

## ***The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, April 23, 2019***

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

#### **Andrew Benintendi's opposite-field power has game-changing potential**

Alex Speier

For Andrew Benintendi and the Red Sox, hope is something that comes out of left field.

While the Red Sox finally gained some traction for the 2019 season with a three-game weekend sweep over the Rays, the team remains in search of greater consistency — particularly from a lineup that typically left opposing pitching staffs on their heels in 2018.

Entering Monday, the Red Sox had scored just 4.2 runs per game, a below-average mark that ranked 21st in the big leagues.

Yet in Tampa Bay, there were ongoing glimpses of a potential catalyst. Benintendi — after sitting out the team's three straight losses to start the week while recovering from the foul ball he slammed off his foot last Sunday — returned to the lineup against the Rays and showed difference-making ability in three wins from atop the lineup.

In particular, Benintendi's grand slam to left-center against Charlie Morton in Saturday's 6-5 victory pointed to an area of potential growth for the 24-year-old. Increasingly, Benintendi is showing the ability to drive the ball to left-center in a way that points toward a potential next step in his offensive development.

Benintendi has 40 career homers. While just five of those have been to the opposite field, each of his last three — one last August, both this season — have gone out to left or left-center.

“The last two years, I've hit a lot of balls over there. I think now, I'm getting older and stronger and can maybe hit it a little further that way,” said Benintendi. “Even the ball I hit in Tampa, if I hit that same ball a year ago, or two years ago, that's a double, maybe one-hopping the wall. I think as time goes on, my opposite-field power will show up more.”

The ability for lefthanded hitters to drive the ball to the opposite field can serve as a springboard to elite performances for Red Sox players. After all, the ability of the Wall in left to turn routine flyballs into doubles and homers is the stuff of hitters' dreams and pitchers' nightmares.

As Benintendi came through the minors, the flashes he showed of opposite-field ability convinced some evaluators that he could compete for batting titles while piling up extra-base hits by the dozen at Fenway. He took a step in that direction in 2018, hitting .314/.363/.498 with 39 extra-base hits in 75 home contests, a major jump from his 2017 performance at home (.258/.329/.382 with 21 extra-base hits).

Now, if he can continue to show the ability to drive pitches to the opposite field as the Red Sox leadoff hitter, he has a chance to create havoc from atop the lineup, with a potential trickle-down through what the Red Sox still anticipate will be a stacked top-half of the order.

Toward that end, the Red Sox have been heartened by what they've seen from the leftfielder in recent weeks. In 12 games dating to April 4, Benintendi is hitting .348/.404/.565 with six extra-base hits. Though he's missed time in that stretch due to the ball that he pounded off his foot last Sunday, Cora actually thinks that the injury may have helped to reinforce good habits thanks to an opposite-field double down the leftfield line that Benintendi had in his first plate appearance after the injury.

“It seems like his swing is getting better,” said Cora. “The first few games [of the season], he was very pull heavy, not driving the ball to left-center. . . . Honestly, I feel [the turnaround] started here in that last at-bat when he fouled that one off, stayed back, and just used his hands, hit that double down the line without using his hands – kind of a reminder that, ‘OK, I can stay on the pitch and go the other way.’”

Despite the double, however, the foul ball was an unpleasant reminder to digest. Benintendi — who’d already pounded two foul balls off his knee earlier in the season, and had to wear a pad for protection — will now wear an EvoShield guard on his foot; he received a box of the protective devices on Monday.

“Everyone was joking that [I] should take Vazquez’s catchers shin guard,” said Benintendi. “It’s hard not to think about when you’re at the plate. On a pitch inside, you can’t be afraid to pull it, so you have to be willing to hit it off your leg, I guess. You just can’t really think about it. You’ve got to hopefully not do it again. It’s going to happen again at some point, just hopefully not that bad, but I’ll be wearing the right stuff then.”

The team’s hope, however, is that Benintendi will be pulling fewer pitches off his right foot and leg and instead continue to build on his early-season signs of hitting more to the opposite field. To this point, Fangraphs has Benintendi hitting balls to the opposite field at the highest rate of his career (30.4 percent) and making hard contact on a career-high 39.3 percent of the balls he’s putting in play.

Even with an unusually high 22.0 percent strikeout rate to this point, that sort of contact gives the Red Sox hope of what might be coming from their leadoff hitter moving forward. If Benintendi is able to drive the ball in the air to all fields, then it will both diminish the number of vulnerable areas where opposing pitchers can attack him and generally make him a top-of-the-order menace along the lines of what Cora envisioned — and someone who can help the Red Sox offense find a groove moving forward.

“He’s getting close. I think he can do that,” said Cora. “When Benny’s doing that, using his hands, trusting his hands, backtracking the ball, he’s in a great place.”

### **Nathan Eovaldi to undergo elbow surgery Tuesday**

Alex Speier

Nathan Eovaldi will undergo arthroscopic surgery Tuesday to remove loose bodies in his right elbow, a team source said, confirming a report by Fox’s Ken Rosenthal.

Eovaldi saw Dr. Christopher Ahmad in New York on Monday.

Nathan Eovaldi pitched his best game of the season Wednesday in New York, but found himself unable to straighten his right arm Thursday.

