

## ***The Boston Red Sox Friday, April 26, 2019***

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

**This was what Alex Cora envisioned when he adjusted the top of the lineup**

Alex Speier

In August 2015, while scouting the Red Sox farm system for the Mariners, Bill Masse had a vision. He was not merely impressed, but awed by the offensive skill of Andrew Benintendi. On the 20-to-80 scale used by scouts to grade players' abilities, he pegged Benintendi — then in Single-A Greenville — as a 70, a potential perennial All-Star who represented one of the best prospects he'd ever seen in A-ball.

With that impression came a prognostication.

“What a player,” Masse texted. “Him and Betts hitting 1-2 in the order in 2017 will be [the best] 1-2 in baseball.”

The 2017 timetable didn't quite come to fruition, at least with Benintendi batting leadoff.

But in 2019, that long-ago forecast of a future Red Sox lineup has taken shape, and in recent games, the vision of Masse — and of Red Sox manager Alex Cora, who decided this winter to flip-flop Betts and Benintendi in the lineup — has taken shape in spectacular fashion.

On Thursday night, Betts and Benintendi combined to go 4-for-7 with four doubles and a walk, with each scoring a run and driving in another. The duo served as catalysts of a 7-3 victory over the Tigers at Fenway Park.

Benintendi (2-for-3, 2 doubles, a walk) is now hitting .348/.418/.565 in his last 18 games, while Betts (2-for-4, 2 doubles) is scalding the ball at a .423/.531/.692 clip over his last seven contests. With both hitters jumping opposing pitchers out of the gate, the Red Sox are now 5-2 in their last seven contests, improving to 11-15 as they move beyond their poor start to the season.

“It's cool to see Benny [and] Mookie making me look good. That's the plan,” said Cora. “They can put pressure [on the other team] on a daily basis. People know that with one swing right away, it can be 1-0, us, or it's men at second with no outs right away.”

On Thursday night, that dynamic duo atop the order was not alone. The Sox amassed season highs in doubles (6) and extra-base hits (7), with the team continuing to benefit not just from the top of the order but from the jolt provided by recent callup Michael Chavis.

With the game still scoreless in the bottom of the second inning, Chavis once again showed his potential to alter the feel of the bottom third of the Red Sox lineup, jumping on an 86 mile-per-hour meatball slider from Detroit starter Jordan Zimmermann (0-4) and blasting it over the Wall in left for a two-run homer and an early 2-0 lead. With the 374-foot shot, Chavis became the sixth Red Sox player in the last 50 years to homer in at least two of his first six big league games.

Though Rick Porcello quickly gave the lead back, with the Tigers scoring three runs in the top of the third — two when Nick Castellanos gonged a fastball off the Pesky Pole for an opposite-field homer — the Red Sox quickly responded with three runs in the bottom of the third.

Betts hit his first of two doubles with one out, and after a walk, scored on a J.D. Martinez single to tie the game. Rafael Devers then stayed on a two-out, full-count curveball, driving the ball to the opposite field

and off the Wall in left-center to plate two runs and give the Red Sox a 5-3 lead. The team added another run in the fourth when Benintendi and Betts laced back-to-back, two-out doubles to center.

Two innings later, Benintendi added another run-scoring double to plate the Red Sox' seventh run of the game — thus marking the first time in 2019 that the Sox managed to put seven runs on the board in back-to-back games. Both of the first two hitters in the Sox lineup reached base multiple times in each contest.

“It took a little time,” Betts said of the effort to gain comfort in the new lineup spots. “It was a little weird initially, but I think we’re kind of settling in now.”

Porcello overcame his third-inning stumble, holding Detroit scoreless for the next three innings to finish with a yield of three runs on six hits and two walks; he struck out five. His six-inning effort was his longest of the year — indeed, it ended a career-long drought of 11 straight starts of fewer than six innings that dated to last August.

The outing marked his first quality start of 2019 and also gave the righthander (1-3) his first victory of the campaign while sustaining a steady crest of improvement from the rotation as a whole. In the first 13 games of the year, Sox starters were 0-8 with an 8.79 ERA. In 13 subsequent contests, they’re 4-4 with a 3.44 mark.

“Starting pitching sets the tone,” said Porcello. “You live and die by the wins and losses. That’s what hurt the most the first couple of weeks. We were digging our team a hole so bad each game. It was virtually impossible for our offense to get things done. To be able to stabilize and go out there and allow our guys to stick to their gameplan on offense has been huge.”

And right now, the gameplan of Benintendi and Betts creating havoc seems to be a winning one.

### **How Red Sox pitcher Brandon Workman went from vulnerable to dominant**

Alex Speier

A month ago, it seemed fair to wonder whether Brandon Workman's run with the Red Sox might be nearing its end. During a spring in which members of the Red Sox organization acknowledged that the righthander's velocity was a concern, Workman seemed vulnerable while working frequently in the high-80s and low-90s. Manager Alex Cora described the righthander as being on the roster bubble in the final days of spring training.

And then the regular season lights came on. Workman entered Thursday night having held opposing hitters to an .061 average, the lowest mark against any pitcher in the big leagues. He had yet to give up an extra-base hit, striking out 15 of the 41 batters (37 percent) he'd faced — a startling number given that his four-seam fastball has averaged 91.0 miles per hour, well below average in today's game. So how has Workman dominated?

For starters, he stopped worrying about his velocity. He recognized that regardless of whether he was throwing 89 or 92 m.p.h., he'd be featuring below-average velocity.

“No matter what,” he said, “I’m not throwing hard.”

With that acceptance came possibility, as Workman reconceived his pitch mix. Instead of relying on his fastball to set up his curveball and cutter, as he did earlier in his career, he did the opposite. He's throwing his curveball about 49 percent of the time, while using his cutter (26 percent) slightly more than his fastball (25 percent).

“I’m aware of my velocity constantly when I pitch because it’s something that’s been talked about a lot,” said Workman. “But I’m not so concerned about it. I have secondary pitches and I can kind of hide my fastball with those secondary pitches.”

Workman is thus a completely different pitcher than when he arrived in the big leagues in 2013, armed with a mid-90s fastball that he threw the majority of the time. But through his first 12 appearances of the 2019 season, he also enjoyed one of the most effective stretches of his career, evidence that — while velocity undeniably remains a critical asset — there is still more to pitching than simply radar gun readings.

“I feel like I’ve been able to put the ball where I want to and then I have good action on the ball,” said Workman. “I’ve been able to combine the two. It’s been working out well for me.”

Indeed. Workman has gone from a pitcher who was on the fringes of the bullpen to one who, along with Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier, has become one of the team’s most trusted early-season bullpen options.

“It does seem like it was a long time ago that we were talking about whether I’d make the team or not,” said Workman.

“Somebody is going to start,” said Cora. “I don’t know if we want to call it an ‘opener’ or whatever, but we need somebody that can get outs early in the game.”

A couple of factors led the Red Sox to enter the weekend series against the A.L. East leaders with an unidentified starter on Friday followed by David Price on Saturday and Chris Sale on Sunday. First, Cora wants to keep Sale and Price stacked together in an effort to try to have relatively reliable providers of innings pitching back-to-back. Secondly, Cora likes the distinction in the arsenals of Sale (primarily a fastball/slider pitcher) and Price (two- and four-seam fastballs, changeup, cutter), and wanted to avoid having Price pitching too close to a pitcher with similar usage patterns in Eduardo Rodriguez. Finally, with some threat of rain on Friday, Cora didn’t want to jostle Price’s schedule too drastically depending on the forecast, so he elected to have the veteran start against his former team on Saturday.

Holt to begin rehab Brock Holt (scratched cornea) said he’ll join Triple-A Pawtucket on Friday to begin a rehab assignment, a step he felt comfortable taking after he took an estimated 10-11 at-bats against pitchers at Northeastern University. Holt said his ability to pick up the spin on breaking balls and to identify changeups convinced him he’s ready to start a rehab assignment after an aborted effort last week. The Red Sox have yet to determine when Eduardo Nunez (back) or Dustin Pedroia (knee) will start their rehab assignments. Lefthander Brian Johnson, after throwing at 90 feet for multiple days, could throw off a mound as soon as Sunday or Monday . . . Infielder Marco Hernandez, almost two years after landing on the injured list due to a left shoulder subluxation that eventually required three surgeries, was activated and optioned to High-A Salem, where he’d already been playing on a rehab assignment. He was 4-for-14 with two walks while playing short and second in his first four games . . . Hard-throwing righthander Brian Ellington, who topped out at 102 miles per hour as a member of the Marlins, was assigned to Double-A Portland from extended spring training.

### **‘Dude, I’m having the time of my life.’ Michael Chavis and the benefit of adding some new blood**

Peter Abraham

Back when I was covering the University of Connecticut men’s basketball team, the Huskies had almost every player coming back from an NCAA Tournament team one season but recruited a junior college guard to create competition in the backcourt.

I asked assistant coach Howie Dickenman why the staff decided to change the look of what had been such a successful roster.

“You don’t want it to get stale,” he said. “Even the best teams need a little new blood.”

That has stayed with me since and I believe it to be true for teams in any sport. Every season is different and recreating what worked one year is not always possible the next.

Which brings us to the Red Sox and Michael Chavis, a young man who is most definitely not stale.

The 23-year-old Chavis started his fifth consecutive game on Thursday night and hit a two-run homer in the second inning to help the Sox beat the Detroit Tigers, 7-3.

The Sox were not necessarily intending to use Chavis every day when he was called up last week. But the Georgia native changed those plans. He has reached base in 9 of 23 plate appearances and driven in four runs.

“Dude, I’m having the time of my life,” Chavis said.

Chavis is a character, in a good way. He starts sentences with “Dude” and “Bro” a lot and is successfully working the beard-without-a-mustache look. His comments to the media are honest, unscripted and peppered with laughs.

Chavis engages his 14,320 Twitter followers in topics that include everything from his religious beliefs to how best to prank your neighbor by ringing their doorbell and running.

His enthusiasm is genuine and the stagnant Sox needed a dose of that instead of more glum looks and “We’ll be fine” comments.

But most importantly, Chavis can hit. He belted a 441-foot home run on Tuesday night that was the longest hit by a Sox player this season.

As the Red Sox work to recover from their slow start, Chavis is giving them some of that new blood.

“Everybody’s excited when he swings hard,” manager Alex Cora said. “It’s just a threat. He’s very quiet in the clubhouse; he’s playing the part of the young kid trying to get information. I think he’s just a good player who’s going to help us out in whatever role we use him.”

For now, that’s at second base with Brock Holt, Eduardo Nunez and Dustin Pedroia on the injured list.

Chavis has shown he can make the routine plays and that’s really all the Sox need. But his long-term defensive position is probably first base or third base.

Mitch Moreland Steve Pearce will become free agents after the season and the Sox could save roughly \$12 million by playing Chavis at first base. Or maybe Chavis plays third base and Rafael Devers moves to first base.

How 24-year-old corner infielder Bobby Dalbec develops will be part of that equation, too. For now, the Sox will find somewhere for Chavis to play.

