and bullpens emptied, lots of tugging and mugging ensued and ejections — five in all — were handed out.

And just in case that wasn't foolish enough, MLB piled on by issuing a one-game suspension to Anderson for, in part, the "language" he used in the melee.

Does MLB have any idea how 1) backward and 2) hypocritical it appears with these disciplinary measures?

How can it run slickly produced promos, designed to show that it has turned a corner from its hypersensitive past and welcome on-field expressions of personality, and then turn around and levy punishment at those who aren't afraid to drag the game into the 21st century?

Of course, MLB as an institution isn't alone in its culpability. It was the Royals — players and staff — who determined that Anderson's apparent breach of protocol couldn't go unanswered and responded with pitches aimed at Anderson in retribution.

The Players Association, which has pushed for marketing ideas like the August weekend in which players get to wear colorful cleats and nicknames on the backs of their uniforms, needs to get its players unified on this issue. It cannot have half of its membership ready to go forward with unbridled enthusiasm after dramatic moments and the other half resolutely stuck in the past, playing self-appointed guardians of the old way of doing things.

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For the life of me, I'll never understand the antipathy on the part of some Red Sox fans toward Dustin Pedroia.

Mention a physical setback for Pedroia on social media and be prepared for an avalanche of snark, with fans angrily insisting that he just go away and retire already — as if Pedroia is somehow responsible for the knee injury that has limited him to just nine games since the start of the season.

In reality, Pedroia is attempting to recover from a surgery few others in the game have undergone. If he fails to return to a meaningful career, it surely will not be for a lack of effort. Pedroia has worked tirelessly the last two off-seasons to come back to full-time player status.

It's no exaggeration to suggest that Pedroia was on a path that would have made a strong case for Cooperstown through his first seven seasons from 2007 through 2013, when a typical season for him included a slash line of .305/.372/.457 with 14 homers, 70 RBI, 40 doubles and 17 steals to go along with three Gold Glove campaigns, a Rookie of the Year award, an AL MVP and a Silver Slugger and an OPS+ of 118.

Since then, Pedroia had battled a succession of injuries to his hand, thumb, and of course, knee.

It remains nothing sort of remarkable that in 2017, playing essentially on one leg, Pedroia hit .293 while helping to lead the Red Sox a division title.

And yet, Pedroia is routinely met with derision and calls for his exile.

It's not as if his presence is serving as a distraction to his teammates. Even when he could manage just three games in 2018, forcing the Sox to cobble together the second base position for the remainder of the season, he returned in September to contribute in a non-playing capacity and help teammates in any way that he could.

When he was activated for the start of the first homestand of this season, Xander Bogaerts remarked that Pedroia's mere presence energized and focused the team.

Has Pedroia made mistakes? Surely. Chief among them was his distancing himself from teammates and staff to tell Manny Machado "it's not me, it's them." Even if the Red Sox' attempts to avenge Machado's

questionable takeout slide of Pedroia — the primary source of his knee issues since — were, at best, clumsy, with missed opportunities and unnecessary headshots.

The rest? While some knock Pedroia for undermining then-manager Bobby Valentine with his “that’s not how we do things around here” on Patriots Day in 2012, recall that Pedroia was merely coming to the defense of teammate Kevin Youkilis. (And for my money, anyone positioning himself on the other side of an issue from Valentine is, by definition, on target).

For many fans, displeasure with a pro athlete is often linked to salary and the fact that Pedroia has this year and two more remaining for \$40 million is somehow evidence that he’s “stealing” from the team when, in fact, both sides signed the extension in good faith in 2012. Further, at the time, Pedroia was roundly criticized for taking what was perceived as a below-market, team-friendly deal.

Now, seven years later, it’s somehow Pedroia’s fault that his body has betrayed him?

Meanwhile, the suggestion that Pedroia should somehow slink off toward the sunset and forfeit the remaining money to, you know, make things easier on the team’s payroll, is folly. The deal, like all of its kind, is guaranteed and Pedroia shouldn’t be expected to leave any of the outstanding money on the table.