An MRI taken on Friday showed a “loose body” in Eovaldi’s elbow.

Eovaldi, 29, believes it’s a broken-off piece of cartilage based on a similar issue last season.

Ahmad, who is the Yankees team doctor, performed Eovaldi’s second Tommy John surgery in 2016.

Last spring, when Eovaldi was with the Rays, he had arthroscopic surgery March 30 to remove two loose bodies. He started a minor league rehabilitation assignment May 4 and returned to the majors May 30.

With Eovaldi on the injured list, manager Alex Cora said that Hector Velazquez is expected to stay in the rotation for at least a couple of turns.

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.

## **Monday night's Red Sox-Tigers game rescheduled for Tuesday**

Andrew Mahoney

The Red Sox-Tigers game scheduled for Monday night at Fenway Park has been postponed. The forecast calls for an extended period of moderate to heavy rain throughout the evening and into the overnight hours in the Fenway area.

The game was rescheduled as the first game of a day-night doubleheader Tuesday beginning at 1:05 p.m. Tuesday's regularly scheduled game remains at 7:10 p.m. Tickets for Monday's game will be good for admission to the rescheduled contest at 1:05.

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

### **Chris Sale looks to take another step forward**

Steve Hewitt

While Chris Sale saw it one way, Alex Cora came away with a completely different perspective.

After Sale's most recent start last Tuesday against against the Yankees, in which he allowed four runs on seven hits in an 8-0 loss, dropping his record to 0-4 with an 8.50 ERA, the ace was hard on himself.

"I've got to find a way to pitch better. This is flat-out embarrassing," Sale said. "For my family, for our team, for our fans."

Even with his catcher of choice, Sandy Leon, back in the fold, Sale wasn't himself. But Cora had an optimistic view, going as far as to say he wouldn't be surprised if in his next outing, Sale is right where they need him to be.

A night after he was originally scheduled to take the ball, Sale will look to back up his manager's wisdom when he pitches in Game 1 of a doubleheader against the Tigers that will open a four-game series at Fenway Park. Monday night's scheduled game was rained out.

"I think he's ready," Cora said. "Like I said, we had two different opinions of his outing. He felt like he disappointed his family. I think that he's close."

Though his final line wasn't Sale-esque, Cora was encouraged by a few factors. Sale's velocity was closer to his capabilities, as he topped out at 97 mph and stayed in the 93-94 range for most of the outing. His slider also continued to look better, as he got nine swings and misses on the pitch, the most of his four starts this season.

That wasn't enough to please Sale, who was unhappy he couldn't last deeper into the game. He's yet to pitch into the seventh inning this season, but if Cora is right, today might be the day.

"I think he's very close to taking off," Cora said. "Velocity's there, slider's there, delivery was more consistent, so I know he wants to get on the mound, but I think it's just a regular day for him."

Walden impresses

After a couple of rough appearances against the Orioles, reliever Marcus Walden seemed to turn a corner this weekend at Tampa Bay. He had two strikeouts in Saturday's victory, and threw two scoreless innings in Sunday's win that helped the Red Sox earn a sweep.

Cora seems to be developing trust in the right-hander, particularly in high-leverage situations.

“What he did (Sunday) was outstanding,” Cora said. “He’s done that every time he goes out there. The stuff is a lot better, the slider is a lot better. He’s a different look. You got (Colton) Brewer and (Matt) Barnes and (Brandon) Workman. They’re all fastballs, cutters, breaking balls, and he’s more east-west with the slider, so it’s a different look for them. Yesterday we got some good matchups for him. ... He’s in the mix.”

Eovaldi out month

Nathan Eovaldi will be out 4-6 weeks to have surgery to remove loose bodies in his right elbow, a source confirmed to the Herald. The Athletic was the first to report the news.

It’s the same procedure that the right-hander had last season when he was a member of the Tampa Bay Rays. He had the surgery done in late March last year and debuted on May 30.

Dustin Pedroia, who is still on the 10-day injured list with an irritation in his left knee, has not begun baseball activities yet, Cora said. The manager said Pedroia did some work in the weight room on Monday. ...

Brock Holt (eye) will participate in batting practice Tuesday to determine his next step. Brian Johnson (left elbow) will play catch from 60 feet either Tuesday or Wednesday. Eduardo Nunez (back) is feeling better, Cora said, and might try to take soft toss Tuesday. ...

Hector Velazquez will take the ball for the second game of the doubleheader, scheduled to start at 7:10. Tickets for Monday night’s game will be good for admission to the rescheduled game at 1:05.

### **Red Sox reliever Matt Barnes: ‘I want to strike everybody out’**

Jason Mastrodonato

Most baseball fans know the most overpowering reliever in the game is Josh Hader, the long-haired Brewers lefty who has been compared to Chris Sale.

But fewer could probably answer the question: who’s second? Who has struck out almost the same rate of batters faced but allowed fewer runs on fewer hits and fewer walks?

That’d be the Red Sox’ seventh-inning guy. Or eighth-inning guy. Or ninth-inning guy.

Or whatever inning Red Sox manager Alex Cora decides to use Matt Barnes on that particular day.

