

## ***The Boston Red Sox Monday, April 29, 2019***

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

#### **Chris Sale has strong outing, but drops to 0-5 in loss to Rays**

Julian Benbow

Perhaps no one on the planet is more critical of Chris Sale's pitching than the lefthander is of himself. He is his own brutally honest comments section. He couldn't have been more blunt about his early-season struggles than he was two weeks ago in New York after an 8-1 loss to the Yankees prompted him to observe, "I just flat-out stink right now."

Sale has always maintained a consistent bottom-line message: Got to be better.

In many ways, the Red Sox ace was just that — better — in a 5-2 loss to the Tampa Bay Rays on Sunday at Fenway Park, but the results were still bitterly disappointing just the same.

Sale went seven innings for the first time this season. He racked up eight strikeouts after recording 10 in his previous outing against the Detroit Tigers. But he remained winless this season (0-5, 6.30 ERA) and mired in the second-longest losing streak of his career after putting the Red Sox in an early hole, 4-0, after the first two innings.

Sale gave up a two-run homer by Daniel Robertson in the first and was tagged in the second for a two-run triple by Yandy Diaz.

It marked Sale's second outing this season with four or fewer hits after allowing three over six innings April 2 at Oakland.

"I guess that's maybe the one and only positive out of this," said Sale, who threw 111 pitches, marking a single-season high and his most since last May 22 at Tampa, where he threw 112. "I've still got to put my team in a better position early on."

Still, it was difficult for Sale to accept any positive takeaways after the Red Sox absorbed their second straight loss against the Rays.

"It's the love-hate relationship," Sale said. "I love this game for the same reason I hate it. Today's one of those days where if you don't give up a two-run homer in the first inning, we've got a chance. If you find your groove a little bit earlier, or this or that, I've got to find a way."

With one on and one out in the first inning, Robertson jumped on Sale's first-pitch fastball and launched it into the Monster seats to give the Rays an early 2-0 lead. It was the seventh homer Sale has allowed in six starts this season. Five of them have come on his heater, which topped out at 94.2 miles per hour Sunday but averaged 91.7.

"First inning, two-run homer, that's a tough spot to put my guys in," Sale said. "Still building. I feel like a broken record, saying the same things over and over, but at the end of the day, I need to be a little bit better."

Tough luck bit him in the second inning. He issued a one-out walk to Guillermo Heredia, then Sox third baseman Rafael Devers booted a double-play ball from Willy Adames, making it first and second with one out.

“That’s a tailor-made double play and we paid the price,” said Sox manager Alex Cora.

Sale struck out Christian Arroyo for the second out of the inning but gave up a scorching triple to Diaz that plated Heredia and Adames to make it 4-0.

With the Sox offense scuffling, that was more than enough runs for the Rays.

The Sox didn’t get on the board until the sixth inning, when Mitch Moreland drove in Christian Vazquez with a sacrifice fly to center field to make it 4-1. Michael Chavis added a solo homer off Rays starter Tyler Glasnow in the seventh (his third of the season) to make it 4-2.

The Rays got an insurance run in the ninth when Avisail Garcia scored on a Chavis throwing error trying to turn a double play.

The Sox went 0 for 3 with runners in scoring position and left five runners on base.

Sale was sitting on 100 pitches through six innings but urged Cora to let him go out for the seventh. He retired the side in order.

“I told AC I was ready to go,” Sale said. “Especially when you’re only going four, five innings for most of your outings, you want to do everything you can to extend it for not only yourself but for your bullpen and show the guys that on your day to pitch, you’re going out there to do your job. It’s what I’ve got to do.”

Winless through his first six starts, Sale is in the middle of the second-longest losing streak of his career, topped only by a six-game skein from June 2 to July 6, 2013.

“That’s kind of the double-edged sword of this game,” Sale said. “It’s fun when you’re on one side of it but it kind of [stinks] when you’re on the other side of it, so you’ve just got to do what you’ve got to do to get on the right side and keep winning games.”

### **Dustin Pedroia will start rehab assignment Thursday**

Julian Benbow

Dustin Pedroia will travel to Double A Portland on Wednesday and being a rehab assignment with the Sea Dogs on Thursday.