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### The List/Top 3

In honor of the close call suffered by Pedroia earlier this week, here are the three greatest Red Sox careers short-circuited by injury

#### 1. Tony Conigliaro

On this, there can be no argument. Conigliaro was the game’s youngest home run champ at 20 and the fastest player to 100 career homers. Then, struck down by a fastball from Jack Hamilton in August of 1967, he was never the same. He returned, triumphantly, in 1969 and, with one good eye, even managed a 36 homer, 116 RBI season in 1969. But a year later, he retired (though not for good). Oh, what might have been.

#### 2. Nomar Garciaparra

There’s little doubt that, based on his first four full seasons with the Red Sox (1997-2000), Garciaparra was on a Hall of Fame track. In those heady seasons, he won two batting titles (including a .372 average in 2000) and never knocked in fewer than 96 runs. But he suffered a wrist injury in 2001 that limited him to just 21 games, and while he rebounded to hit .300 and knocked in more than 100 runs in each of the next two seasons, he wasn’t the same. In 2004, he suffered through a succession of physical ailments and was famously dealt away at the deadline. He played another 468 games with three other teams, but his best days were well behind him.

#### 3. Jim Lonborg

In the magical summer of 1967, Lonborg, 25, was arguably transforming himself into one of the best young starters in the game. Perhaps his stuff wasn’t on par with that of Bob Gibson — who would go on to best him that fall in the World Series — or Juan Marichal, or even a still-blossoming Tom Seaver. But Lonborg, highly competitive, with a lean, strong physique, was positioned to be a No. 1 starter for a long time. Then, that winter, Lonborg went skiing, severely injured his leg, and was never the same. Over the next four seasons, he won just 27 games with the Sox. Traded after 1970, his playing career would last another eight seasons and he would finish with a good career and 157 wins. But he was never again the dominant force that he was in the year of the Impossible Dream.

**BSJ Game Report: Red Sox 6, Rays 5 – Red Sox rally, then hold off Tampa, for dramatic win**

Sean McAdam

Game ends on odd note: With the Red Sox clinging to a one-run lead, the potential tying run on second and potential winning run at first, Christian Vazquez threw behind the runner at first, Tommy Pham, and picked him off for the final out. Credit Vazquez with being alert — although there were hints that a play was put on from the Red Sox dugout — and making a strong throw and first baseman Steve Pearce for sneaking in behind Pham to take the throw and apply the tag. It has not been a good week on the bases for Pham — on Thursday night, the night before the Sox series began, Pham attempted to steal third base in the ninth inning of a tie game and was thrown out. The Rays went on to lose the game in 11 innings to Baltimore. If anything, though, Saturday's miscue was worse, since it appeared that Pham wasn't fully alert, with a far-too-big lead off first, then failing to get back to the bag in time.

Benintendi delivers — twice: In the second inning, the Red Sox had a run and the bases loaded when Andrew Benintendi stepped to the plate against Tampa Bay starter Charlie Morton. Benintendi drove a fastball on the outer half to left-center and the ball managed to just clear the wall. (In fact, on a crew review, the umpires checked to determine if the fan who caught the ball had interfered by reaching into the field of play; it was ultimately ruled he hadn't). Benintendi was then hitless in his next two at-bats, but came into play again in the ninth. With runners on second and third and one out, he managed a tough at-bat against lefty flamethrower Jose Alvarado, hitting a ball deep enough to right field to enable Jackie Bradley Jr. to score the go-ahead run from third base.

Porcello straightens out: After three horrid starts, Rick Porcello finally give the Sox a quality outing. He yielded a solo homer in the second to Avisail Garcia, then gave up two triples in the fourth for a second run. But that was the only damage done against him. More to the point, Porcello displayed far better control. After walking 12 in his first 11.2 innings over the first three starts, he issued just one walk. Throughout, thanks to some mechanical adjustments, he showed far better fastball command and even though he missed location on a few pitches in the middle of the game — resulting in extra-base hits — he kept the game under control, something he couldn't claim about any of his first starts this season.

#### TURNING POINT

The Rays threatened in the seventh, scoring two off the Boston bullpen and putting the potential tying run on third. But Marcus Walden took over and over nine pitches, struck out the next two hitters — one looking, one swinging — to preserve the lead.