“We’re comfortable with him,” Cora said.

Hitting coach Tim Hyers was a minor league coordinator in 2015 when Chavis was the organization’s first-round draft pick. He left to work for the Dodgers and returned last year.

“I saw how much Michael had changed,” Hyers said. “He had a lot of body movement in his swing. Now it’s more compact and balanced from start to finish.”

That Chavis drew four walks in his first five games impressed Hyers even more than the long home run.

“He’s taking those breaking balls and they’ll keep throwing them to him,” Hyers said. “Hitting is Michael’s thing; he likes to talk hitting. He understands you can’t hit every ball out of the ballpark and not all strikes are created equal. You have to get your pitch and he’s done a good job of that.”

At 5-foot-10, 208 pounds, Chavis is not a classically built slugger. But he had 23 extra-base hits in 46 games last season after serving an 80-game suspension following a positive test for an anabolic steroid. Then he had four home runs in 22 at-bats with the major league team during spring training.

“It’s a quick engine,” Hyers said. “He’s not lacking for bat speed by any means. He has shown us that from his first at-bat in the majors. You have to be able to hit the fastball and he can.”

Cora initially portrayed Chavis as a temporary roster solution until the Sox got some of their injured infielders back. But his name keeps popping up on the lineup card and the Sox are playing better.

Don’t get stale. It’s still good advice.

### **The Red Sox are squandering opportunities early on**

Chad Finn

Playing nine innings while wondering if Dustin Pedroia is angling for Dana LeVangie’s job . . .

1. To paraphrase the great philosopher Lawrence P. Berra, is it getting late early for the Red Sox? At 10-15 they basically have been a near-opposite of the juggernaut that they were from the get-go a season ago, when they didn’t lose their 15th game until May 18. They already had 30 wins at that point, then ripped off four in a row to get to 34-15. They’re basically going to need Alex Cora’s version of Morgan Magic, when the ’88 Sox won 12 in a row and 24 straight at home after Joe Morgan took over for John McNamara, to get anywhere near that record this year.

2. To actually answer the question, I still believe the Red Sox will get their act together and make the postseason. The Rays deserve some overdue respect for being a very good team for the second straight year despite very little star power. And the Yankees have played well recently despite placing their 15th player of the season on the disabled list Thursday. (Jacoby Ellsbury can’t hog the whirlpool this year). The Red Sox, in their bizarre lethargy, wasted an opportunity to take advantage of the Yankees’ ailments. They’re fortunate to be just 6 games behind the Rays and 4.5 back of the Yankees.

3. It is frustrating that the Red Sox have already bobbled and thrown away decent opportunities to spark a winning streak against feeble opposition. After the turbulent 3-8 start during the season-opening 11-game swing through Seattle, Oakland, and Arizona, it was embarrassing that they could only manage a split of six games with the mediocre Jays and hapless Orioles upon returning to Fenway. Even after an encouraging sweep of the Rays, it’s hard to tell if they learned any lessons given that they’re fighting for a split with this carcass of Dave Dombrowski’s old Tigers teams. Soon, it won’t be so early anymore.

4. We still have no idea how this bullpen is going to shake out. Matt Barnes, Ryan Brasier and Brandon Workman have all been good, with Barnes thriving in the highest-leverage role. I thought Colten Brewer would be a find, but he’s been lost. Marcus Walden has been a find (his slider sometimes is so sharp you wonder if he stole it from Max Scherzer) but he’s 30 years old. Tyler Thornburg is in a perpetual state of trying to find what he had in 2016. Bobby Poyner is your standard Quadruple-A bullpen lefty. I do know this much, though. I’ve seen about enough out of Heath Hembree and his John Wasdin repertoire.

5. In terms of sports media, I’ve never seen such a universally positive reaction to anything like the one Sean McDonough received during his seven-game stretch in the Red Sox’ radio broadcast booth. I can’t recall receiving even one lukewarm response to hearing McDonough, the TV voice of the Red Sox from 1988-2004, call their games again, let alone a negative comment. That’s how it should be, too – he was exceptional, and often hilarious when needling Joe Castiglione. The good news: He’s down for 20 more Sox games this season, including four in May. The bad news: He’s not down for 137 more.

6. I don’t know if it’s necessarily a fun thing because it’s sort of been done out of desperation, but it has been at least entertaining to watch Michael Chavis, Darwinzon Hernandez, and Travis Lakins make their unexpected big-league debuts so early in the season. Chavis is currently hitting .214 with a .950 OPS and

one bomb of a home run in 19 plate appearances, which seems like a decent small-sample representation of what he will be. Hernandez has a high-voltage left arm and he didn't look rattled in his brief debut, and Lakins impressed the same night. Maybe the farm system isn't thin at the top after all.

7. I'll admit to being befuddled by how Pedroia could casually show a new breaking ball grip to Eduardo Rodriguez, E-Rod could say, "That's cool," take the pitch for a test drive in the bullpen, and then go out and deploy it against the Tigers like he's been honing it to perfection since he was in the Florida State League or something. I guess it's just one of those appealing quirks of baseball, where every now and then something that is supposed to be hard or improbable just clicks, and you end up with a good story to tell.

8. Here's something I never thought I'd see this season that happens every five days or so now: Fans and media searching for small clues in mediocre-or-worse Chris Sale performances that purport to suggest everything will be OK and he's going to find that old Slingin' Ace form soon. I've seen nothing other than occasional upticks in velocity that offer hope that he will dominate again. I've joked about him turning into 1981 Frank Tanana minus the perm, but I don't joke about such a career transition now. I don't think he's hurt, but I can't help but wonder if last year's injury had an altering effect.

9. Well, that Sale item was pretty grim. Since the Sox have won four of six (doubleheader loss to the Tigers? What doubleheader loss to the Tigers), we'll wrap this on a few positive thoughts. J.D. Martinez (.344/.430/.538) has been a beast yet again; Andrew Benintendi is suddenly hitting the ball to left field like a young Fred Lynn; Mitch Moreland sure delivers a bunch of clutch hits for a guy whose top career comp is Paul Sorrento; and Pedroia's latest injury wasn't his end scene. And while he's out, that leaves him more time to help the rest of the pitching staff fine-tune their repertoires.

### **Chris Berman to call Red Sox games in May**

Chad Finn

ESPN legend Chris Berman will make his Red Sox radio play-by-play debut in May.

Berman will join Joe Castiglione for the May 27-29 home series against the Indians on flagship station WEEI. Lou Merloni be the third voice in the booth for the third game of that series.

WEEI and parent company Entercom are using a rotating cast of broadcasters this season alongside longtime voice Castiglione.

Former Red Sox television voice Sean McDonough's recent extended stint received rave reviews. He is back for a total of four games this coming month.

Here is how the rest of the broadcaster groupings are shaping up for May. Castiglione is currently being joined by formers Tigers broadcaster Mario Impemba.

May 1: Castiglione, Impemba, and Merloni will call the finale of a home series with the A's.

May 2-8: Josh Lewin, who was part of the broadcast team for the first 11 Red Sox games of the season, will rejoin Castiglione for a seven-game road swing to Chicago and Baltimore.

May 10-12: In between off-days on the 9th and 13th, Dale Arnold will be in the booth for a three-game set at Fenway versus the Mariners. He will join Castiglione for the first two games, with Will Flemming, usually the studio host, taking a turn at the microphone for the third.

May 14-15: Castiglione and Merloni will have the two-game home series versus the Rockies before another off-day.

May 17-18: McDonough will be back with Castiglione for Friday-Saturday games hosting the Astros. Merloni will join them Friday and Dave O'Brien Saturday.

May 19: Castiglione and Merloni will call the finale of the Astros-Red Sox series.

May 20-26: Impemba will be with Castiglione for a seven-game swing to Toronto and Houston.

May 27-29: It's the Boomer and Castig show, hopefully with minimal rumblin', bumblin', and stumblin'.

May 30-31: McDonough will join Castiglione in the Bronx for two with the Yankees.

Austin back on Red Sox duty

NESN says Guerin Austin will work all but one of its Red Sox broadcasts over the next three weeks.

Austin had been absent from her usual role as the in-game reporter on the network's game coverage recently.

The Globe reported in late March that her future was uncertain at the network after she had been left off the work schedule after the first few weeks of the season.

Jahmai Webster has been the primary in-game reporter since the Red Sox' first home series of the season.

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

### **Red Sox pummel Detroit Tigers again to salvage series split**

Michael Silverman

If the Red Sox keep winning like they did the last two nights, they have a decent chance at reaching .500 before this homestand is over.

Baby steps, folks, baby steps.

In a 7-3 series finale victory over the Tigers last night, the Red Sox once again won with a tried-in-2018-and-true strategy of a strong start and plenty of offense. Weather permitting, the 11-15 Sox begin a three-game set against the Tampa Bay Rays Friday, followed by three against the Oakland A's before they head out on the road.

Rick Porcello went six innings, allowing three runs on six hits, with two walks and five strikeouts. Two of the runs came on a Pesky's Pole home run in the third inning.

The Red Sox hit a season-high six doubles. The top two batters, Andrew Benintendi and Mookie Betts, went 2-for-3 and 2-for-4 respectively, each doubling twice. Coming after a night when the team scored a season-high 11 runs, manager Alex Cora is seeing the offense come around just as the rotation is starting to settle in.

"We've been saying it all along, since Tampa, the lineup has been moving, there's a lot of traffic, we're hitting the ball hard," said Cora. "I don't get too much into exit velocity but I think yesterday we hit 13 balls over 95, today we did the same thing. People are getting on base and that's what we envision, those two guys at the top of the lineup, they keep doing that, they can hit extra-base hits and just keep putting pressure on people and the other guys are going to benefit. It's cool to see Benny, Mookie making me look good. That's the plan. There's going to be traffic for Mookie. There's going to be traffic for Mitch (Moreland) and so on and so on. We know we're a good offensive club. We know it."

Pitching with a fresh 2-0 lead in the third, Porcello could not preserve it.

After an RBI single by Jeimer Candelario, Nicholas Castellanos bounced a ball off Pesky's Pole to give the Tigers the 3-2 lead. Porcello responded to the affront by retiring the next three Tigers in order, two on strikeouts.

"The third inning was frustrating because we put a two-spot up and I was unable to shut them down that inning but our offense has been relentless the last two nights and tonight especially they kept swinging it and got us back in front and then we were able to shut the door from there," said Porcello, who won his first game of the season and shaved his ERA a full point to 7.43. "That was definitely important, but again I'd like to do an even better job of that, especially that third inning."

The Red Sox offense rectified the flukish-feeling deficit in the third inning, Betts hit a one-out double. After reaching third on a wild pitch from Jordan Zimmermann followed by a walk of Moreland, J.D. Martinez singled in Betts to tie the game. After Xander Bogaerts reached base on a fielder's choice, Rafael Devers doubled in both runners and the Sox were back on top, 5-3.

In the fourth inning, Betts' double scored Benintendi to put the Red Sox up, 6-3.