Pedroia has been on the injured list since April 18 with left knee irritation. After missing all but three games last season, Pedroia played six games this year before knee pain left him on the IL.

“He hasn’t played in a while,” manager Alex Cora said. “He needs at-bats, he needs to play, so we’ll go over the program and see where we’re at.”

Cora said Pedroia’s input is an important factor in the determining how much time he’ll need on his rehab assignment.

“One thing, I don’t know if you guys are aware of, but it’s a little bit different than back in the day when I played,” Cora said. “The player has input on this. So I know sometimes it feels like we’re cutting them short or whatever, but it’s just the way it goes nowadays. But we do our best to let them know how we feel about it, what we’d like to do. It’s not that they go over the program or the team, but if they feel like they’re fine, that’s within the rules, so that’s how it works.”

Eduardo Nunez, who went on the injured list at the same time as Pedroia with a back strain, left to begin a rehab assignment with Triple A Pawtucket on Monday. He’ll play second and third, but the emphasis will be on getting at-bats. Cora said the target number over Nunez’s rehab assignment will be 20 plate appearances.

Brock Holt, still working his way back from a scratched right cornea that landed him on the IL on April 6, was set to play his third rehab game Sunday night, but was scratched because of a right shoulder strain.

### **Rafael Devers continues to be hampered by defensive struggles**

Julian Benbow

Coming out of spring training, Red Sox manager Alex Cora saw signs of the defensive strides Rafael Devers was making at third base. But since the start of the season, the 22-year-old has continued to deal with the fielding issues that have tripped him up early in his career.

In the second inning of a 5-2 loss to the Tampa Bay Rays on Sunday at Fenway Park, Devers booted a potential double-play ball that would have ended the inning. Instead, the error wound up being costly when Yandy Diaz ripped a two-run triple and hung a pair of unearned runs on Sox starter Chris Sale.

“He knows he has to make those plays,” Cora said. “For us to give our pitchers breathing room and a chance to go deeper into games, we’ve got to make the routine plays and we didn’t today.”

Three of the Rays runs were unearned. They took advantage of a throwing error by second baseman Michael Chavis to tack on an insurance run in the ninth. The Sox have made 22 errors as a team this season. Devers is on the hook for eight of them.

“Inconsistency, you know?” Cora said. “We see the great plays and then that happens. Honestly, as a manager, as a defensive player, I’d rather him make the routine plays than the five-star plays. That’s a mark of consistency. We’re going to keep working on it. He was solid until that one. He had a good week, defensively, and then that happened.”

Before his permanent move to shortstop, Xander Bogaerts dealt with growing pains at third base early in his career, so he could empathize with Devers’ hiccups now.

“I talk to him a lot,” Bogaerts said. “I was his age and I made a good amount of errors at that age, so I know what he’s going through. The way it goes like that, whenever you make an error, those runs seem to score. That makes you feel even much worse.

“So I know what he’s going through and whenever I see him hang his head, all I can say [to him] is keep his head up and try to catch the next one.”

Pedroia to start rehab

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“It’s a little bit different than back in the day when I played,” Cora said. “The player has input on this. So I know sometimes it feels like we’re cutting them short or whatever, but it’s just the way it goes nowadays. But we do our best to let them know how we feel about it, what we’d like to do. It’s not that they go over the program or the team, but if they feel like they’re fine, that’s within the rules so that’s how it works.”

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Brock Holt, still working his way back from a scratched right cornea that landed him on the IL on April 6, was scratched late from his third rehab game Sunday night due to right shoulder soreness.

Johnson throws bullpen

Lefthanded reliever Brian Johnson, who strained his elbow pitching against Arizona on April 5, threw 25 fastballs in the bullpen before the game and said he felt fine. "I feel like I can get into a throwing program and get back in a game at some point," said Johnson, who feared he had suffered a season-ending injury. Johnson is tentatively scheduled to throw again on Wednesday . . . Michael Chavis hit his third career homer, a solo shot in the seventh inning. As PawSox announcer Mike Monaco pointed out via Twitter, Chavis has hit seven this season between the PawSox and Red Sox. The distances on the last six? 441 feet, 374 feet, 441 feet, 434 feet, 467 feet, 470 feet . . . Christian Vazquez caught Sale for the fourth time this season after working with Sale just 11 times over his first two seasons with the Sox. "We need offense and Christian has been swinging the bat well," Cora said of Vazquez, who went 1 for 3 to extend his hitting streak to four games.