Quietly, Barnes has become the American League version of Hader, a premium reliever with a high-90s fastball, knee-bending breaking ball and a strikeout rate better than 50 percent. He’s capable of pitching in a versatile, sometimes multi-inning role. They’re the only two active pitchers in the game who can say that: Hader and Barnes.

Barnes has struck out 19 of the 37 batters he’s faced this year, while walking just two in 9½ innings of work.

He’s struck out at least two batters in each of his nine appearances.

“Don’t jinx me,” Barnes said Monday, when the Sox were rained out at Fenway Park. “Am I trying to strike guys out? Yeah. Absolutely. I want to strike everybody out.”

There used to be a weird thing about pitchers talking about strikeouts. It was almost looked at as a statistic that didn’t matter, something used by baseball writers for awards voting and maybe in contract negotiations. But for a while, pitchers would rarely say they were trying to strike guys out.

That seems to have to changed.

Reliever Brandon Workman was standing nearby when Barnes said he wants to strike everybody out. When told guys used to be shy about admitting that, Workman said, "That's before every piece of contact went over the fence for a homer."

Barnes nodded his head.

"Fact," he said. "That's why. I'm trying to strike guys out because there are more home runs now than there have ever been in the game."

This might sound like a broken record, but here it is: Home runs are up again this year, and they're up big.

There have been 862 home runs in 648 games as of Monday morning, a pace of 6,467 home runs, which would be an increase of 16 percent from last year's total of 5,585. It would shatter the MLB record.

And this is April, the month when historically there have been the fewest home runs hit.

The game is evolving so fast that pitchers are being forced to evolve just as quickly.

For Barnes, that meant a change to his pitch mix.

With MLB hitters teeing off on fastballs, Barnes, who can dial it up in the high-90s, is throwing a career-low 38 percent fastballs. That's down from 54 percent fastballs last year, and down further from 64 percent in 2016.

Meanwhile his curveball, which was always a good put-away pitch for him, has become more important than his fastball. He's throwing it a career-high 58 percent of the time, up from 42 percent last year, and 24 percent in 2016.

"Guys hit fastballs," he said. "Everybody hits fastballs. You have to try to stay as unpredictable as you can. I've been able to command it well in the zone when I need to, expand it when I need to. It's a pitch that's really been good for me this year."

He's even using his curve to pitch backwards, often starting hitters with a first-pitch bender over the plate for strike one.

"Anytime you can get ahead of guys," he said. "That's been one of the biggest things, I've been consciously trying to be more aggressive in the zone as opposed to falling behind guys right away. It allows you to expand more once you get ahead of guys early."

Before the season, his goal was to limit "dumb walks," something that bit him in the past. With just two walks on the year, he's done that.

"But I would trade a couple of dumb walks to get those homers back," he said.

Twice this weekend, Barnes allowed a game-tying homer in the eighth inning. Perhaps that comes with the territory of being so aggressive.

"The pitch to Yandy Diaz was a pretty decent pitch up and away, I just pulled it a little bit and allowed him to stay on his bat a little bit longer than I would've liked," Barnes said. "The one to Tommy Pham, I was more banking on him not putting a good swing on a 2-1 curveball and I just hung it. I didn't locate it where I wanted to for a 2-1 curveball, left it up and he put a good swing on it."

He's allowed just three runs in total this year. Batters are hitting .048 against his curve.

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

### **Red Sox injuries: Dustin Pedroia works in weight room, Brian Johnson will play catch this week**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Before news broke that Red Sox right-hander Nathan Eovaldi will undergo elbow surgery and miss 4-6 weeks, manager Alex Cora provided some updates on four other injured players:

\* Second baseman Dustin Pedroia (left knee discomfort) has not resumed baseball activities but “did a lot in the weight room” Monday. Pedroia was removed from Wednesday’s game against the Yankees after one at-bat and was placed on the injured list a day later.

A visit to the doctor in New York revealed nothing serious with Pedroia’s knee, but the timetable for his return is not yet known. He’s eligible to come off the IL on April 29.

\* Infielder/outfielder Brock Holt (scratched cornea in right eye) hit off a machine Sunday and will hit batting practice at Fenway Park on Tuesday. Holt is trying a new contact lens after a couple failed attempts that halted his rehab assignment at Pawtucket.

Holt was returned from his rehab stint Saturday and won’t be eligible to go back to the minors until later in the week. It’s unlikely the Sox would be willing to activate him without him having some successful at-bats with the PawSox.

\* Infielder Eduardo Nunez (mid-back strain) also hit off the machine Sunday and may not take more than the 10 required days. He’s eligible to come back on April 29.

“He’s feeling better,” Cora said.

\* Left-handed pitcher Brian Johnson (left elbow inflammation) will play catch Tuesday for the first time since hitting the IL on April 6. He’ll throw from 60 feet as part of building arm strength back up.

“Pretty encouraging,” Cora said. “He’s feeling a lot better than he did a few days ago.”

Johnson will be a candidate to take Eovaldi’s rotation spot once he comes back. Until then, it’ll belong to righty Hector Velazquez.

### **Nathan Eovaldi injury: Boston Red Sox righty to undergo surgery to remove the loose bodies in his elbow (report)**

Christopher Smith

BOSTON — Boston Red Sox starter Nathan Eovaldi will undergo surgery to remove the loose bodies in his elbow, per The Athletic’s Ken Rosenthal.