They added a run in the sixth, when Sandy Leon made his first hit of the season count, legging out a double to the right-field corner and then scoring on Benintendi's double.

The Red Sox scored first in the second inning, when Michael Chavis hit a two-run shot over the Wall. It was Chavis' second career home run. He has played in six games.

After having a tough go of it in his first three starts, Porcello was coming off the best start of his season. Last Saturday in St. Petersburg, Porcello went 5-2/3 innings and allowed just two runs on six hits with only one walk and five strikeouts. He carried an 11.12 ERA into that game, it was 8.47 afterward.

"I think a combination of things," said Porcello about what's been the difference his last two starts. "I think most important is being aggressive with guys, not giving free passes, establishing the fastball first and foremost and then going off that."

Said Cora: "He gave us a chance. One bad inning, I think he hung a breaking ball and then that home run happens here. We're playing here. But besides that, in control. Did a good job, gave us six. And he you can see he's building up and getting there."

### **Alex Cora loves hearing that Dustin Pedroia helped out Eduardo Rodriguez**

Michael Silverman

Alex Cora knew it was coming, and he was ready for it.

"You know what, at some point somebody needs to give credit to (pitching coach) Dana (LeVangie) — one was Pedro (Martinez), the next one was (Dustin) Pedroia, who's next? Pookie (Jackson, longtime Red Sox equipment manager)?" said Cora about Eduardo Rodriguez' postgame rave review of the slider grip Pedroia taught him two days before Wednesday night's start. "I heard it. I started laughing. I didn't even know about it. Pedey's not taking credit but if that's the case, hey, he can help a lot of people here."

Since coming aboard last season, Cora has championed a clubhouse culture where the chatter is focused on baseball — its subtleties and its details.

A position player like Pedroia teaching a pitcher like Rodriguez is exactly what he was talking about. "Part of the baseball culture is baseball talk — they're the ones playing," said Cora. "I can talk all about hitting or situations and all that but I don't know what is facing 97 with spin rate — when I played it was east-west and changeups, now it's different, so they can help each other out, that's what makes the team

better, the louder the talk in the clubhouse, I've been saying that for a year and a half now, the better it is, that's part of what good teams do."

Pedroia's grip tutorial is less common than other tips that a middle infielder can give to a pitcher. And Cora, a former infielder, believes that sharing those details have value not only to the observer and his team, but for the long-term future of the observer in the game itself.

In other words, Cora's own attention to details as a player played a large part to him landing his current job.

"It happens a lot, it's a different angle, you're watching, you're at second and short, you see the whole picture, it's kind of like the catchers, they see the whole picture and maybe an infielder is late in his pre-set, and then they see it and they get a bad jump, and Christian (Vazquez) or Sandy (Leon), whoever's catching, 'Hey, just be ready earlier,' that's part of it," said Cora. "It's something that I really like because that was the type of player that I was, you pay attention to details and you try to help people any way to be better because at the end, if that guy's better, it's helping my team and if my team wins the whole thing or whatever, it helps me. Not only financially, but as far as where you're going to be in the game. People like those types of players, people who pay attention and help others to be better."

Cora was asked if he remembered a specific incident of helping a pitcher, and after a short reflection, he came up with one, helping closer Jonathan Papelbon better disguise his split-fingered fastball, which the Cleveland Indians were tipped off to back in 2007.

### **Red Sox push back David Price start to Saturday**

Michael Silverman

A threat of a rainout for Friday night's opener against the Rays helped lead to the Red Sox' decision to push David Price's start back one day to Saturday (4:05 start), with Chris Sale going Sunday.

Getting more rest for the two veterans was not part of the equation, but likely it was inevitable the club wanted its two premier starters to be pitching back-to-back.

"We're going to keep them together, those two — I think that's the way we prefer it, feeling that they can go deep into games and can help us out bullpen-wise so you keep them together and go from there," manager Alex Cora said before Thursday night's series finale against the Tigers. "I don't like Eddie (Rodriguez) and David together back to back because of the changeup but with Chris and David it's different, one is slider, the fastball up, the other the sinker, the changeup, so they're different, that's the reason."

After the 7-3 victory Thursday night, Cora did not want to name a starter for Friday: "I don't know. We'll see how the rain goes and go from there."

What the Red Sox clearly do not want to happen is to have a Price start wasted in a rain-shortened outing.

"You really don't want to pitch (Price) and all of a sudden we play two and it rains and we have to go somewhere else," Cora said. "We've got to be smart with him and I don't think one day for him hurts him. He'll be fine for Saturday."

Chavis goes deep

Michael Chavis hit the second home run of his career in his sixth career game.

"A little bit different," Chavis said. "I caught the first one a little bit better, but I mean I still got barrel on this one. Not downplaying it at all. But I enjoy all my home runs honestly. I might try and act like I'm cool and everything is fine, but inside I'm doing jumping jacks and cartwheels."

Three of Chavis' first four hits have gone for extra bases, a double and the two homers. He has reached base in nine of his first 23 career plate appearances.

Chavis' visible enthusiasm for being with the big league club is nice, but Cora believes the fact that Chavis is hitting and contributing adds even more to the Sox.

"I think everybody is excited when he swings hard, you know?" Cora said. "It's just connecting, it's just a threat. As far as the clubhouse, he's very quiet in the clubhouse. He's playing the part of the young kid, trying to get information. I don't know. I think he's just a good player who's going to help us out in whatever role he's in."

Cora is learning that enthusiasm inside the clubhouse pays limited dividends.

"(Bench coach) Ron Roenicke told me last year, because we went to Seattle and we kind of scuffled offensively and we went to Minnesota, it was kind of like the same thing, I was like, 'There's no energy here,' " Cora said. "Ron was like, 'You know what brings energy to the equation?' I was like, 'What?' 'Runs.' It's that simple. They can play hard, all they want, whatever, but if you lose 1-0, 2-0 it feels like there's no energy. All of sudden you start scoring runs and probably it's the same effort and the same people in the clubhouse, in the dugout, doing the same thing and you feel like wow, they have energy. No. No. We just scored runs and that's the difference."

Just because Chavis has not yet settled on a defensive position does not mean he will not eventually, Cora said.

"He's not going to be a DH," Cora said. "He holds his own defensively. At first, second, third, we're comfortable with him so I don't think he's a 24-, 25-year-old DH."

#### Pearce struggling

Besides being on the injured list for the first two series of the season with a calf strain, first baseman Steve Pearce has gotten off to a slow start at the plate as well. Pearce is hitless in his last six at-bats, and was carrying a .125 batting average with just one RBI and no homers. He did not play in the series finale against the Tigers.

Cora believes Pearce is close to clicking.

"The last three days he's been in there, just working, trying to get his timing," Cora said. "It starts with his set-up, when he gets going, I do feel that he is a little bit late as far as that, he just was out there with J.D. (Martinez) with the machine on the field, velocity, and he was barreling balls and he feels like the timing – it's not timing as far as like facing pitching, it's his timing when he starts, has been off, inconsistent with it. We feel like the last few days have been really good for him and if something happens today with a lefty out there with a match-up that we like, we'll use him and we expect big things out of him."

#### Injury updates

A decision on the near-term future of Brock Holt (scratched-by-toddler-son cornea) was expected to be made after Thursday's game. Eduardo Nunez (back) is feeling better, Cora said. Dustin Pedroia (left knee) was hitting and fielding grounders during batting practice. Sending him out for a rehab assignment would take place no sooner than early next week. ...

Left-hander Brian Johnson (elbow) threw from 90 feet and in a couple of days will throw a bullpen session, minus breaking balls.

"He's feeling much better," Cora said.

#### Striking difference

Matt Barnes has struck out 22 of the 43 batters he's faced this season, a 51.2 percent rate that leads all AL relievers.

Cora has a hunch what's playing into the uptick.

"I think the fastball is playing better velocity-wise, I saw 97 (Wednesday)," Cora said. "The breaking ball seems like it has a different shape. He can get ahead, then he can expand. He's doing a good job. It's a more aggressive breaking ball. It looks that way to lefties, too. That back foot breaking ball, they make the swing decision, it's hard for them to stop.

"It's been good. you start looking around, where we're using him, it looks like in that eighth inning, we've been facing a lot of 2-3-4 the first 25 days of the season, and he's done an amazing job."

Barnes threw three curveballs in a row Wednesday, which is unusual.

"It's rare, but it's a trend, kind of like teams are using back-to-back-to-back changeups," Cora said. "That's the way that the game is going. Sometimes you've got to adjust, too — how you use your fastball in certain counts, your breaking ball. I think he's done a good job of that, too, adjusting."

The Red Sox have won five of their last seven games. They are now 11-5 when they hold their opponent to six or fewer runs.

The bullpen — Heath Hembree, Colten Brewer and Ryan Brasier — allowed one hit over three scoreless innings. ...

Rafael Devers went 2-for-4 and has hit safely in seven of his last eight games. Andrew Benintendi has reached base in 17 of his last 18 games.

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

### **Red Sox 7, Tigers 3: Boston salvages series split**

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- With all due respect to late NFL coach Dennis Greene, perhaps the Red Sox are who we thought they were after all.

Boston has quietly won five of its last seven games after a dreadful start to its latest World Series title defense. The starting rotation is slowly rounding into form, with Rick Porcello delivering his second straight effective outing. The offense pounded out a pair of season highs with six doubles and seven extra-base hits, grinding the Tigers into submission.

Detroit was in prime position to win the four-game series after a day-night doubleheader sweep on Tuesday. The Red Sox restored order over the next two evenings, including Thursday's 7-3 victory at Fenway Park.

Porcello notched his first quality start of the season over six innings, Andrew Benintendi and Mookie Betts extended what look to be the start of individual hot streaks and Michael Chavis drilled the second home run of his young career. Boston started its reversal of fortunes in a three-game sweep at Tampa Bay last weekend and welcomes the Rays to town beginning on Friday night.

"That's baseball," Porcello said. "You go through peaks and valleys. What's important is that when you're in those valleys to grind your way out and not get in. Don't get too mentally frustrated.

“Hopefully as a team and for myself we’re on the ascent and we’re getting out of this valley. Continue to play good baseball and keep things in the win column.”

Porcello was blasted for 14 earned runs in just 11 1/3 innings through his first three starts. He’s turned the tables over his last two, surrendering five earned runs in 11 2/3 innings. The right-hander struck out five against two walks and induced 14 swings-and-misses on his 91 pitches.

“You can see he’s building up” red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “He’s getting better. The fastball usage was good. Control was good. That’s what we need from them.”

Porcello’s lone rough patch came in the third. Each of Detroit’s first three hitters reached base and scored, as JaCoby Jones doubled to deep center and Jeimer Candelario lined an RBI single to right. Nicholas Castellanos sliced a two-run homer off the Pesky Pole, giving the Tigers a 3-2 lead.

“Our offense has been relentless the last two nights, and tonight especially,” Porcello said. “They kept swinging it, got us back in front and then I was able to shut the door from there.”