### **It's time for scuffling Red Sox to get it going**

Peter Abraham

As usual, Chris Sale was relentlessly honest after the Red Sox lost again on Sunday, 5-2 against the Tampa Bay Rays.

The lefthander said he sees his teammates doing the same pre-game preparations they did last season. The hitters are in the cage, the pitchers in the bullpen, and the coaches are delivering the same information.

It's largely the same team, too. The bullpen isn't as deep, but that has only occasionally been a problem, and it's one that can easily be fixed when the time comes.

"We're doing our thing; we're doing what we've got to do to succeed," Sale said. "It's just, the success isn't there."

Sale's solution is to keep doing what once worked, to keep connecting all the dots until a brighter picture comes into focus.

"Just know that on the other side of all this, there's going to be some green grass," he said. "It's not easy to swallow now. But, hey, we'll be there."

But when will that be? The Red Sox are 11-17 and have won one of the nine series they have played. They swept the Rays in Florida last weekend, returned to Fenway Park, and are 2-4 since with three games coming up against Oakland.

At some point soon this won't be a good team playing poorly. This will just be a bad team. Good teams don't talk about why they should be winning games; they win them.

"It's a result-oriented game," Sale said. "No one cares about the hard work; no one cares about the effort. You've got to start winning games. You've got to find a way."

Sale fell to — this is no typo — 0-5 after allowing four runs on four hits over seven innings. Two of the runs were unearned when error-prone third baseman Rafael Devers fumbled a double-play ball in the second inning.

Had that happened last year, Sale would have found a way out of the jam. This time he left a slider over the plate and Yandy Diaz hammered it to center.

Had that happened last year, Jackie Bradley Jr. would have caught the ball. This time he got back to the right spot, jumped, and missed it.

That put the Sox down 4-0. Had this been last year, they would have found a way to come back. This time, they stranded runners in scoring position in the sixth and seventh innings.

There is 83 percent of the season left to play and the Sox are a good week away from being just behind the Yankees and Rays. But that good week has yet to come.

Manager Alex Cora has been determinedly positive, something he believes is a necessity given the expectations on the Sox. But how often can he say he feels that change is coming when it never does?

At least one more time, apparently.

“I honestly feel like we’re not that far,” Cora said. “You see flashes. It’s just a matter of getting that big hit, that one that puts a crooked number up there.”

There were no flashes in two games against the Rays, only clouds and a metaphoric cold wind at Fenway Park. The Sox scored three runs on 12 hits over 18 innings and were 0 for 11 with runners in scoring position.

Without J.D. Martinez, who has missed two games with back spasms, the Sox looked easy to pitch to.

“Sometimes you don’t even understand, you know? We’re trying to find answers,” shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. “It’s so weird. It just hasn’t all clicked yet.”

The Sox changed the mix when they called up 23-year-old power hitter Michael Chavis on April 19. He hit a 441-foot homer to center in the seventh inning that closed the gap to two runs.

But then he threw a ball away in the ninth inning trying too hard to turn a double play he had no chance of making. That allowed a run to score.

If the Red Sox were a rebuilding team or coming off a losing season, that would all be fine. But they’re a team with an enormous payroll built to win again.

Cora rightfully praised the Rays, who have an excellent pitching staff, as being a tough team to beat. But the Yankees, who have an All-Star team of players on the injured list, have found a way to hang in there.

At some point, the Sox will have to decide how long they can roll with the same cast. If Brock Holt, Eduardo Nunez, or Dustin Pedroia comes off the injured list and shows he can play second, Chavis may make more sense at first base or third base.

Or maybe he should DH with Martinez in the outfield if Bradley doesn’t emerge from his annual slump.

Actions will have to replace words before it’s too late.

“That’s the bottom line, you’ve got to play better,” Cora said. “We know it as a group. We’ve done it for two days; we don’t do it for one day. We haven’t been consistent at it. You’re looking for consistency, that’s what we need. We need to start doing that sooner rather than later.”