Eovaldi, then with the Rays, underwent arthroscopic surgery to remove loose bodies in his elbow March 30, 2018, after posting a 3.24 ERA in five starts during spring training (16.2 innings).

He missed two months. He returned from that procedure May 30, 2018. He also was returning from his second Tommy John surgery last year. He didn’t pitch at all in 2017.

The Red Sox placed right-handed starter on the 10-day injured list with loose bodies in his elbow Friday.

### **Ex-Boston Red Sox Blake Swihart writes farewell letter to fans before Diamondbacks debut**

Chris Cotillo

Former Red Sox catcher Blake Swihart said goodbye to Red Sox Nation on Monday, penning an emotional letter on Instagram hours before his debut with the Diamondbacks.

"Red Sox Nation," Swihart wrote, "As today is the first day I will wear a jersey that doesn't have Boston/Red Sox across my chest, I wanted to reach out and thank all of you personally. While today I turn the page on a new chapter, I leave the Red Sox organization with so many amazing friends, teammates, and of course you, the fans. You embraced me as part of 'The Nation' as a 19 year-old boy from New Mexico and helped me grow into a man, and last year, into a champion! I take with me so many great memories and look forward to building many new ones as my journey continues in Arizona. Thanks for always being supportive and cheering for me and our teams. You will always hold a special place in my heart and a piece of me will always be part of Red Sox nation!"

Swihart was designated for assignment Tuesday and traded to Arizona on Friday in exchange for outfielder Marcus Wilson. Boston decided to keep catchers Sandy Leon and Christian Vazquez in the roster after initially taking Swihart on its Opening Day roster.

Swihart leaves the Red Sox having hit .255/.314/.365 with nine homers and 58 RBIs in 203 games. He was the team's first-round pick in 2011.

Swihart is expected to make his first appearance for the Diamondbacks on Monday night against the Pirates.

### **Chris Sale to start Game 1, Hector Velazquez will pitch Game 2 of doubleheader for Boston Red Sox on Tuesday**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Chris Sale will start Game 1 and Hector Velazquez will pitch Game 2 for the Red Sox on Tuesday as they face the Tigers in a day-night doubleheader.

Sandy Leon will catch Sale at 1:05 p.m. and Christian Vazquez will catch Velazquez at 7:10 p.m. The Sox were rained out Monday night.

Velazquez is assuming Nathan Eovaldi's rotation spot with Eovaldi on the injured list due to loose bodies in his right elbow. Manager Alex Cora said Monday that Velazquez will be in the rotation for at least the next two turns.

"I think for now," Cora said. "The next, probably, two, he'll be there."

Eduardo Rodriguez and Rick Porcello will start in the final two games of the four-game set against Detroit on Wednesday and Thursday. David Price will start the series opener against the Rays on Friday before Sale and Velazquez take their next turns.

Cora said he had no update on Eovaldi's status. The righty was meeting with doctors in New York on Monday to determine if he needed surgery on his elbow.

### **\* *The Portland Press Herald***

#### **Vazquez asserts himself, at bat and behind plate**

Tom Caron

Catching became a big topic of conversation for the Red Sox in the past week. After its worst start since 1996, Boston was looking for a way to improve the starting rotation, which had the highest ERA in baseball.

Because all five starters are established pitchers under contract for years to come, the attention turned to the men calling the pitches. The decision was made that Sandy Leon, considered one of the game's elite pitch callers, would be summoned from Triple-A Pawtucket.

The decision came at a cost. Dave Dombrowski, the Red Sox president of baseball operations, had to designate Blake Swihart for assignment, ultimately trading him to Arizona for minor league outfielder Marcus Wilson.

Through it all, Christian Vazquez has done his best to remind us he's a pretty good catcher, too. On Friday he hit a two-run homer to help lead the Red Sox to a 6-4 win over the first-place Tampa Bay Rays.

It was his fourth homer of the year, and it's only April. That's just one shy of his career high (five in 2017). And it's the most by a Red Sox catcher in April since Jarrod Saltalamacchia hit five in 2012. In the last 20 years only Jason Varitek hit more for a catcher in April – six in 2005.

Not bad for a guy who was supposed to be a defensive catcher with questionable offensive ability.

And make no mistake, Vazquez is still very good with the glove. And his arm. That was on display when his snap throw picked off Tommy Pham to end Saturday night's 6-5 win over the Rays. It locked down the first series win of the year for the Sox, and the first series loss of the year for Tampa Bay.

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

Vazquez was quick to point out that he threw out a runner to end a Triple-A game in 2016. That's notable because Vazquez missed all of 2015 after undergoing Tommy John surgery – an unusual procedure for catchers – and there were concerns at the time that he may not have the same arm strength when he returned.

Clearly he does. He leads active catchers (minimum 100 starts) by catching 39 percent of potential base stealers. Runners know to think twice before trying to grab an extra base. And Pham knows you better get back to your bag after a pitch with Vazquez behind the plate.

The baseball season is back on after the Red Sox swept the first-place Rays to move within five games of first place and four games of .500. Now they're in a 10-game homestand at Fenway Park. And Vazquez has helped everyone calm down about the team's catching situation.