The Red Sox offense did all the scoring before and after that brief Detroit outburst. Chavis started the parade in the second when he picked on a slider from Jordan Zimmermann out over the plate, launching a liner over the Green Monster for a two-run homer. He’s just the sixth Boston player in the last 50 years to go deep twice in his first six career games, joining the likes of Mo Vaughn (1991) and Rafael Devers (2017).

“I enjoy all of my home runs, honestly,” Chavis said. “I might act like I’m cool and everything’s fine, but inside I’m doing jumping jacks and cartwheels.”

J.D. Martinez hooked an RBI single through the left side and Devers found the wall in left with a two-run double in the third. The Red Sox answered Detroit’s three runs with three of their own, and it was a 5-3 game. Boston never trailed again, as the Tigers managed just a pair of singles the rest of the way.

Benintendi doubled twice to help account for each of the final two Red Sox runs. His two-out liner off the Monster in the fourth was followed by a Betts double to right center, making it 6-3. Benintendi picked up the RBI himself in the sixth when he peppered the wall again with one out, chasing in Sandy Leon.

“It took a little time,” Betts said of the flip-flop with Benintendi at the top of the lineup this season. “It was a little weird initially. I think we’re kind of settled in now.”

### **Red Sox Journal: Friday starter still up in air**

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Mother Nature and Alex Cora might have equal say regarding a starting pitcher for the Red Sox on Friday night.

Rain is in the forecast throughout the day and Boston has yet to name who will take the ball for the scheduled opener of a three-game series with the Rays. The Red Sox rolled to a sweep of Tampa Bay last weekend at Tropicana Field and wouldn’t mind taking even more steam out of the current American League East leaders. David Price and Chris Sale have each been pushed back an extra day to Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

“You really don’t want to pitch them and we play two (innings) and it rains and all of a sudden we have to go somewhere else,” Cora said. “We’ve got to be smart with them. I don’t think one day hurts.”

Cora declined to name specific candidates to take the ball should the game be played, but he should have freshly promoted right-hander Travis Lakins available for a couple innings. Right-hander Josh Smith is scheduled to start at Triple-A Pawtucket and right-hander Denyi Reyes is scheduled to start at Double-A

Portland. Reyes is on the club's 40-man roster and listed as the No. 19 prospect in the organization per SoxProspects.com.

One thing Cora won't do is break up Price and Sale on back-to-back days. Both have the ability to pitch deep into games and feature different pitch mixes — Price is heavy on his two-seam fastball and changeup while Sale features more four-seam fastballs and sliders.

"I think that's the way we prefer it," Cora said. "They can go deep into games and help us out bullpen-wise. You keep them together and go from there."

Bats come alive

The Red Sox offense enjoyed a breakout Wednesday in the 11-4 victory over the Tigers, plating a season high in runs. Boston totaled eight runs on two previous occasions, both defeats. The most recent was a 15-8 spanking at Arizona on April 5.

"If you lose 1-0, 2-0, it feels like there's no energy," Cora said. "All of a sudden you start scoring runs and it's probably the same effort and the same people in the clubhouse and the dugout doing the same things. You feel like, 'Wow, they have energy.' No, we just scored runs. That's the difference."

Cora received that bit of advice from bench coach Ron Roenicke during a rocky stretch last season from June 11-21. The Red Sox lost four of five on a three-city road trip, including a pair at Seattle and at Minnesota. Boston was shut out by the Mariners, 1-0, on June 16 and scored just three runs total in defeats against the Twins on June 19-20.

"I was thinking about getting thrown out the other day," Cora said. "I thought about it — 'Let's go over there and get them going.' Nobody's going to pay my fine. Why should I jump-start it? I'm not going to do that."

Pearce scuffling

Steve Pearce was among those on the field early Thursday afternoon for some extra hitting.

It's been a tough start for the reigning World Series Most Valuable Player. Pearce was limited in spring training due to a left calf strain and has staggered out of the blocks with a .125/.176/.156 slash line. Three singles and a double are all Pearce has to show for his 11 games and 32 at-bats.

"We feel that the last few days have been really good for him," Cora said. "If something happens today where there's a lefty out there and a matchup that we like, we'll use him. We expect big things out of him."

Pearce has yet to find his timing at the plate. He's been late on some fastballs and jumped at some off-speed pitches attempting to compensate. Cora suspects Pearce is struggling to locate the exact point where his swing should start.

Brock Holt (right eye), Eduardo Nunez (back strain) and Dustin Pedroia (left knee) each took early batting practice. Brian Johnson (left elbow) played catch in right field from up to 90 feet and continues to progress. Holt could go out on a rehab assignment this weekend and Johnson might throw a bullpen session — all fastballs — sometime prior to Monday.

**\* *MassLive.com***

**Boston Red Sox offense comes alive behind Michael Chavis, Mookie Betts with seven extra-base hits in 7-3 win over Tigers on Thursday**

Chris Cotto

BOSTON -- Red Sox manager Alex Cora was encouraged by how his offense “kept the line moving” in Wednesday’s 11-1 win over the Tigers. One night later, the Sox kept that going in one of their best offensive performances of the season.

Boston had a season-high seven extra-base hits and beat the Tigers, 7-3, behind Rick Porcello’s first quality start of the season. Andrew Benintendi and Mookie Betts each had two doubles and Michael Chavis hit his second career homer in the victory.

Chavis got the scoring started in the second, sending a Jordan Zimmermann slider into the light tower in left field to give Boston an early 2-0 lead. The Tigers answered quickly, ambushing Rick Porcello with three straight hits (including a Nicholas Castellanos homer off Pesky’s Pole) that plated three runs in seven pitches to begin the third.

J.D. Martinez tied things up with an RBI single to plate Betts in the bottom half of the third before Rafael Devers hit a two-run double to give Boston a 5-3 lead. Betts’ RBI double drove in Benintendi an inning later to make it 6-3.

Sandy Leon notched his first hit of the season with a double in the seventh and was promptly driven in by Benintendi’s second two-bagger of the game. Heath Hembree, Colten Brewer and Ryan Brasier pitched scoreless innings in relief of Porcello.

Porcello, who began the night 0-3 with an 8.47 ERA in four starts, worked around a tough third inning to post a quality start. He went six innings, allowing three runs on six hits while striking out five Tigers.

Five different Red Sox had RBIs in the win, which improved Boston’s record to 11-15. Boston won two in a row to split the four-game series with the Tigers.

Sox offense stays hot

Boston had 10 hits Thursday, posting its third consecutive game with at least nine hits and sixth game out of seven with at least eight. Seven members of the lineup had at least one hit, with the only exceptions being Mitch Moreland and Jackie Bradley Jr.

Rays up next at Fenway

The Red Sox will face the division-leading Rays for the second weekend in a row, welcoming to Fenway Park for a three-game set that begins Friday (weather-permitting). Tampa Bay took two out of three from the Royals this week to improve to 16-9.

Friday, 7:10 p.m. ET: RHP Charlie Morton (2-0, 3.38 ERA) vs. TBA

Saturday, 4:05 p.m. ET: RHP Tyler Glasnow (4-0, 1.53 ERA) vs. LHP David Price (1-1, 3.75 ERA)

Sunday, 1:05 p.m. ET: TBA vs. LHP Chris Sale (0-4, 7.43 ERA)

### **Red Sox’s Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi finally showing benefits of flip-flop at top of order**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- It took some time, but Alex Cora’s decision to flip-flop Andrew Benintendi and Mookie Betts at the top of the Red Sox lineup is finally beginning to deliver.

Both Benintendi and Betts had two doubles in Thursday’s 7-3 win over the Tigers, combining for four hits and two RBIs in seven at-bats.

Boston won its second consecutive game to split a four-game series against the Tigers.

“It’s cool to see Beni and Mookie making me look good,” Cora said. “That was the plan.”

Though both outfielders have had tough stretches in the season’s first 26 games, they seem to be rounding into form with May approaching. Benintendi has reached base in 17 of his last 18 games while hitting .348 in that stretch. Betts is 11-for-26 in Boston’s last seven games.

In 2018, Betts won an MVP award as Boston’s leadoff hitter. He has had to adjust to the unfamiliarity of having a potent offensive threat hitting directly ahead of him.

“It took a little bit of time (to adjust to hitting second),” Betts said. “It was a little weird initially. I think we’re kind of settled in now.”

A perfect example Cora’s preseason vision unfolded in the fourth when Benintendi hit a two-out double to left-center and Betts promptly drove him in with a double of his own to give Boston a 6-3 lead. It was the second time in two days-- but just the third all season-- that Betts drove in Benintendi with a base hit.

“Hitting with somebody on base is definitely more fun than hitting with nobody on,” Betts said. “(Benintendi) can run, too, so if I hit a ball in the gap, he’s going to score from first.”

Benintendi and Betts led a strong offensive showing for the Red Sox, who had a season-high seven extra-base hits and won comfortably for the second night in a row. For a team that was shut out three times and scored less than four runs in eight of its first 24 games, it’s a welcome development that began during the three-game sweep of the Rays over the weekend.

“We’ve been saying it all along,” Cora said. “Since Tampa. The line is moving. There’s a lot of traffic out there. We hit the ball hard.”

Seven of Boston’s nine starters had hits Thursday, with five different players driving in at least one run. The offensive outburst was led by Benintendi and Betts, who are expected to continue setting the table for what could become one of the most potent lineups in all of baseball.

“Those two guys at the top of the lineup, you saw what they did today,” Cora said. “If they keep doing that, getting extra-base hits, and keep putting pressure on people, that’s going to benefit them.”

### **Boston Red Sox’s Brock Holt to resume rehab assignment with PawSox on Friday**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox utility player Brock Holt will resume his rehab assignment with Pawtucket on Friday in Rochester, he said after Thursday’s win.

Holt, who has been on the injured list since April 6 with a scratched cornea in his right eye, wasn’t sure how long he’ll spend with Pawtucket.

“Hopefully not too long,” Holt said. “I need to get some at-bats. I haven’t played in a while. Just getting that timing back.”

Holt played one rehab game with the PawSox last Tuesday but had trouble seeing pitches and had his rehab assignment halted over the weekend. He rejoined the Red Sox at Fenway Park and spent the last week progressing through hitting drills.

Holt hit off a pitching machine earlier in the week and joined Northeastern’s practice to face live pitching Wednesday. He had 10 or 11 at-bats against Huskies pitchers and felt much better than he did in the minors.

Holt visited the eye doctor one last time Thursday before meeting the PawSox for their series against Minnesota's Triple-A affiliate in Rochester. He feels much more confident entering a rehab assignment this time around and could be activated by the Sox before the homestand ends Wednesday.

"I feel a lot better," Holt said. "It's a weird deal. I would wake up and I could see so I thought I could play. Then I would get into the game, and a little bit of your vision's not what it's supposed to be makes it hard to play."

### **Boston Red Sox notebook: Dustin Pedroia's advice to Eduardo Rodriguez was news to Alex Cora, Steve Pearce putting in extra hitting work**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Some news and notes from Thursday's action at Fenway Park, where the Red Sox will take on the Tigers in the finale of a four-game series.