#### ONE UP

Michael Chavis: Chavis made his major league debut off the bench in the ninth and belted a bullet double to deep center, sending Bradley to third to help set up the go-ahead run.

#### TWO DOWN

Bobby Poyner: With some of the bullpen unavailable, the Sox turned to Poyner for some big outs in the seventh and didn't get them. After getting ahead of pinch-hitter Guillermo Heredia, he walked him, then got ahead of Austin Meadows, allowed a two-run triple.

Tzu-Wei Lin: Rough night at the plate for the infielder, who was 0-for-3 in his first three at-bats, then couldn't get a bunt down in the ninth, fouling off his second attempt for another strikeout.

#### QUOTE OF NOTE

"It feels good. If you would have told us before the year that it would take us this long to win a series, we'd probably laugh." — Andrew Benintendi.

#### STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

While the win gave the Red Sox their first series win of the season, it also represented the Rays' first series loss of the year.

Tampa Bay collected four triples against the Red Sox.

J.D. Martinez extended his hitting streak to 10 games. He's reached safety in all 21 games to date

After not recording a blown save in their first 18 games, the Red Sox have blown two in their last three games.

#### UP NEXT

The Red Sox and Rays finish their series Sunday at 2:10 p.m., with David Price (1-1, 3.79) vs. RHP Tyler Glasnow (4-0, 1.13) at 2:10 p.m.

#### **Nathan Eovaldi placed on injured list with loose body in his right elbow**

Sean McAdam

Just when it appeared as though the Red Sox' starting rotation was beginning to stabilize, bad news hit Saturday morning.

The team announced that Nathan Eovaldi — who limited the Yankees to one run on three hits over six innings Wednesday in New York — was placed on the injured list, diagnosed with a “loose body” in his right elbow, retroactive to April 18.

To take Eovaldi's spot on the roster, the Red Sox recalled lefty reliever Bobby Poyner from Pawtucket.

This is not the first time that Eovaldi has encountered this same problem. A little more than a year ago, recovering from a second Tommy John surgery, Eovaldi, then with the Tampa Bay Rays, underwent arthroscopic surgery to remove a loose body in the area and missed approximately two months.

It's unknown, of course, whether he'll require a similar procedure again, or just needs rest and rehab.

#### BSJ ANALYSIS

There was little indication that Eovadi was dealing with any physical issues on Wednesday. His fastball was regularly clocked at 98-99 mph and he demonstrated improved control (one walk) compared to his first three outings, when he was atypically wild, issuing 10 walks in his first 15 innings.

The move comes at a particularly bad time for the Red Sox, who are attempting to dig out from their worst start to a season in more than 20 years. The Sox currently sit at 7-13, seven games behind first-place Tampa Bay in the American League East.

Worse, they only Friday began a period that will see them play 20 games over the next 20 days without a day off, their longest such stretch of the season.

Eovaldi's turn is due to come around Tuesday, when the Sox are at Fenway as part of a 10-game homestand.

They have a number of options available to them, the easiest of which would be to insert swingman Hector Velazquez into the rotation on a regular basis. Velazquez has twice stepped into the rotation this season to provide spot starts designed to give the rest of the starters additional rest. In six innings, he's allowed just one run on three hits. Presumably, he could build up arm strength in order to go deeper into games.

At Pawtucket, Mike Shawaryn is 1-1 with a 3.12 ERA and a 1.10 WHIP and has performed the best of the starters at Triple-A. Shawaryn is not currently on the organization's 40-man roster, but could be added since there are now three available spots.

Lefty Darwinson Hernandez is perhaps the most highly regarded starter prospect in the organization's upper levels and is 1-1, 1.80 after two starts at Double-A Portland. But it's doubtful the Sox would want to rush him to the big leagues and interrupt his development.

Another would-be candidate, lefty Brian Johnson, is on the IL himself, also sidelined with elbow issues and hasn't yet been cleared to resume baseball activities.

## **\* TampaBay.com**

### **Rays' comeback falls short, lose 6-5 to Red Sox**

Marc Topkin

ST. PETERSBURG — The mistakes Charlie Morton made early in the game that left the Rays down five runs they were able to make up for. The one Tommy Pham made that ended the game, that one may haunt the Rays for a while.