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

### **Tigers-Sox washed out; Sale to open DH**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- With a forecast of moderate to heavy rain expected throughout the evening, the Tigers-Red Sox series opener was postponed on Monday and will be made up as part of a day-night doubleheader on Tuesday.

This will give ace Chris Sale one more day of rest as the lefty attempts to snap out of the toughest early-season slump of his career.



Sale will pitch the first game of the split twin bill, which will start at 1:05 p.m. ET. Tickets for Monday's game will be good for admission for Game 1.

"I don't think he's anxious," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "I think he's ready."

Hector Velazquez will start Game 2 at 7:10 p.m. ET, filling in for Nathan Eovaldi, who will have surgery to remove loose bodies in his right elbow, according to a source.

All eyes will be on Sale when Game 1 begins. In his first four starts this season, Sale is 0-4 with an 8.50 ERA.

The issue for Sale in his first two starts was a lack of velocity, but he struggled with his slider his third time out. In his last start at Yankee Stadium, Sale had his best fastball of the season and a sharp slider, but he missed location several times.

"We had two different opinions of his [last] outing," Cora said. "He felt like he disappointed himself and his family. I think that he's close. Stuff-wise, he was great. He just misfired a few pitches and they took advantage of it, but I think he's very close to taking off. Velocity was there, slider was there, the delivery was more consistent. I know he wants to get on the mound, but I think it's just like a regular day for him."

As for Velazquez, he has done a nice job swinging back and forth between the rotation and the bullpen for the Red Sox the last couple of seasons.

In 13 career starts, Velazquez is 2-4 with a 4.09 ERA. Cora said the 30-year-old Velazquez will likely stay in the rotation for at least the next two turns.

#### Injury updates

Infielder-outfielder Brock Holt, who has made inconsistent progress from the scratched cornea in his right eye, might be ready to ramp up activities again. Holt was pulled off his Minor League rehab assignment last week after just one game.

"Brock, he's going to hit [in Boston] tomorrow. He didn't do it today. He'll hit here tomorrow and see how he feels," said Cora.

There was also some news on lefty Brian Johnson, who is out with left elbow inflammation.

"B.J. actually starts playing catch tomorrow or the next day at 60 feet," said Cora. "I saw him today. He had a smile on his face. He's feeling a lot better."

#### Emerging bullpen force

Righty Marcus Walden, who didn't make the Red Sox out of Spring Training but has already been called up from the Minors twice this season, is turning into a high-leverage weapon for Cora.

"I mean, you see it," Cora said. "We trust the guy in the seventh inning of games. What he did [during Sunday's game vs. the Rays] was outstanding. He's done that every time he goes out there. The stuff is a lot better. The slider is a lot better."

"He has a different look. You've got [Colten] Brewer and Barnes and [Brandon Workman], who are tall and use fastballs, cutters, breaking balls, and he's more like east and west with the sliders, so it's a different look for that. He's in the mix."

#### **Surgery for Eovaldi, out 4-6 weeks (source)**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Red Sox right-hander Nathan Eovaldi has elected for arthroscopic surgery to address loose bodies in his right elbow, and he could pitch again in four to six weeks, a source told MLB.com.

Eovaldi will have surgery on Tuesday morning. It is the same procedure Eovaldi had in March 2018, when he was a member of the Rays.

In that circumstance, Eovaldi pitched for Tampa Bay two months after having the procedure, but he was also returning from Tommy John surgery.

This time, the recovery should be a little swifter, and Eovaldi could slot back into Boston's rotation by late May or early June, depending on the length of a likely Minor League rehab assignment.

Eovaldi has made four starts this season, going 0-0 with a 6.00 ERA. His most recent outing was his best, as he held the Yankees to three hits and zero earned runs over six innings on Wednesday, but the next day, the 29-year-old righty felt discomfort in his right elbow and received a familiar diagnosis.

Eovaldi was placed on the 10-day injured list prior to Saturday's game against the Rays.

Eovaldi had a visit in New York on Monday with Dr. Christopher Ahmad. Shortly after that, the decision was made to schedule surgery.

"I went right into the surgery [in 2018], and it worked out really well for me," Eovaldi told reporters on Saturday. "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. I felt like the procedure went really smoothly last year and the recovery was fast. It's two weeks until you have your range of motion back."

Spot starter Hector Velazquez will fill Eovaldi's spot in the rotation for at least the next couple of turns, Red Sox manager Alex Cora said on Monday.

In fact, Velazquez will start Game 2 of Tuesday night's day-night doubleheader against the Tigers.

After starring for the Red Sox throughout last year's postseason, Eovaldi signed a four-year, \$68 million contract to remain with Boston.

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

### **Red Sox-Tigers postponed due to rain, doubleheader on Tuesday**

Ryan Hannable

The Red Sox' second home series of the year will need to wait a day.

Monday's game against the Tigers has been postponed due to rain. It will be made up as part of a day/night doubleheader on Tuesday.

Tickets for Monday's game can be used for the first game, which will begin at 1:05 p.m. Game 2 is scheduled for 7:10 p.m.

Chris Sale will pitch one of the two games, while the second starter is TBD.