Pedroia's advice to Rodriguez news to Cora

Lefty Eduardo Rodriguez said after his start Wednesday that Dustin Pedroia had taught him a new changeup grip that he used brilliantly against the Tigers. That was news to manager Alex Cora.

Eduardo Rodriguez said Boston Red Sox teammate Dustin Pedroia taught him a new breaking ball grip about four days ago. He used it during Wednesday's win.

"I heard it. I started laughing," Cora said. "I didn't even know about that. Pedey isn't taking credit. But if that's the case, then he can help a lot of people here."

Cora joked that pitching coach Dana LeVangie had not received enough credit for Rodriguez's strong stretch of outings.

"At one point, somebody has to give credit to Dana," Cora said. "One was Pedro (Martinez), the next one's Pedroia. Who's next, Pookie? (clubhouse manager Pookie Jackson)"

Cora tried to help position players in a similar way during his playing career, even taking credit for fixing Jonathan Papelbon's splitter in 2007. He believes the players behind the pitchers can see things that catchers and coaches may not be able to pick up on.

"People like those type of players-- the people that pay attention and help others to be better," Cora said.

Pearce putting in extra work after miserable start

First baseman Steve Pearce has gotten off to a terrible start at the plate, hitting 4-for-32 (.125) with 15 strikeouts so far. Cora said Pearce has been doing extra hitting work over the last few days in an effort to improve his timing.

Pearce hit off a machine under the watchful eye on J.D. Martinez earlier in the week and was barreling pitches, according to Cora. Cora believes Pearce has been a little late getting his swing started at times this year.

"It's not timing as far as facing pitching. It's timing as far as when he starts... it has been off. Inconsistent with it," Cora said. "We feel that the last two days have been really good for him. If something happens today and there's a lefty out there in a matchup that we like, we'll use him and we expect big things out of him."

Pearce is Boston's preferred first baseman against lefties but could concede some time at first to rookie Michael Chavis. Cora said he envisions a scenario in which either Pearce or Chavis plays first against lefties while the other serves as the designated hitter.

"If we face a lefty, I think Steve will play," Cora said. "I don't know where. I think Michael will be playing, too. Somewhere, somehow, we'll get them both in the lineup."

Cora prefers to use Chavis as an infielder to allow him to keep developing his defensive skills.

"He's not going to be a DH," Cora said. "He holds his own defensively. At first, second, third... we're comfortable with him."

Cora thinks about getting thrown out, decides against it

With the Red Sox lacking energy at times this season, Cora admitted he has considered getting ejected from a game to light a fire under his players. He thought about doing it earlier in the week but decided against hurting his wallet.

"Nobody's going to pay my fine. I have to pay it," Cora said. "So why should I jumpstart it?"

At one point last season, bench coach Ron Roenicke told him that the best way to inject energy into a team is to score runs. The Red Sox are likely doing better in that category after scoring 11 in Wednesday's win.

Holt, Johnson still progressing

Cora said the Sox will decide if Brock Holt (scratched cornea in right eye) will go on a rehab assignment after Thursday's game. Eduardo Nunez (mid-back strain) and Dustin Pedroia (left knee irritation) are not at that point yet.

Lefty Brian Johnson (left elbow inflammation) threw from 90 feet and is expected to throw a fastball-only bullpen either Sunday or Monday.

### **Portland SeaDogs no-hitter: Boston Red Sox AA affiliate throws combined no-no Thursday night**

Chris Cotillo

Portland pitchers Kyle Hart, Daniel McGrath and Adam Lau combined for a no-hitter against Binghamton on Thursday night. It was the fourth no-hitter in the history of the Red Sox's Double-A affiliate.

Hart went 6 2/3 no-hit innings and got the win in a 2-0 victory. McGrath relieved him with 1 2/3 innings, getting the hold before Lau closed things out.

Designated hitter Luke Tandler drove in both runs for Portland, hitting an RBI single in the seventh and a sacrifice fly in the ninth.

None of the three pitchers involved are ranked in MLB.com's listing of the top 30 prospects in the Red Sox organization. Hart was a 19th-round pick in 2016, McGrath was signed as a free agent out of Australia and Lau was a 37th-round pick in 2015.

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

### **Five Red Sox Takes: Alex Cora's two-headed monster sets the tone**

Chris Mason

BOSTON — This is exactly what Alex Cora envisioned when he moved Andrew Benintendi into the leadoff spot.

Benintendi and Mookie Betts set a relentless tone in last night's 7-3 win over the Tigers, each doubling twice and bolting around the basepaths. With the victory, Alex Cora's club has quietly won five of their last seven games.

Here are five takes from the series finale at Fenway Park:

1. Lethal one-two punch

It's no coincidence that as Betts and Benintendi have been heating up, the rest of the Red Sox offense is following suit.

Over the past week, both outfielders have posted on-base percentages over .400, and runs are starting to come at the rate that everybody expected.

"They keep doing that," Cora said. "They can hit extra-base hits and just keep putting pressure on people and the other guys are going to benefit. It's cool to see Benny, Mookie making me look good. That's the plan."

2. Chavis goes deep again

Michael Chavis continues to make a strong first impression.

The rookie homered again, slapping a slider over the Green Monster, and admitted that home run trots at Fenway Park are still a little surreal.

"I enjoy all my home runs," Chavis said. "I might try and act like I'm cool and everything is fine, but inside I'm doing jumping jacks and cartwheels... Honestly every time I put on the Red Sox jersey it kind of blows me away, just thinking about who's worn that name on their chest and who's been in this locker room and on this field. That alone is unbelievable."

3. Quality start for Rick

For the first time since last August, Rick Porcello gave the Red Sox six innings. It wasn't perfect — Porcello couldn't record a shutdown inning in a three-run third — but after a disastrous beginning to his season, it was certainly another step in the right direction.

"You go through peaks and valleys and what's important is when you're in those valleys and grind your way out, not give in and not get too mentally frustrated," Porcello said. "Hopefully the team and myself, we're on the ascent and getting out of this valley and continue to play good baseball and keep things in the win column."

4. Bogey keeps getting on base

Xander Bogaerts scored a pair of runs, and reached base for the 11th straight game.

Dating back to the start of April, the shortstop has now reached safely in 21 of his last 22.

5. Devers puts it in the air

Not to be outdone by Chavis, Rafael Devers had two RBIs of his own, belting a double off the Monster.

From a power perspective, it's been a frustrating start for Devers — he's still searching for his first home run — but the hacks he took against the Tigers have Cora optimistic.

"He hasn't been able to hit the ball in the air yet," Cora said. "On-base percentage is way up, he's controlling the strike zone and it's just a matter of today was the first day he was able to do that. It's going to come. If he stays with the approach, great things are going to happen."

## **\* RedSox.com**

### **Porcello puts 1 in W column for Red Sox**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- For the Red Sox, snapping out of a sluggish start has basically consisted of checking items off a fix-it list.

They can put the checkmark next to Rick Porcello's name.

In one solid evening of pitching on Thursday night at Fenway Park, the veteran earned his first win and quality start of 2019, leading the Red Sox to a 7-3 victory over the Tigers.

Over six innings, Porcello scattered six hits and three runs while walking two and striking out five. Two of the runs came on what can best be described as a Fenway home run, a 320-foot poke from Nicholas Castellanos that clanged off Pesky's Pole in right as part of Detroit's three-run third.

Other than that, Porcello did his job. Of his 91 pitches, the righty generated 14 swings and misses. He had his two-seamer going, and he also was effective with his slider and four-seamer.

"It's all about winning ballgames, and we won tonight, and that's really all that matters," Porcello said. "We swung the bats great, Sandy [Leon] called a great game, I was able to manage the damage that was done in the third inning and we were able to get the win, and that's what it's all about."

To say Porcello had problems earlier in the season would be an understatement. Even after doing the job in his past two starts, Porcello (1-3) has a 7.43 ERA.

But he is trending in the right direction, and you can say the same about the Red Sox, who have won five of their past seven games after starting the season 6-13. Heading into a three-game series against the American League East-leading Rays that starts on Friday night at Fenway Park, the Red Sox are 5 1/2 games back.

"That's baseball," Porcello said. "You go through peaks and valleys, and what's important when you're in those valleys [is to] grind your way out, not give in and not get too mentally frustrated. And hopefully, the team and myself, we're on the ascent and getting out of this valley, and [we] continue to play good baseball and keep things in the win column."

There were a couple of other developments Thursday that could help the Red Sox stay in that win column.

#### Order restored at the top

Not many managers would flip-flop the top of the batting order after a World Series-winning season. But Alex Cora will never be accused of being conventional. When the Sox were struggling at the plate, it was easy to second-guess his decision to have Andrew Benintendi bat first this season and Mookie Betts bat second when it worked so well the other way last year.

Now, Cora is seeing the benefits of what he envisioned. Benintendi is spraying the ball around the park and grinding out at-bats, and Betts is starting to get hot.

"It took a little time. It was a little weird initially, but I think we're kind of settling in now," Betts said. "Now it's a lot of fun. Hitting with somebody on base is obviously a lot more fun than hitting with nobody on. Benny can run, too, so you hit a ball in the gap, you know he'll score from first and it'll be 1-0 or whatever the score is at that point. I've been able to do that a couple times here lately."

Benintendi and Betts both had two doubles to pace Thursday's win. Benintendi is hitting .306 and has a .384 on-base percentage. Betts, after a start that he termed "unacceptable," has a sturdy OPS of .827.

"It's cool to see Benny and Mookie making me look good," Cora said. "That's the plan. There's going to be traffic for Mookie. There's going to be traffic for Mitch [Moreland], and so on and so on. We know we're a good offensive club. We know it. It's just a matter of keep controlling the strike zone and putting good swings on pitches in the zone."

The kid parks another one

Michael Chavis, Boston's top prospect per MLB Pipeline, continues to look like a man who is ready to compete at the Major League level.

Two nights after he belted his first MLB homer over everything in left, Chavis again cleared the Monster, this time with a two-run blast in the bottom of the second inning.

"I caught the first one a little bit better, but I mean, I still got barrel on this one," Chavis said. "Not downplaying it at all. But I enjoy all my home runs, honestly. I might try and act like I'm cool and everything is fine, but inside I'm doing jumping jacks and cartwheels."

It will be interesting to see what the Red Sox do with Chavis once they get healthy. Three veteran infielders are currently on the injured list in Brock Holt, Eduardo Nunez and Dustin Pedroia. The thought when Chavis got called up last week was that he would get most of his playing time at the corners. But of late, he has settled in at second base, a position he was just starting to learn in the Minor Leagues.

The bottom line is that if Chavis hits, the Red Sox will find somewhere to play him.

### **Price start moved to go back to back with Sale**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Red Sox manager Alex Cora has made a slight tweak to his rotation that will allow his two aces to pitch on back-to-back days going forward.

David Price, who had been scheduled to open the weekend series against the Rays on Friday night, will pitch Saturday instead.