**\* *The Boston Herald***

## **Chris Sale, Red Sox still spinning their wheels**

Michael Silverman

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One month and 28 games into the Red Sox' 2019 season, the Red Sox remain in a state of perpetual fuzz and static, a slow-spinning pinwheel of frustration on a blank screen that is beginning to flicker as it shrinks.

The Red Sox have an 11-17 record, and no amount of waiting, searching and wishing can distract from the reality that until they can prove otherwise, this is the record they deserve.

That hunch, the one most of us have that they are better than their record, means less than little.

This is who they are, and Sunday's 5-2 loss to the surging 18-9 Rays was only the latest reminder of how this squad is still stuck in neutral, unable to prove anything other than they remain a model of inconsistency and under-achievement.

As good as Rays' starter Taylor Glasnow was – and he was stellar – the Red Sox' offense is reportedly better than placing three runners in scoring position and going 0-for-3 in those instances.

More bad defense, too, was on display, with third baseman Rafael Devers' eighth error of the season in the second inning helping to contribute to the third and fourth Rays runs of the game.

But it was Chris Sale's start – four runs allowed in the first two innings before finding his groove for five scoreless innings in which he allowed one hit – that best symbolizes how unprepared and overmatched the Red Sox have looked to start this season.

One can take all the encouragement one wants from how Sale turned around his start from the third inning on, but that won't take away the big whole he put them in – again.

The Red Sox are 0-for-6 when Sale starts this season.

That storyline's over-ripe, which Sale knows all too well even as he has been powerless to flip the script.

Just like the Red Sox.

"I keep saying the same things over and over but it's a step in the right direction — I know nobody wants to hear that," said Sale. "I'd love to be sitting up here talking about wins and all of that but at the end of the day, you've got to do what you've got to do and I'm grinding. I'm trying to find a way."

So, too, are the Red Sox. They're lost, just like Sale, and they have yet to find more than a few breadcrumbs.

They win three in a row over the Rays last week, then lose a doubleheader to the Tigers, then beat the Tigers convincingly two games in a row. And then lose two games to the Rays.

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“I’m sitting here like a broken record — what am I, six starts in?” said Sale. “I’ve sucked every bit of every last one of them. I don’t want to sit here and say the same things over and over, but hopefully sooner rather than later. That’s for damn sure. Like I said, this is a result-oriented game. No one cares about the hard work. No one cares about the effort. We’ve gotta start winning games. I appreciate the effort. I appreciate the hard work, and I know on the other end of that comes success, but we’ve got to find a way. We’ve got to keep grinding and doing what we’re doing. Just hope the other end of it changes, because we’re doing everything we’ve got to do. It’s just not there right now. But we’ll get there. We will get there.”

Xander Bogaerts is as active in the search party as anyone. But he’s in the dark, too.

“Trying to find answers, but it’s so weird... It just hasn’t all clicked yet,” said Bogaerts. “I think we have to continue to get better — real quick.”

Bogaerts said he wasn’t “mad” about the floundering. But getting mad seldom solves anybody’s problems. The problem with the Red Sox’ problems is that they don’t have other appropriate emotions to display to fix themselves. Only better and more consistent quality baseball will bring about that “click.”

But the Red Sox can’t do that for more than a couple of games at a time. And that’s their bottom line this season.

“We have a losing record by what, six or seven games?” said Bogaerts. “I know we’ve faced some good pitching. I’m not going to say we’ve just struggled. We’ve faced some good pitching. Guys tend to pitch good against us. They know we’re the defending champs, come in hard against us. And up until now they’ve been successful most of the time.”

Success — continued success — has eluded the 2019 Red Sox.

They are operating on an old modem in a 5G world. And they are being left behind.

### **Tyler Glasnow out-duels Chris Sale as Red Sox swept by Rays**

Jason Mastrodonato

The direct counter-argument to one who might say, “it’s still early,” or, “83 percent of the Red Sox’ season is still remaining,” is the right-hander who was on the mound for the Tampa Bay Rays on Sunday.

And the one who pitched for them on Saturday.