This is the first rain out of the season.

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

## **Nathan Eovaldi elbow injury illustrates risk associated with him, but it was a risk worth taking**

John Tomase

OK, first of all, that came out of nowhere. Nathan Eovaldi delivered his best start of the season on Tuesday in New York, limiting the Yankees to three hits and one unearned run in six innings. He hit 99.9 mph and left with a 3-1 lead before Brett Gardner's grand slam left us bemoaning a lost April.

Eovaldi transitioned from that performance to "he can't straighten his elbow" in the span of 48 hours, which illustrates the risk each of Eovaldi's employers has assumed since he entered the league.

He is not just injury-prone, he's surgery prone. He underwent a similar elbow procedure last March that cost him the first two months of the season. He's also a veteran of two Tommy John surgeries, though one of them was during his junior year in high school. This time around, per USA Today, doctors are expected to shave the bone in his right elbow to keep any more loose bodies from appearing.

Report: Eovaldi to have elbow surgery, timeline for his return>>>

Those who wondered what the Red Sox were thinking when they signed Eovaldi to a four-year, \$68 million contract this winter should feel free to gloat. I considered him a risk worth taking, even knowing he could encounter moments like this, because the upside is so high.

He showed what kind of difference-maker he could be last October, when he delivered the signature moment of the postseason, albeit in a losing effort, tossing six innings of stellar relief in Game 3 of the World Series before being walked off in the 18th inning.

He timed his breakthrough perfectly, just weeks before hitting free agency, and if the Red Sox wanted to keep him, they were going to have to pay him. The \$17 million annually they committed might sound high for his track record -- he's sub-.500 lifetime with a 4.21 ERA -- but not his potential. Still only 29, Eovaldi is at an age when pitchers can figure things out. The risk was that he'd go bust, and Dave Dombrowski must be swallowing hard this evening, but the reward was even greater.

Maybe it still will be, but it's going to have to wait.

Finally: who replaces him? Manager Alex Cora said right-hander Hector Velazquez will start the next couple of turns through the rotation, but who goes after that is unclear.

The best prospect at Triple-A is right-hander Mike Shawaryn, a 2016 fifth-rounder out of Maryland who's 1-2 with a 3.63 ERA and 23 strikeouts in 22.1 innings.

The most intriguing name is left-hander Darwinzon Hernandez, who's 1-1 with a 1.80 ERA but has only made two starts at Double A. The team's best pitching prospect, Hernandez hasn't yet demonstrated a command of the strike zone (7 BBs in 10 IP), so it's unlikely he's ready, but to use this word again, he's got the most potential.

## **Chris Sale appears poised to make his real 2019 debut, and Alex Cora called it**

John Tomase

When it comes to Tuesday afternoon's start against the Tigers, you're either with Chris Sale or Alex Cora.

Sign me up for Team Cora.

Let's explain: Last week in New York, Sale lost his fourth straight outing to open the season. This one differed from its predecessors in that Sale routinely hit 97 mph and featured better action on his slider. Command remained an issue, however, and the Yankees teed off for seven mostly loud hits and four runs in five innings, including a homer by Clint Frazier, in an 8-0 victory over the Red Sox.

Afterwards, you could choose from two options. Cora took the long view. Sale threw hard and rediscovered most of his arsenal. We'd be seeing the perennial Cy Young candidate real soon.

"I'm not going to be surprised if his next outing he's right where we need him to be," Cora said after the whitewashing. "Stuff-wise, compare it to the first three -- the velocity was there, the slider was a lot better, he's very close to the quote-unquote real Chris Sale."

Then there was the Sale approach of self-flagellation.

"It sucks!" he said. "I'm not going to sugarcoat it. I just flat-out stink right now. I don't know what it is. When you're going good, it's good. When you're going bad, it's pretty bad. You know, show up tomorrow, put on the shoes and get back after it."

Did he share his manager's confidence in a quick turnaround?

"We better (expletive) hope so," he declared.

So which is it? Cora's optimism or Sale's fatalism?

There was simply more to feel good about than bad last Tuesday, no matter the final numbers. The Sale who struggled to throw 89 mph fastballs in Oakland -- thanks to illness, we now know -- had us worried about the health of his shoulder. He finished last year injured and then started this one throwing like Frank Tanana. Not good, especially in light of a five-year, \$145 million extension. His transformation from machine-gunner to tactician was at least supposed to wait until the new deal actually kicked in next year.

Sale didn't exhibit those same underlying physical issues on Tuesday, though. He threw 23 fastballs of at least 95 mph and six times topped 97. Per Baseball Savant, he hadn't thrown a single 95-mph fastball all season.

The problem was location and the Yankees unloaded, ripping seven balls with exit velocities of at least 100 mph. Five of them went for hits, including Frazier's homer, which came on a hanging changeup. Sale also hung a slider to Mike Tauchman, who bounced a double into the right field corner.

New York's other five hits came on fastballs. As a means of comparison, Sale allowed an average exit velocity of only 84.7 mph last year, which ranked fifth among starters.

"Need to get results," Sale said on Tuesday. "Doesn't matter how hard you throw or how fancy, you need to throw up zeroes."