Chris Sale, who showed some encouraging signs in his most recent start, will get the ball in the finale on Sunday afternoon at Fenway Park.

So who will open the series on Friday night?

"To be announced. Let's see how it goes today, and we'll make a decision what we're going to do," Cora said.

Could Friday's candidate be someone who is already on the roster -- perhaps an opener type of situation?

"They're all over the place, in the Northeast," Cora quipped. "I mean, somebody is going to start. I don't know if we want to call it an opener or whatever, but we need somebody that can get outs early in the game. So we'll see how it goes tonight and we'll go from there."

What does Cora like about Price and Sale going back to back?

"I think that's the way we prefer it, feeling that they can go deep into games and can help us out bullpen-wise, so you keep them together and go from there," Cora said.

Pearce trying to break out

The start of 2019 is not what World Series MVP Steve Pearce envisioned. First, he had a left calf strain and had to open the season on the injured list. While he was activated for the eighth game of the season, the right-handed hitter has been unable to find his stroke.

Pearce has a line of .125/.176/.156 with no homers and one RBI in 32 at-bats.

“Actually, the last three days he’s been in there [in the cage], just working, trying to get his timing, I think it’s more mechanically than anything else,” Cora said. “We talk about it. It starts with his setup, when he gets going.

“I do feel that he is a little bit late as far as that. He just was out there with J.D. [Martinez] with the [high-speed] machine on the field, and he was barreling balls. It’s his timing when he starts, has been off, inconsistent with it. We feel like the last few days have been really good for him.”

Cora quips

Though the Red Sox haven’t gotten off to the start they wanted, Cora remains upbeat and dropped a couple of good lines in his pregame press conference on Thursday.

What did Cora think about Eduardo Rodriguez’s revelation on Wednesday that Dustin Pedroia had helped him find a new slider grip?

“You know what, at some point somebody needs to give credit to [pitching coach] Dana [LeVangie],” Cora said. “One [start] it was Pedro [Martinez], the next one was Pedroia. Who’s next? [Clubhouse attendant] Pookie [Jackson]? I heard it. I started laughing. I didn’t even know about it. Pevey’s not taking credit, but if that’s the case, hey, he can help a lot of people here.”

When asked if top prospect Michael Chavis has the potential to add energy to his team, Cora went in a different direction.

“I was thinking about getting thrown out the other day,” he said. “It was like, ‘Let me go over there and get them going. Let me get thrown out.’ [But] nobody is going to pay my fine. I have to pay it. So why should I jump-start it?”

In all seriousness, Cora didn’t waste his time getting thrown out because he didn’t think it would solve anything.

“I think everything starts with pitching. Like, if you pitch well, obviously you’re going to be in the game,” Cora said. “Another thing, too -- [bench coach] Ron Roenicke told me last year, because we went to Seattle and we kind of scuffled offensively and we went to Minnesota, it was kind of like the same thing.

“I was like, ‘There’s no energy here.’ Ron was like, ‘You know what brings energy to the equation?’ I was like, ‘What?’ ‘Runs.’ It’s that simple. They can play hard, all they want, whatever, but if you lose 1-0, 2-0, it feels like there’s no energy. All of a sudden you start scoring runs, and probably it’s the same effort and the same people in the clubhouse, in the dugout, doing the same thing, and you feel like, ‘Wow, they have energy.’ We just scored runs and that’s the difference.”

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

### **How his big contract has impacted Xander Bogaerts**

Rob Bradford

There is no instruction manual for how a 27-year-old is to live life after signing a contract that will pay him \$120 million. And don’t think the uncertainty didn’t cross Xander Bogaerts’ mind.

"I was curious how I might feel," Bogaerts told WEEI.com "I didn't know."

Fair enough.

Bogaerts had earned the right to sign his six-year extension with the Red Sox by simply going out and playing baseball. But now he was going to be the guy starting 2020 who would be making \$20 million a year well into his 30's. Something had to change and fortunately for the shortstop it did ... in some ways he didn't quite anticipate.

"It might be a peace of mind," he said. "One thing I've noticed is that it hasn't changed the competitiveness. Sometimes you get all that money and you might think you can play relaxed. I think it has actually more like making sure you want to do things to help your team. You feel a bigger responsibility but in a good way. Not adding pressure. But I haven't had the feeling that I'm good, I'm set.

"Obviously, a lot of young guys on the team are going to look up to you more so you have to be an example. It's a huge responsibility as me as a individual to really make sure anybody needs help I take care of them."

On the field, it appears as though Bogaerts' new existence fits him well.

After the Red Sox' 7-3 win over the Tigers Thursday night, in with the righty hitter notched a hit and two runs, Bogaerts' numbers are trending right toward the totals of his breakout season in 2018. He is hitting .283 with a .846 OPS and four home runs. (For a complete recap of the Sox' victory, [click here.](#))

Defensively, he has made just one error while showing slightly more range than at any time in his career as a big league shortstop.

After just a few days of uneasiness at the end of spring training due to contract negotiations -- ("It was little bit nerve-wracking at the end when it was crunch-time," he said) -- Bogaerts has simply seemed like a player who is evolving in the manner befitting one of the club's pieces of its foundation. For that, he feels his newfound certainty should get at least some of the credit.

"I think it makes it easier with off the field stuff," Bogaerts explained. "Regardless of if I signed or didn't, I would have to go out and perform. But off the field I know I'm going to be here and I'm committed here and I enjoy it."

### **Red Sox Farm Report: Three Sea Dogs pitchers combine for no-hitter**

Nick Friar

Double-A Portland logged its fourth no-hitter in team history in Thursday's 2-0 win over the Binghamton Rumble Ponies (Mets).

Kyle Hart got things rolling with 6 2/3 innings of lockdown pitching. He struck out six, walked a batter in the fifth and hit Binghamton designated hitter Andres Gimenez twice. From there, Daniel McGrath took over. He went 1 1/3 and struck out two.

Adam Lau finished things off in the ninth with a strikeout and a walk to earn his first save of the season. The 24-year-old right-hander has yet to give up a run in his 7 2/3 innings of relief this year while striking out 14. Opponents are hitting .120 against Lau and he has surrendered four free passes.

Bobby Dalbec went 2-for-4 at the plate and scored both Sea Dogs runs. Tate Matheny also did well offensively, finishing 3-for-4 with a stolen base.

Jenry Mejia back on track

On April 16, Jenrry Mejia had an outing to forget, his first major hiccup as a member of the Red Sox organization. Triple-A Pawtucket's closer surrendered four runs on three hits and two walks in 1/3 of an inning against the Buffalo Bisons (Blue Jays). The outing against Toronto's Triple-A affiliate was only the second in which Mejia surrendered a run in 2019.

Mejia has cleaned things up since that appearance. The righty has not given up a run in three games while covering three innings. In that time, he struck out three without walking anyone and surrendered only two hits.

Mejia's season ERA sits at 4.66 primarily because of the appearance against Buffalo, giving up only one run (April 6) outside of that game. The closer's two walks against the Bisons are the only free passes he has allowed in his 9 2/3 innings of work this season. (He also has one hit batter.) Mejia is sporting a 1.14 WHIP and has nine strikeouts.

### **Why Dustin Pedroia teaching Eduardo Rodriguez a pitch isn't all that weird**

Rob Bradford

The biggest news that came out of the Red Sox' win over the Tigers Wednesday night was how Eduardo Rodriguez learned his new and improved slider. That was because of who taught the Sox starter his new pitch, second baseman Dustin Pedroia.

Meeting with the media prior to Thursday's series finale Alex Cora downplayed the meeting of the minds.

"You know what, at some point, somebody needs to give credit to Dana (LeVangie)," the Red Sox manager said. "One was Pedro (Martinez), the next one was Pedroia, who's next? (Clubhouse attendant) Pookie (Jackson)? I heard it. I started laughing. I didn't even know about it. Pedey's not taking credit but if that's the case, hey, he can help a lot of people here.

"One thing for sure, Eddie, like I said yesterday, you go back to the first two games and there's two at-bats in the first game and one in Oakland and that's good. If I can remember the bad at-bats or the bad matchups or what he did, and the first two is only three hitters, great. Just didn't turn out to be the outings we wanted. Especially the one in Oakland, I think everybody knows about that play in right-center that we didn't make. That made it look worse than what it was. He's been good and the fastball has been good in the strike zone. It was that way in Oakland and it has happened that way the last three. We'll keep pushing him. one thing for sure, we don't him to feel satisfied. We want more. Now he's going six. Well, you know what's next? Let's push you to go seven. That would be good because he is that talented. We are very proud of him. he's been working hard. He worked hard in the offseason and I think the difference is that he had a regular offseason, a short one, but a regular one. It wasn't rehab. Physically he looked great coming in and he's strong right now and like I said yesterday and we've been saying all along, we're very proud of him."

Cora explained that this sort of scenario actually isn't all that unusual.

For Pedroia alone, along with adjusting Eduardo Rodriguez's slider he has the example of helping David Price with his delivery in 2016.

"It happens a lot, it happens a lot. It's a different angle, you're watching, you're at second and short, you see the whole picture," he said. "It's kind of like the catchers, they see the whole picture and maybe an infielder is late in his pre-set, and then they see it and they get a bad jump, and Christian (Vazquez) or Sandy (Leon), whoever's catching, hey, just be ready earlier, that's part of it. It's something that I really like because that was the type of player that I was, you pay attention to details and you try to help people any way to be better because at the end, if that guy's better, it's helping my team and if my team wins the whole thing or whatever, it helps me. Not only financially, but as far as where you're going to be in the game. People like those types of players, people who pay attention and help others to be better."

Cora could also draw on his own experience, citing an example from the 2007 American League Championship Series. After giving up a run in one of the two innings he pitched against the Indians in the regular season, then-closer Jonathan Papelbon came back in the postseason to pitch five scoreless innings vs. Cleveland.

"Yeah, there has to be a few," he said with a smile. "I mean, yeah. Um, Pap in '07, when Cleveland was getting to him here and all of a sudden, they didn't recognize his split. "

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

### **Andrew Benintendi, Mookie Betts aren't just setting the table -- they're clearing it to revive Red Sox offense**

John Tomase

BOSTON -- Alex Cora wants his offense to operate like the world's most efficient DMV -- keep the line moving.

That can't happen without a fast start, and Andrew Benintendi has been providing it. On Thursday, that meant working a nine-pitch walk leading off against Tigers starter Jordan Zimmermann to jump-start a 2-for-3 night in a 7-3 win over the Tigers.

The lineup Cora envisioned this winter when he named Benintendi his new leadoff hitter in a flip with MVP Mookie Betts is starting to bear fruit.

Sox, Porcello finish series strong in win over Tigers

Benintendi has reached base in 17 of his past 18 games while hitting .348 with a .983 OPS. He has also reached base in 37 of 39 career games out of the leadoff spot, suggesting he could be the perfect table setter for Betts to turn his power into even more production.