With another rally building in the ninth, Pham was caught too far off first base and picked off to seal a frustrating 6-5 loss to the Red Sox.

"All I'm going to say is I (screwed) up, and that's it," Pham said. "I have nothing else to say. I messed up. ... There's no other need to explain. "

The Sox deserve some credit in scouting and setting the trap, catcher Christian Vazquez, saying the coaches "told me to watch for it," noting where Pham was and flashing a sign to first baseman Steve Pearce to be ready for a pickoff throw.

"Good job by Christian looking around and seeing what's going on," Sox manager Alex Cora said. "That was a great play."

So after Daniel Robertson led off the ninth with a single, and after Pham drilled a two-out single to bring Willy Adames up with a chance to complete what would have been a remarkable comeback from an early 5-0 deficit, the Rays broke down.

"Sure it was frustrating," Rays manager Kevin Cash said. "It was a really well-executed play on their part. I guess that's probably the best I can say. They made a good play."

There was plenty of frustration on what ended up a night of loss for the Rays, now 14-7.

They lost their first series after winning the first six of the season. They lost three straight for the first time since Aug. 3-5. They lost some of the margin, real and perceived, created by their fast start and the Red Sox's struggles. And they lost first baseman Ji-Man Choi, who left the game due to calf tightness shortly after legging out one of their team-record four triples, with the hope he won't need more than a day or two.

With their bullpen "taxed" – Cash's word – after three straight days of using openers and multi-inning relievers, the Rays were counting a big outing from veteran starter Charlie Morton.

Instead he put them in a big hole, allowing five runs to the Red Sox in a messy second inning that included a leadoff single, two walks and a hit batter and then Andrew Benintendi's grand slam.

"Just fell behind a few guys," said Morton, who didn't give up anything else in working six innings. "I wouldn't say it was a poorly executed pitch to Benintendi, I would just say it was the wrong pitch."



There was frustration when it landed, too, as the Rays felt a fan, in their colors, reached over the low railing atop the fence to catch it and interfered, but the umps called it a home run, and a replay review didn't change it.

"It looked like he reached over," centerfielder Kevin Kiermaier said. "I don't think they had a good camera angle. I always say I hate when guys sit here and always ask for a replay when the play's not even close, but for me right there – maybe my eyes were wrong – it really looked like the fan caught that hanging out over. ... It's unfortunate because I really do think it might have hit off the top of the fence."

Down 5-0, the Rays slowly, and impressively, came back. An Avisail Garcia homer in the second got them one run. Fourth-inning triples by Choi and Brandon Lowe another. They got two in the seventh keyed by triples by Kiermaier and Austin Meadows.

And they finally got even in the eighth when Yandy Diaz, who couldn't hit homers with Cleveland, hit his fifth for the Rays, an opposite field shot.

But there was more frustration to come.

Jose Alvarado, who hadn't given up a run in his first 10 outings, proved fallible in the ninth.

Jackie Bradley Jr. led off with a single, and after a failed bunt, Sox rookie Michael Chavis made a smashing major-league debut, driving a ball over Kiermaier's head for a double.

"What a way to start your big-league career," Cora said. "That ball was hammered."

Enough that a Benintendi sac fly made it 6-5.

The Rays weren't quite done, with a chance for absolution for several earlier misdeeds.

Robertson singled off Ryan Brasier, and when Pham singled with two outs, and the Trop was rocking with another noisy split allegiance crowd of 22,940.

It seemed like that had a chance for a happy ending.

"It just shows you our team," Pham said. "We have a whole bunch of grinders in here. We're not going to give up without a fight."

But then Pham made the mistake that ended that fight. "There were some key situations for me specifically and I didn't come through (Saturday)," Pham said. "I messed up all around – hitting and on the bases today. So I'll make up for it."

He has a couple mistakes to cover. Thursday, he made a big one, getting caught trying to steal third, perhaps unnecessarily, in the ninth of a tie game, and then Friday he was caught stealing second in the seventh with the score again tied.

"Tommy is going to be fine. He's a big part," Cash said. "It's kind of come in bunches right here lately. But we'll all work through that with him."