Chavis makes immediate impact for Sox

While that's true, we need to see Sale's starts in context. Last week's was the first that featured something approximating his healthy arsenal. Given his track record -- six straight top-five finishes in the Cy Young voting, three straight All-Star Game starts -- it's fair to assume that if he continues throwing that hard with that much movement on his slider, he'll look like Chris Sale again sooner than later.

Let's also not underestimate the value of his other attributes, like competitiveness, mental toughness, and tenacity. A 1-0 loss to Oakland showed that he can still record outs while barely breaking 90 mph, because he knows how to pitch.

Cora is betting on it all coming together in his next start. A snarling Sale refuses to make any assumptions, because that's not how he's wired.

The manager is paid to see the big picture, though, and in this case I'm with him -- it may have taken a month, but don't be surprised if the real Chris Sale finally makes his 2019 debut this week.

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

### **Red Sox Notebook: Eovaldi to have surgery, lost for 4-6 weeks; Red Sox-Tigers rained out**

Sean McAdam

Nathan Eovaldi, who was placed on the IL Saturday with a loose body in his right elbow, will undergo surgery Tuesday and be lost to the team for four to six weeks.

Eovaldi, who allowed one run in six innings last Wednesday in New York, had difficulty straightening out his right arm the next day.

He underwent a similar procedure last year while with the Tampa Bay Rays and missed exactly two months. But that surgery came as Eovaldi was still recovering from Tommy John surgery, which further slowed down his recovery.

Eovaldi has undergone Tommy John surgery twice in his career. Tuesday's procedure will mean a total of four surgeries on his right elbow.

In the meantime, the Red Sox will, for the foreseeable future, use Hector Velazquez in his spot in the rotation.

Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic was first to report Eovaldi's scheduled surgery.

---

With heavy rain forecast for much of Monday night, the Red Sox-Detroit Tigers game scheduled for a 7:10 start Monday evening was postponed.

The two teams will instead play a day/night doubleheader Tuesday, with the rescheduled game set for 1:05 p.m. and the night game remaining at 7:10 p.m.

Chris Sale will face LH Matthew Boyd in the afternoon game, with Velazquez going in the second game, opposed by RHP Spencer Turnbull.

Sale is 0-4 with an 8.50 ERA in his first four starts, but Alex Cora is expecting better things — and soon.

"I don't think he's anxious," said Cora. "I think he's ready. We had two different opinions on his (last) outing — he felt like he disappointed him and his family and I think he's close. Stuff-wise, he was great. He just misfired a few pitches and (the Yankees) took advantage of it, but I think he's very close to taking off. The velocity's there, the slider is there."

---

Cora was asked about the Red Sox opting for a "small ball" strategy in the 11th inning Sunday, when the Sox used a sacrifice bunt from No. 8 hitter Jackie Bradley Jr to move over two baserunners, then getting a sacrifice fly from Christian Vazquez to deliver the go-ahead run

"The game dictated what we did," explained Cora. "Not every game is the same, but we knew where we were at in the lineup. We were trying to get the leadoff man to second, and if they walked (Michael) Chavis, then we were buying an at-bat for Mookie (Betts). That's the way we see it. In that area of the game, a bunt by Jackie there? Well, you have to make a decision — you pitch to Christian, who's swinging the bat well, with the infield in. Or you walk him and pitch to Benny (Andrew Benintendi) and you saw what Benny did the night before.

"Every game is different and we're going to match up the way we feel. But I think we (bunted) last year, a little bit, at certain points, to get an at-bat for those guys at the top of the lineup. It's not something we like

to do. But if the game is there for us and we can get an at-bat with men in scoring position for Benny or Mookie, we'll do it."

---

Dustin Pedroia (knee) "did a lot in the weight room," Monday.

Brock Holt (scratched cornea) is with the team and will take batting practice Tuesday to test a new contact lens and his vision.

Brian Johnson (elbow) will start playing catch either Tuesday or Wednesday, from a distance of 60 feet.

"That was very encouraging. I saw him today and he had a smile on his face," said Cora of Johnson. "He's feeling a lot better."

---

Cora said Sandy Leon will catch Sale — as he did so often the last two years — but said he won't go out of his way to match them up all the time, noting that the team needs offense and is encouraged by the recent at-bats from Vazquez.

"We'll see how it goes," said Cora.

---

Tyler Thornburg wasn't used at all over the weekend series at Tropicana Field, but Cora said there were no physical issues.

"The game hasn't been there for him," explained Cora. "We had some lefties in the second game and we used (Bobby) Poyner. But I think he's still going to be a big part of our bullpen."

---

The Red Sox can add a 26th man for the doubleheader Tuesday, but Cora was unsure of which player they would promote from Pawtucket.

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

### **Even amid Red Sox struggles, Dustin Pedroia looks at old teammate Alex Cora and sees his steady hand at work**

Jen McCaffrey

For the better part of two years, Alex Cora hasn't done much wrong.

He won the World Series as bench coach with the Houston Astros in 2017 and was immediately hired as the manager in Boston. He led the Red Sox to their most wins in franchise history in his first year at the helm and then guided that team to a World Series win.

So you could say the start of this season has been a bit of a slap in the face for Cora.