Betts, meanwhile, is hitting .423 over his past seven games and has raised his average 63 points to .260. He went 2-for-4. Like Benintendi, he doubled twice.

"It's cool to see Benny, Mookie making me look good," Cora said. "That's the plan. There's going to be traffic for Mookie. There's going to be traffic for Mitch [Moreland] and so on and so on. We know we're a good offensive club. We know it. It's just a matter of keep controlling the strike zone and putting good swings on pitches in the zone."

No one is doing that better than Benintendi, who's hitting .306 with a .368 on-base percentage after opening the season 4-for-25.

"You're going to go through those times," Moreland said. "I don't think it was the leadoff spot, just the ups and downs of the season. You knew it was only a matter of time before he started feeling good, and obviously, he's doing it now. He's been that guy for us, getting on base, and getting it started for us. He's gotten off to a great start."

Cora believes Benintendi is capable of big things atop the order.

"I think this is only the second time he's gotten on base leading off in the first inning," he said. "Yesterday he put a good at-bat against (Tyson) Ross. He struck out. Today, he kept fouling off pitches. He was upset because he got some pitches he could hit. Just fouled it off and being able to get to first. That's what we're looking for.

"Both guys, regardless, if it's Mookie leading off or Benny leading off, they can put pressure on a daily basis. People know that with one swing right away, it can be 1-0, us, or it's men at second with no outs right

away. He's doing a good job. You can see him getting on base. I think he's probably, what, .375, .380, I feel he can be a .400 on-base percentage guy. I know he can do it. just keep challenging him and tell him to set the table for this team and he's up to the challenge."

Sox' Venezuelan pitchers get a thrill facing childhood hero Cabrera

Cora took a risk messing with a good thing when he decided to move Betts out of the leadoff spot where he thrived last year, but it was the right call. Analytics have upended the long-held belief that your best hitter should bat third. It's now clear that the two-hole is that spot, which is why sluggers like Giancarlo Stanton, Aaron Judge, Mike Trout, Alex Bregman, and NL MVP Christian Yelich often hit there.

"Hitting with somebody on base is obviously a lot more fun than hitting with nobody on," Betts said. "Benny can run, too, so you hit a ball in the gap, you know he'll score from first and it'll be 1-0 or whatever the score is at that point. I've been able to do that a couple of times here lately."

The Red Sox can only hope it continues.

"Obviously you see it the last couple of nights, the more they're out there and on base, the more opportunities everybody in the lineup's going to have," Moreland said. "It's just nice when we keep adding pressure. Inning after inning, we got opportunities to score runs, and it starts with those guys."

### **'I got emotional' - Darwinzon Hernandez, Eduardo Rodriguez describe what it's like to face childhood idol Miguel Cabrera**

John Tomase

BOSTON -- It's a rite of passage for major league pitchers from Venezuela, and on consecutive nights, Darwinzon Hernandez and Eduardo Rodriguez lived it -- facing future Hall of Famer Miguel Cabrera.

The South American nation of 32 million has produced about 400 big leaguers since right-hander Alex Carrasquel debuted in 1939, and none of them is as famous or accomplished as Cabrera.

The 11-time All-Star, two-time MVP, and 2012 Triple Crown winner is in his 17th season, and he long ago achieved legendary status in his home country. So, when Hernandez, 22, debuted in the second game of a doubleheader on Tuesday, there was one batter he wanted to face more than anyone.

"I got emotional," Hernandez admitted.

As Cabrera stepped into the box, Hernandez had to gather himself. A week earlier he had been facing Double-A hitters. Now, he was staring down his idol. He fought the butterflies long enough to work the count full before issuing a walk.

E-Rod can identify. He experienced those same butterflies the first time he faced Cabrera in 2016. Cabrera reached three times on a pair of singles and an intentional walk. They've since become friends who work out together in Miami in the offseason, and Rodriguez has limited him to just one hit over their last three matchups.

"He's been my friend since I got to the big leagues," Rodriguez said. "I think you guys have seen it, every time I face him, we joke with each other, things like that, he'll say he's going to hit the ball out of the ballpark every time against me, I tell him I'm going to strike you out all the time. It's a good relationship we have.

"He's a legend from my country. It's special every time I face him because he's a future Hall of Famer. I've had a good relationship with him, and to have that kind of respect that we have for each other, and especially myself for him, this is something we do all the time. I just thank God he hasn't hit a homer yet, because it will be really crazy when he hits it."

Cabrera is used to it. He's known throughout baseball as being particularly giving to his countrymen, and most of them admit being in awe before facing him.

"Intimidated? No. I don't believe that," Cabrera said before Thursday's series finale vs. the Red Sox. "When you put on a uniform, it doesn't matter how old you are. You're in the big leagues for a reason. It doesn't matter how old or young you are. You put a uniform on and you go out there and compete.

"It's different outside of baseball, because when you're on the field, you don't have time to think about that. That's more about being a fan because they don't have a chance to go out there and compete. You see a person in real life and you say, whoa. But when you work in the same place and you step to the big leagues, there's no chance to think like, 'Wow, I'm here.' Now it's time to work. It's a distraction. You don't need a distraction on a baseball field."

Cabrera said he had never heard of Hernandez before facing him, though the young left-hander said they've met. In any event, he was gracious when told how much the at-bat meant to the youngster.

"That's nice to hear," Cabrera said. "He has good stuff."

Hernandez is back in the minors, but if and when he establishes himself as a big leaguer, he should expect to end up in Cabrera's orbit.

"That's the way I am," Cabrera said. "I try to help my teammates, the people I know, the people around me, be a better person, be a better baseball player and that's it."

## **\* NESN.com**

### **Red Sox Wrap: Rick Porcello Gets First Win Of Season In Victory Over Tigers**

Logan Mullen

The Red Sox finished things with the Detroit Tigers far better than they started them.

Boston wrapped up its four-game series with the Tigers with a 7-3 win Thursday night at Fenway Park. After falling in a day-night doubleheader Tuesday, the Red Sox stormed back to win the final two contests and earn the series split.

Rick Porcello earned his first win of the season, while the Red Sox offense showed some nice pop throughout the night.

The Red Sox climb to 11-15 with the win, while the Tigers fall to 12-12 with the loss.

Here's how it went down:

#### **GAME IN A WORD**

Power.

The Red Sox put on a nice offensive showcase, clubbing six doubles with one home run.

#### **ON THE BUMP**

— Porcello really needed a good outing, and other than one bad inning, he provided one. Porcello allowed three runs on six hits over six innings with five strikeouts and two walks.

The righty allowed a hit and walk in a scoreless first, then pitched a 1-2-3 second before running into some trouble in the third.

JaCoby Jones kicked off the inning with a double, then came home the next at-bat on a Jeimer Candelario single, cutting Boston's lead to 2-1. The next hitter, Nicholas Castellanos, drilled a homer to right to put Detroit ahead 3-2. Porcello didn't allow any more damage though, retiring the next three hitters.

Porcello threw scoreless frames in the fourth, fifth and sixth to end his night.

— Heath Hembree walked one in a hitless, scoreless seventh, striking out one.

— Colten Brewer pitched a 1-2-3 eighth inning.

— Ryan Brasier closed the door in the ninth, allowing a hit in a scoreless frame.

#### IN THE BATTER'S BOX

— During the second inning, Michael Chavis reminded folks just how well he can hit for power.

Xander Bogaerts smacked a one-out single, then Chavis put an 0-1 slider into the Monster Seats to make it 2-0 Red Sox.

— The Tigers took a 3-2 lead in the top of the third, but the Sox responded by plating a trio in the bottom half.

Mookie Betts roped a double, which was followed up by a Mitch Moreland walk. J.D. Martinez then singled to left, driving in Betts to tie the game. With two down and runners in scoring position, Rafael Devers cleared the bases with a double off the wall in left, putting the hosts up 5-3.

— In the fourth, the Red Sox furthered their lead.

Andrew Benintendi hit a two-out double, then Betts hit a two-bagger of his own to plate Benintendi, making it 6-3.

— Already up three, the Red Sox added another run in the sixth.

Sandy Leon drilled a two-out double down the right-field line, then came home the next at-bat on a Benintendi double to make it 7-3.

— Benintendi, Betts and Devers all had two hits.

— Martinez, Bogaerts, Chavis and Leon had one hit apiece.

— Moreland and Jackie Bradley Jr. went hitless.

#### TWEET OF THE DAY

Yeah, that's bad news for the rest of the league.

#### UP NEXT

The Red Sox will begin a three-game set with the Tampa Bay Rays on Friday. The Red Sox starter is to be determined, but they'll be opposed by Charlie Morton. First pitch from Fenway Park is set for 7:10 p.m. ET.

**\* *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

**Starting rotation settles in for Red Sox**

Sean McAdam

It took exactly four weeks — far longer than they had either expected or hoped — but in the wake of the Red Sox' 7-3 victory over the Detroit Tigers, it can be said with some degree of certainty that the Sox' starting rotation has achieved a degree of stability.

No more are the starters tripping and falling by the third or fourth inning. No longer are homers being rocketed out of the ballpark at a record pace.

Crisis averted.

That doesn't, in and of itself, make the Red Sox unbeatable, as a doubleheader sweep at the hands of these same Tigers served to remind everyone only a few days ago.

But the incontrovertible truth is in. The rotation is, on a nightly basis, giving the team a chance to win games again — a seemingly modest ask, but one which was painfully absent through the first two weeks of the season.

Rick Porcello earned his first win of the year by giving up three runs on six hits over six innings. Those may not be eye-popping numbers, but the outing was more than enough to give the Sox a chance to club a handful of Tigers pitchers, beginning with starter Jordan Zimmermann.

What's more, the night continued a stretch in which the starters have begun to do their respective jobs. Over the last 11 games, Red Sox starters have combined to pitch to a 3.30 ERA. And in 12 of their last 13 starts, Boston starters have allowed three earned runs or fewer.

It helps, too, that as the starters routinely get into the sixth inning or better, the bullpen isn't being as overworked on a nightly basis. On Thursday, after Porcello's six innings, the Sox could hand an inning each over to three different relievers, all of whom contributed scoreless frames.

Couple that with an offense which has come to life in the friendly home environment of Fenway Park and the Sox suddenly look formidable again.

When they didn't win in the early going, the rotation was obviously the root cause. Now that things have improved, the rotation gets some credit.

"Starting pitching sets the tone," said Porcello. "Most importantly, we live and die by the wins and losses. That's the part that hurts the most, especially those first couple of weeks. We were digging our team a hole each game that it was virtually impossible for our offense to get things going and do what they needed to do."

"So to be able to stabilize and go out there and allow our guys to execute their game plan on offense has been huge."

Porcello had been the last of the starters to turn things around. After being shelled for 11 runs in his first two starts of the season — failing to get out of the third one time and out of the fifth another — he's had two starts in a row in which he's allowed either two or three earned runs.

Most mysteriously, Porcello seemingly couldn't throw strikes. Ordinarily pinpoint with his location, he issued 12 walks over his first three, owing to a mechanical glitch which he's corrected.