And the lefty who will pitch for them on Tuesday.

The Rays, who beat the Red Sox, 5-2, on Sunday to complete a two-game sweep and improve to 7-½ games ahead of the Sox in the American League East, might have three Cy Young Award contenders this season.

There’s the guy who won the award last year, Blake Snell, who has yet to pitch against the Sox this year but has a 2.54 ERA thus far.

There’s the guy who shut them out over six innings on Saturday, Charlie Morton, who has a 2.76 ERA.

And there’s the guy who lit up the radar gun with 99-mph heaters, 94-mph changeups and 84-mph curveballs over 6-⅔ innings of two-run ball while striking out nine Red Sox hitters on Sunday afternoon, Tyler Glasnow, who now has a 1.75 ERA.

“It’s a young kid, this guy right here,” said Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts, who was 0-for-4 Sunday. “It’s the third time we’ve faced him and he’s put up good starts against us every time. Charlie Morton, he’s known in the game already. He’s been real good, especially the last couple of years.”

Sunday, Glasnow flashed the devastating combination of stuff and command that could reshape the AL East in 2019. Perhaps most concerning for the Red Sox, and the characteristic that separates these two teams most drastically, is the stark contrast in starting rotations.

The Sox can't win with Chris Sale on the mound this year. They're now 0-6 when he pitches. He has a 6.30 ERA in six starts.

"I've sucked every bit of every last one of them," he said.

And yet the Sox saw their rotation ERA drop from 5.78 to 5.62 after Sale allowed four runs (two earned) over seven innings on Sunday afternoon. He gave up two on a homer by the light-hitting Daniel Robertson in the first inning, when Sale came in with a first-pitch fastball and Robertson smoked it over everything in left field.

Two more runs scored in the second, when a Rafael Devers' error extended the inning and Jackie Bradley Jr. couldn't haul in a long fly ball near the center-field wall.

Sale settled in and got stronger throughout the outing, but it wasn't good enough to compete with one of the best starters in baseball on the other side.

"I've loved this game for the same reason I hate it," Sale said. "Today is one of those days where don't give up a two-run homer in the first inning, maybe we've got a chance. Or you find your groove a little bit earlier, or this or that. Whatever. I've got to find a way."

Glasnow's strong performance actually caused the Rays rotation ERA to jump from 2.03 to 2.07 on the season. It's almost a full run lower than any other rotation's ERA.

Glasnow, Morton and Snell have combined for a 2.32 ERA in 97 innings. They've struck out 116 batters with just 29 walks and 68 hits allowed.

"They're tough, they're really tough," manager Alex Cora said. "Their stuff is good stuff. I talked about Charlie two years ago and Glasnow, although today he was a three-pitch guy, plus fastballs, plus command, plus breaking balls, it's tough and you've got to pitch with him, pitch by pitch and hang in there."

Even when the Red Sox swept the Rays in Tampa last weekend, they didn't do it in an overpowering way. In five games against the Rays this year, the Sox have hit .233 while scoring just 3.8 runs per game.

"Sometimes you face good pitching, like we did with these two guys," Bogaerts said. "As an offense we want to score runs, want to create opportunities, but sometimes it's hard man. When these guys come out throwing the way they did, it's not easy."

The Sox, 11-17, have won just one series in nine tries this year.

Only three teams have fewer wins than the Red Sox: the Orioles, Royals and Marlins.

Their combined payrolls are \$248.7 million, according to Cot's Baseball Contracts. The Red Sox have a payroll of \$236.2 million.

"Sometimes you don't even understand," Bogaerts said. "Trying to find answers, but it's so weird...It just hasn't all clicked yet. I think we have to continue to get better, real quick."

### **Dustin Pedroia to begin rehab assignment Thursday**

Jason Mastrodonato



Dustin Pedroia's second attempt will begin Thursday in Portland.

Pedroia will start a rehab assignment with the Red Sox' Double-A affiliate as he looks to regain strength in his left knee and redevelop the ability to play second base every day.

His first rehab assignment lasted just three games with Single-A Greenville before the Red Sox added him to the big league roster and made him their starting second baseman. He was 2-for-20 before hurting his knee on an awkward swing. But he has a new brace the Sox are hopeful will give him a chance to stay on the field regularly.