A sweep of the division-leading Tampa Bay Rays over the weekend lessened the sting, but overall, it's been an awful month for the Red Sox, who've struggled to find their identity.

It's not that Cora doesn't know adversity. He lost his father at age 13, learned English while playing college baseball at the University of Miami and spent 14 years in the majors primarily as a utility player. He knows the ins and outs of persevering.

Maybe that's why he's taking his first extended rough stretch as manager in Boston in stride.

There have been no big team meetings or angry outbursts in public. There haven't been many excuses, but rather an acceptance that the club has collectively failed so far.

As his own situation hangs in the balance, Dustin Pedroia has seen the same, consistent guy in Cora, one who's been his teammate and now his manager.

"We're grinding right now," Pedroia said. "There's going to be a point when we're not and I think he knows that. You don't see stress on him or anything like that. Obviously, it's not fun going through struggles, especially at this level."

Pedroia continues to face challenges of his own, heading back to the injured list last week with left knee irritation. He worked in the weight room on Monday before the rainout but has not yet started baseball activities.

Pedroia admitted last year that watching from the bench was hard, as expected, but it was made easier by the fact the Red Sox seemed to be winning so easily and that his absence wasn't preventing them from excelling.

Cora made it all look so easy last year.

"I don't think every year he manages is going to end up like last year. That's not realistic. And he knows that," Pedroia said. "So when times are tough you've just got to try to find a way to weather it and get out of it. That's the thing, there's always an answer to every problem, and right now we're searching to find it."

Thanks to Monday's rainout, the Red Sox play 17 games in the next 16 days without a day off. The sweep of the Rays last weekend was the first series the Red Sox won this year, and their three-game win streak is their longest of the season.

"(Cora's) seen everything in the game, he's been around a long time so he understands when you get through tough times, it's not going to last forever," Pedroia said. "You go through them, it's not fun, but it's a part of it. Everyone goes through it. It doesn't matter who you are or what team you're on, it's baseball."

It didn't help that last year's 17-2 start created unrealistic expectations of what this year's team — with virtually the same roster — could do. When the Red Sox sat at 6-13 through the same number of games, the natural reaction in Boston was to panic.

"Last year we had the same communication," Cora said. "As you guys know, I keep telling them, don't get caught up on the whole noise. I told them that last year and it's the same this year. Don't get caught up on whatever is going on outside our world."

So they've held the same hitters' meetings and maintained their routines in the cage. The resiliency they showed so often last year has started to break through just a bit.

"It's not like there's any 'rah-rah' message or anything like that," Pedroia said. "It just comes down to execution at this level. If you don't execute, you're not going to win. And as of this point in the season, we haven't been doing that."

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

### **Red Sox, Tigers rained out, to play doubleheader Tuesday**

BOSTON -- Boston right-hander Nathan Eovaldi is scheduled to have surgery to remove loose bodies from his pitching elbow, an operation expected to sideline the pitcher for four-to-six weeks.

The Red Sox said Eovaldi will have surgery on Tuesday, when the team plays a day-night doubleheader against Detroit following the rainout of the opener of the four-game series.

Eovaldi had similar surgery on March 30 last year while with Tampa Bay and made his season debut May 30.

Acquired by the Red Sox on July 25, Eovaldi went 3-3 with a 3.33 ERA in 12 games. He became a postseason star when he pitched six-plus innings of relief and threw 97 pitches in Game 3 of the World Series, an 18-inning loss to the Los Angeles Dodgers. That preserved the rest of the bullpen for the Red Sox, who beat the Dodgers in five games.

The 29-year-old agreed to a \$68 million, four-year contract and was 0-0 with a 6.00 ERA in four starts this season.

Chris Sale's wait for his first win of a frustrating season extended another day with the rainout. Sale is 0-4 with an 8.50 ERA in four starts since signing a \$160 million, six-year contract.

"This is flat-out embarrassing," he said after an 8-0 loss to the New York Yankees last week. "For my family, for our team, for our fans. This is about as bad as it gets."

Sale had a season-high six strikeouts in New York and his fastball averaged 96 mph, up from 90-93 mph earlier this season.

"We have two different opinions of his outing," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "He felt like he disappointed his family. He's close. Stuff-wise he was great. I think he just misfired a few pitches, and they took advantage of it. But I think he's very close to taking off. The velocity is there, slider's there. The delivery is was more consistent. I know he wants to get on the mound."

Boyd is 1-1 with a 2.96 ERA in four starts, striking out 10 at Toronto in his season debut and 13 at the New York Yankees five days later. He became the first Tigers' pitcher since at least 1908 to reach double digits in strikeouts in his first two starts of the season.

Hector Velazquez (0-1, 2.84) and Detroit's Spencer Turnbull (0-2, 3.43) are to start the night game in a matchup of righties.

Boston is coming off a three-game sweep at the AL East-leading Tampa Bay Rays, the first series win this season for the Red Sox. The Tigers won two of three in a rain-shortened series at home against the Chicago White Sox.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Cora said 2B Dustin Pedroia (left knee irritation) worked in the weight room. Utility player Brock Holt (scratched right cornea) was likely to hit on the field Tuesday, probably between games. INF Eduardo Nunez (back strain) may hit soft toss.