"You go through peaks and valleys," said Porcello philosophically. "What's important is, when you're in those valleys, to grind your way out and not give in and not get too mentally frustrated. Hopefully, as a team and myself, we're on the ascent and we're getting out of this valley and continue to play good baseball."

Cora credited better fastball usage as the reason for the improving outings while Porcello said it was a case of being more aggressive, "attacking guys, not giving free passes and establishing the fastball."

Porcello believes there's more there there for the rotation.

"I think we're all throwing the ball a lot better," he said. "I think we have a lot more in the tank as well. I think we all have a lot of room to get better. I know that I have a lot of room to get better, and we're going to continue that."

For now, however, what they've shown in the last two weeks is miles better than the first two weeks of the season.

### **BSJ Game Report: Red Sox 7, Tigers 3 – Offense continues to do damage**

Sean McAdam

Benintendi, Betts get things started: For much of this week, Alex Cora has remarked that "the line is moving" when it comes to the team's offense. And for that, he can credit the top two guys in his batting order — leadoff hitter Andrew Benintendi and Mookie Betts. On Wednesday night, they combined to get on base five times and scored four times. On Thursday, they got on base five more times and scored twice while also knocking in two. "That's what we envisioned — those two guys at the top of the lineup, doing what they did today," said Cora. "They keep doing that, getting on base, getting base hits and keep putting pressure on people." Over the last 18 games, Benintendi has reached base safely in 17 with a .418 on-base percentage. Cora believes he can maintain a .400 OBP for the season. As for Betts, he took a while to adapt to the second spot in the order, but feels he's getting there. "It was a little weird initially," said Betts, "but I think we're kind of settled in now. It's a lot of fun (when Benintendi in on base). If you hit a ball in the gap, you know he's going to score from first."

Devers showing signs: The numbers may not suggest a great start for Rafael Devers — he doesn't have a homer yet in 26 games — but Cora believes Devers is ready to break out. Devers swatted a double to left with two and two on in the third, one of the biggest hits from the lineup Thursday night. It marked his second go-ahead hit in as many games, producing four runs, and he's hit safely in seven of his last eight games at a .346 (9-for-26) clip. "He hasn't hit the ball in the air yet," said Cora. "But his on-base percentage (.365) is way up and he's controlling the strike zone. It means he's seeing the ball well. Today was the first day that he was able to do that. It's going to come. If he stays with the approach, great things are going to happen. The home runs are not there and the extra-base hits are not there. As long as he controls the strike zone, he's going to be in good shape.

Chavis looks like he belongs: Rookie infielder Michael Chavis has adapted nicely in his first week in the big leagues. After supplying a huge pinch-hit in his debut Saturday and then cranking his first homer Tuesday night and reaching base four more times Wednesday night, Chavis has been on a roll. In the second inning Thursday night, he drove a slider from Jordan Zimmermann off the light tower above the Monster Seats, giving the Sox a quick 2-0 lead. Between Pawtucket and Boston, Chavis has hit six homers in 18 games this season. He got thrown a backdoor slider by Zimmermann, which he missed. When Zimmermann tried it again, Chavis connected. "Honestly, I saw the first one well — I just missed it," said Chavis. "The second one, I did the same approach, same swing, just tried to put a good swing on it. I didn't try to do too much with hit and caught barrel."

#### **TURNING POINT**

After the Red Sox saw their 2-0 lead disappear in the top of the third, the Sox counter-punched just as quickly, erupting for three more runs of their own and never looked back from that point.

#### **ONE UP**

Rick Porcello: The pitching line may have looked rather pedestrian, but Porcello picked up his first win of the year by giving the Sox six solid innings.

## ONE DOWN

Mitch Moreland: A rare off night for one of the Red Sox hottest hitters so far — he was 0-for-3 (with a walk) and ended three different innings by either hitting into a double play (first inning) or stranding baserunners (fourth and sixth).

## QUOTE OF NOTE

“I enjoy all of my home runs, honestly. Like, I might try and act like I’m cool, but inside, I’m doing jumping jacks.” Michael Chavis.

## STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

The Red Sox are 6-1 when leading after six and 7-0 when leading after seven.  
Sandy Leon cracked a double in the sixth for his first hit of the season.  
J.D. Martinez has hit safely in 24 of the Red Sox’ 26 games this season.  
Xander Bogaerts has reached base in 11 straight games and 21 of the last 22.

## UP NEXT:

The Red Sox begin a weekend series with the Tampa Bay Rays at 7:10. They’ve yet to announce a starting pitcher while the Rays will start RHP Charlie Morton (2-0, 3.38).

## **\* *The Detroit Free Press***

### **Jordan Zimmermann missing early control in 7-3 loss**

Anthony Fenech

BOSTON — Jordan Zimmermann’s struggles continued on Thursday night against the Boston Red Sox.

Zimmermann was battered in a 7-3 loss, lasting only three innings and leaving scouts in attendance wondering what happened to the the right-hander who was dealing earlier in the season.

Zimmermann nibbled around the strike zone and yet still left too many pitches over the middle of the plate. He allowed five runs on five hits, walked three and struck out two.

Rookie Michael Chavis hit a two-run home run in the bottom of the second inning for the Red Sox, but the Tigers responded with three quick runs in the third to take the lead.

That lead was short-lived, however, after Boston scored three more times in the bottom of the inning on a J.D. Martinez RBI single and a Rafael Devers two-run double.

More: Detroit Tigers promote Casey Mize Double-A: 'He needs to be challenged'

The Tigers’ bullpen allowed two runs in five innings the rest of the way, but the offense did not score again.

Former Tiger Rick Porcello picked up the win, allowing three runs in six innings.

With the loss, the Tigers fall back to the .500 mark, at 12-12.

Here are three observations from the Tigers’ loss to Boston:

Zimmermann’s night

He just doesn't look very confident in his pitches right now. His margin of error has certainly decreased over the years but in his first two starts this season, relying on great command, he succeeded. Without that command — especially against a strong Red Sox lineup — he was ineffective. Zimmermann's start was the shortest this season by a Tigers pitcher, not including Matt Moore's injury-shortened start on April 6.

On the board

Nick Castellanos broke his season-long homerless drought, hitting his first off the four pole in right. Castellanos hit 23 home runs last season and despite his lack of power early, he should finish with about the same total. He went 2-for-4 Thursday and is hitting .259 this season.

Early offense, but no more

Castellanos' home run capped the Tigers' quick strike in the third inning. In the span of seven pitches against Porcello, they scored three runs. JaCoby Jones led off the inning with a double off the center field wall, misplayed into a triple by Jackie Bradley Jr. Jeimer Candelario singled him home, and then Castellanos hit the "Pesky Pole." The Tigers would only muster three singles the rest of the way.

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

### **Chavis homers, Red Sox beat Tigers 7-3**

BOSTON -- Six solid innings by Rick Porcello were plenty with Boston's suddenly resurgent offense hitting more like last year's World Series champions.

Porcello got his first win of the season and the Red Sox continued to climb back from a dreadful start with a 7-3 win over the Detroit Tigers on Thursday night.

"It's been a lot better as of late and we've got to continue to get better," said Porcello, who struck out five and pitched deep enough into the game to give Boston's weary relievers a little rest.

"We were digging our team a hole so bad each game that it was virtually impossible for our offense to get things going and do what they needed to do," Porcello said. "I think we all have a lot of room to get better."

It was the second straight night Boston's starter went six innings. The Red Sox also followed up their season-high 12 hits in an 11-4 rout Wednesday with 10 hits Thursday, seven of them for extra bases.

Michael Chavis hit a two-run homer, and Andrew Benintendi and Mookie Betts had two doubles apiece for the Red Sox, who have five wins in their last seven to improve to 11-15.

Porcello (1-3) struck out five and allowed three runs, six hits and two walks in six innings. It was the fifth start of the season for the 2016 AL Cy Young Award winner, who missed out on a victory in his last start because of a blown save.

"He kept us in the game. We just hadn't scored many runs behind him," Betts said. "Today was a day where we gave him some run support and he pitched great."

Nicholas Castellanos hit a two-run homer for the Tigers, who swept a doubleheader Tuesday but left their only visit to Boston this season with a four-game split.

Jordan Zimmermann (0-4) allowed five runs and five hits in three innings. He walked three and struck out two before coming out of the game with elbow discomfort before the bottom of the fourth.

"He was pitching with it, which was not good," Detroit manager Ron Gardenhire said. "We'll get him checked out once we get to Chicago."

Chavis hit his second homer in five big league games in the second inning. Rafael Devers hit a two-run double in the third for Boston.

Detroit got to Porcello in the third with three runs, two of them on Castellanos' first homer of the season on a liner just inside Pesky Pole to put the Tigers up 3-2.

The lead was short-lived. J.D. Martinez hit an RBI single to tie it, and Devers drove in two with a double. Boston tacked on two more runs in the fourth on back-to-back doubles by Benintendi and Betts with two outs against reliever Buck Farmer, who replaced Zimmermann.

#### BIG HITTERS

Benintendi doubled again in the sixth, driving in Sandy Leon after he doubled to the right-field corner with one out. It was the sixth double of the game for the Red Sox, who had 22 hits while winning the final two games of the series.

Benintendi was 2 for 3 and Betts went 2 for 4. Betts said the pair is getting used to their new roles in the order with Benintendi hitting first and Betts following.

"It's cool to see Benny and Mookie making me look good," manager Alex Cora said. "That's what we're looking for. Both guys, regardless if it's Mookie leading off or Benny leading off, they can put pressure on. People know that with one swing right away, it can be one-nothing us or there's a man at second with no out."

#### TIGER TROUBLES

Miguel Cabrera went 0 for 4, ending his 10-game hitting streak. Detroit had just seven hits Thursday night and was outscored 18-7 after sweeping the doubleheader Tuesday.

"Frustrating," catcher John Hicks said after going 1 for 4 Thursday. "We played two really good games here and then the last two got away from us."

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: INF Jordy Mercer (right quadriceps strain) was scheduled to begin a rehab assignment Thursday night with Class A Lakeland. ... RHP Casey Mize, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2018 draft, was promoted to Double-A Erie after going 2-0 with Lakeland, allowing just one earned run in 26 innings.

Red Sox: 2B Dustin Pedroia (left knee irritation) continued to take batting practice and some fielding. Pedroia, who has played in six games, went on the 10-day injured list April 18. ... LHP Brian Johnson (left elbow inflammation) could do some throwing in the bullpen this weekend, manager Alex Cora said. . Utility player Brock Holt (scratched right cornea) was heading out to join Triple-A Pawtucket and start a rehab assignment

#### UP NEXT

Tigers: LHP Daniel Norris (1-0, 2.70 ERA) starts against LHP Carlos Rodon (3-2, 2.89) in the opener of a three-game series at the White Sox.

Red Sox: With rain in the forecast, Cora said the Red Sox would hold off on picking a starter for Friday's series opener against the Rays. RHP Charlie Morton (2-0, 3.38) is up for Tampa Bay.