"We'll see how it goes," manager Alex Cora said. "He hasn't played in a while. He needs at-bats. He needs to play. They'll go over the program and see where we're at."

As for the length of Pedroia's rehab assignment, Cora said it's to be determined.

"It's a little bit different than back in the day than when I played," he said. "The player has input on this. I know sometimes it feels like we're cutting them short or whatever, but it's just the way it goes nowadays. But we do our best to let him know how we feel about it, what we like to do. It's not that they go over the program or the team, but if they feel they're fine, that's within the rules. That's how it works."

Michael Chavis has given the Sox some energy at second base in Pedroia's absence. He's been more than adequate on defense while getting on base at a .407 clip with two homers in seven games.

But if Pedroia's knee gets back to health, the Sox seem likely to give him another shot.

"He feels a lot better," Cora said. "I mean, the way that night, I felt like that was it right there. He talked about a pop and the knee. You don't feel comfortable with it. But I think he feels good. He's moving well. He's been through this the past year, so hopefully we keep getting information. There's new spikes, a new brace, there's a lot of effort into this and now just go out there and see how it goes."

#### DEVERS' GLOVE A PROBLEM

It could have been a whole new ballgame had Rafael Devers not botched another routine grounder in the second inning of the Red Sox' 5-2 loss to the Rays on Sunday.

The ball was hit off Willy Adames' bat at just 90.9 mph, one of the slowest-hit balls of the game, and it was right to the glove of Devers at third base. But he couldn't field it cleanly, and it bounced around his feet as Adames reached on the error. Two batters later, Yandy Diaz hit a two-out, two-run triple as the Rays took a 4-0 lead.

Asked what he's seen out of Devers so far, Cora said, "Inconsistency."

"We see the great plays and then that happens," the skipper said. "Honestly, as a manager, as a defensive player, I'd rather him make the routine plays rather than the five-star plays. That's a mark of consistency. We're going to keep working on it. ... For us to give the pitchers breathing room, a chance to go deep in the games, we've got to make the plays."

After leading all third basemen with 24 errors last year, Devers already has eight errors in 2019, second-most by any player in the majors. Only Mariners shortstop Tim Beckham has more (10).

"I talked to him a lot," shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. "I was his age and made my good amount of errors at that age, so I know what he's going through. When you're young like that, whenever you make an error, those runs seem to score. I know that makes you feel much worse. When I see him hang his head, all I can say is to keep his head up, try to catch the next one. Deep down I know how bad that is."

#### INFIELD HELP COMING

Eduardo Nunez, who is on the injured list with a back strain, will begin a rehab assignment at Triple-A Pawtucket on Monday. Nunez is likely to get around 20 at-bats before returning to the Red Sox.

“I know they always feel ready to go, but we’ll talk to him,” Cora said. “He understands the back is different. Changing swings for a while there, so I think his swing is back to where it was in spring training. Now it’s just about competing and getting to feel that way.” ...

Brock Holt was scheduled to play in a minor league game Sunday as he attempts to recover from a scratched cornea in his eye, but he was scratched and did not play.

“He hasn’t played in a month, he hasn’t seen a ball,” Cora said. “This (injury) happened on Opening Day. So, for whatever amount of at-bats he has during the season, they don’t count for me because he wasn’t able to see the ball. We need him to see it, get into rhythm, feel good about it, and play multiple positions, and we go from there.”

#### MARTINEZ STILL HURTING

J.D. Martinez was out of the lineup for the second day in a row because of back spasms and did not come off the bench to pinch-hit.

“J.D. is better, but not better, you know?” Cora said. “Still tight.”

For the first time since Sandy Leon was recalled from Triple-A Pawtucket, Chris Sale threw to a different catcher. Christian Vazquez got the start with Sale on the mound Sunday afternoon. Sale allowed four runs in seven innings. Vazquez was 1-for-3 at the dish.

“Need offense, and Christian has been swinging the bat well,” Cora explained. ...

Lefty Brian Johnson, who has elbow inflammation, threw a bullpen session Sunday and could throw again Wednesday. ...