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

### **Red Sox get 1st series win, beat Rays 6-5 behind Benintendi**

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- Perhaps the Boston Red Sox will look back at this weekend as the games that got their title defense back on track.

The World Series champions won a series for the first time this season when Andrew Benintendi hit a grand slam and a tiebreaking ninth-inning sacrifice fly and catcher Christian Vazquez picked off Tommy Pham for the final out in a 6-5 win over the Tampa Bay Rays on Saturday night.

"These are the games that we expect to win, and the last two days we've grinded out at bats and came out on top," Benintendi said. "We'll figure some things out and once we hit our stride, it'll be a lot more fun."

Boston had lost four of its first six series and split the other two during a 6-13 start, its worst since 1996. The Red Sox beat the AL East-leading Rays 6-4 in Friday's series opener.

Before the game, the Red Sox put right-hander Nathan Eovaldi on the disabled list because of loose bodies in his pitching elbow and said it has not been determined whether he will need surgery.

Rick Porcello gave up two runs and six hits in 5 2/3 innings, Matt Barnes (2-0) won after allowing Yandy Diaz's tying home run leading off the eighth, and Ryan Brasier got his fifth save in six chances after getting into trouble.

Daniel Robertson singled leading off and Pham singled with two outs. With Steve Pearce playing off first base, Willy Adames fouled off a pitch, and Vazquez, who had just entered in the middle of the ninth, received the second pitch and fired to first.

"All I'm going to say is I messed up," Pham said. "Just learn from it and never let it happen again. There were some key situations for me, and I didn't come through today. I messed up all around -- hitting and on the bases today. I'll make up for it."

Boston is no stranger to game-ending pickoffs. Koji Uehara picked off Kolten Wong of St. Louis at first base to end Game 4 of the 2013 World Series.

"I saw on the foul ball on the pitch before he a big lead, and I gave the sign to Pearce," Vazquez said. "Why not? If Adames got a hit, it's a tie game. We got the chance, and we did it."

Boston went ahead in the ninth against Jose Alvarado (0-1) after Jackie Bradley Jr. singled leading off. Michael Chivas, a 23-year-old taken with the 26th overall pick in the 2014 amateur draft, pinch hit in his major league debut and doubled. Benintendi followed with his go-ahead fly.

Chivas spent his first full day with the Red Sox after his delayed flight from Syracuse caused him to arrive in the third inning Friday night.

"I'll be honest, I don't know what today is," Chavez said. "I flew out yesterday at 1; they told me at 11. I literally woke up to three missed phone calls, and I thought I messed something up. They said, 'You're going to the big leagues,' and I was like, 'No way.'"

Tampa Bay had won its first six series of the season. The Red Sox won consecutive games for just the second time this year.

Benintendi homered off Charlie Morton in a five-run second after Sandy Leon was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded.

Avisail Garcia hit a solo homer in the second, and Brandon Lowe drove in a run in the fourth with one of Tampa Bay's franchise-record four triples. Boston had not allowed four triples in a game since June 9, 1983, against Detroit. Austin Meadows hit a two-run triple in the seventh, and Kevin Kiermaier and Ji-Man Choi also tripled for the Rays -- Choi left in the sixth inning because of a tight left calf.

Morton struck out nine while giving up five runs and six hits in six innings.

Boston was looking forward to Sunday's series finale.

"We haven't had a chance to say it all season, but now we've got a chance to sweep somebody," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Red Sox: 1B Mitch Moreland left in the third inning due to back spasms. ... INF Brock Holt (scratched cornea) will not be activated this weekend, as originally planned.

Rays: LHP Blake Snell (fractured right fourth toe) threw 18 pitches in his first bullpen session and is to throw another bullpen session Monday. Manager Kevin Cash didn't rule out the 2018 AL Cy Young Award winner from returning Wednesday or Friday. ... Cash said INF Joey Wendle (strained left hamstring) is ready to be reinstated from the 10-day IL but hasn't been yet because of a need for pitchers on the roster.

#### UP NEXT

LHP David Price (1-1, 3.79), who won the AL Cy Young Award for the Rays in 2012, starts Sunday for Boston and RHP Tyler Glasnow (4-0) for Tampa Bay, Glasnow has a league-leading 1.13 ERA.