Chavis hit his third homer in eight games. It traveled 441 feet to dead center, his second 441-foot homer of the season. They’re the two longest homers by Red Sox hitters this year.

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

### **Red Sox just can’t shake early season blues**

Bill Koch

BOSTON — This was always the danger of falling flat to start the season.

The Red Sox staggered out of the blocks by winning just two of their first 10 games. That’s barely 6 percent of a baseball season. Such a short span barely registers within most clubhouses, especially one that shelters the defending World Series champions.

If it had stopped there, fine. Boston was marooned on the West Coast, slogging through Seattle and Oakland and Arizona on a brutal three-city road trip. Returning to Fenway Park and finding its bearings at home sounded like the perfect corrective course of action for the club.

But the mediocrity has yet to cease. The Red Sox suffered a two-game sweep at the hands of the Rays this weekend, one finished off by a 5-2 defeat on Sunday. Boston is just 9-9 in its last 18 games, and playing .500 baseball for such an extended period is something the Red Sox can no longer afford.

“Sometimes you don’t even understand,” shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. “Trying to find answers, but it’s so weird. We have pretty much the same squad as last year — it just hasn’t all clicked yet.”

Boston is 11-17. Last year’s second American League wildcard qualifier, the Oakland Athletics, lost a total of 65 games. If 2019 plays out in similarly top-heavy fashion across the league, the Red Sox will need to go a scorching 86-48 over their final 134 games — 38 games over .500 — just to secure a postseason berth for the fourth straight year.

“No one cares about the hard work,” said Chris Sale, who dipped to 0-5 despite allowing just two earned runs on Sunday. “No one cares about the effort. We’ve got to start winning games.

“I appreciate the effort. I appreciate the hard work. I know that on the other end of that comes success. But we’ve got to find a way.”

To be fair, Sale’s criticisms were almost entirely self-directed as usual. There are few players more accountable who have passed through Boston’s clubhouse in recent seasons. But the simple truth is the Red Sox have lost all six of his starts this season after going a combined 40-19 in two previous seasons.

“We haven’t been consistent,” Boston manager Alex Cora said. “If we pitch, we don’t hit. If we hit — you know the phrase. One thing’s going, the other one is not.”

Murphy’s Law might have been the term for which Cora was searching. Perhaps it was the Bill Murray version of Groundhog Day with regards to the seemingly endless frustrating results. Punxsutawney Phil can only be blamed for six more weeks of winter, not for Boston playing substandard baseball.

Red Sox starting pitching seems to have turned a corner, posting a 3.20 earned-run average over their last 12 games. That follows a beginning to the season where Boston’s rotation gave its offense almost no chance from the outset to overcome sizable deficits. Now the bats have gone a bit limp, managing four runs or less in five of the club’s last seven games.

“Mad? I wouldn’t want to say mad,” Bogaerts said. “Disappointed might be a better word. Surprised obviously, too. We didn’t expect to have a losing record, and by six games? I know we’re facing good pitching, and I’m not going to say we expected to struggle.”

There were more slammed bats and helmets by Andrew Benintendi and Rafael Devers after making outs at the plate late in Sunday’s game. Such open signs of frustration should put to rest any foolish notion that Red Sox players don’t care or are simply hoping to coast on last year’s accomplishments for a few more months. But they also betray a general edginess that doesn’t tend to pop up very often while you’re steamrolling to a franchise-record 108 victories.

“We’ve done it for two days, we don’t do it for one day — we haven’t been consistent at it,” Cora said. “You’re looking for consistency. That’s what we need. We need to start doing that sooner rather than later.”

### **Red Sox Journal: Pedroia set to start rehab in Portland**

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Dustin Pedroia is nearing a second start to his 2019 season.

The second baseman is scheduled to begin a rehab assignment with Double-A Portland this week. Pedroia has been on the injured list since April 19 due to left knee irritation, the latest in a string of setbacks involving the surgically-repaired joint.

Pedroia lasted just one inning in the field and a lone at-bat in his second game at Yankee Stadium, removed after feeling what he described as a pop in the knee. He was serving as the designated hitter against New

York, just the 13th time in his career where Pedroia has been in the Red Sox lineup without playing the field.

“He hasn’t played in a while,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “He needs at-bats. He needs to play. We’ll go over the program and see where we’re at.”

Pedroia managed just three games last season while Boston captured its fourth championship this century. He was 2-for-20 with a pair of singles in six games before approaching Cora and asking to be removed from the 5-3 loss to New York.

“He’s been going through this for the last year,” Cora said. “We’ll keep getting information. New spikes, a new brace — there’s a lot of effort into this. He’ll get out there and we’ll see how it goes.”

There is no set number of games Pedroia will have to complete before making a return to the Red Sox roster. The decision to eventually activate him involves input from both Pedroia and club medical staff. Pedroia is likely never to be what doctors would consider 100 percent against after undergoing a cartilage restoration procedure in October 2017.

“I know sometimes it feels like we’re cutting it short, but that’s the way it goes,” Cora said. “We do our best to let him know how we feel about it and what we’d like to do.”

Michael Chavis made his sixth start at second base on Sunday against the Rays. The top position player prospect in Boston’s system slashed .200/.407/.550 through his first seven games, including two home runs and a double.

Martinez out again

J.D. Martinez (back tightness) was out of the lineup for the second straight day on Sunday.

Martinez had appeared in each of the first 26 games of the season for the Red Sox, hitting safely in 24 of them. He was a late scratch prior to Saturday’s 2-1 loss to the Rays and received treatment throughout the afternoon.

“He’s still tight,” Cora said. “We’ll try to stay away from him today. If we need him later on it depends on how he progresses during the day.”

Boston managed just five hits, went 0-for-8 with runners in scoring position and stranded 11 men against Tampa Bay on Saturday. Steve Pearce went 0-for-3 with a walk replacing Martinez in the designated hitter spot.

Close to returning

Two other Red Sox infielders will be in rehab action as soon as Monday.

Brock Holt (right eye) will be joined by Eduardo Nunez (back strain) at Triple-A Pawtucket. Nunez will depart Boston on Sunday night and join the PawSox for a doubleheader at Buffalo. Pawtucket’s scheduled game at Rochester on Saturday was snowed out, and Holt was out of the lineup for the series finale with the Red Wings on Sunday.

“For whatever X amount of at-bats he has during the season, they don’t count for me,” Cora said of Holt. “He wasn’t able to see the ball.”

Holt was 1-for-16 in six games and made his last appearance with the Red Sox on April 5 at Arizona. Nunez has been sidelined since the two-game series with the Yankees and failed to record a hit in three of his last four starts. He’s slashing just .159/.178/.182 through 17 appearances.

“It’s more about the at-bats than the repetitions in the field,” Cora said. “I know they always feel ready to go. He understands.”

Pitching schedule

Boston’s rotation for the upcoming three-game series against the Athletics includes Eduardo Rodriguez, Rick Porcello and – most likely – Hector Velazquez.

The Red Sox are without a proven long reliever in the bullpen with Velazquez making spot starts in place of Nathan Eovaldi (right elbow). Brian Johnson (left elbow) threw an all-fastballs bullpen session on Sunday as he continues to work his way back from injury.

“I don’t know what the program is for the next one,” Cora said. “For how good it looks, he’s still at the beginning stages.”

### **Rays 5, Red Sox 2: Tampa Bay completes two-game sweep**

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Manager Alex Cora and his Red Sox were believers long before this weekend.

The feeling since the second half of last season was that the Rays would be a significant factor in the American League East race in 2019.

Tampa Bay assuming the division lead ahead of Boston and the Yankees might have been a bit of a stretch, but here we are as April draws to a close. The Rays left Fenway Park with an abbreviated two-game sweep of the Red Sox thanks to their 5-2 victory on Sunday.

It’s the seventh time in the last 10 meetings between the two clubs that a game has been decided by three runs or less, and Boston lost the other three games by a combined 19 runs. Translation? While Boston has captured the last three A.L. East crowns, Tampa Bay has been tough on the Red Sox for some time now. Any distance between the two clubs on the field has become more perception than reality.

“They’re good,” Cora said. “They have a good pitching staff. It’s tough to create energy when you’re not scoring runs.”

The Rays enjoyed a 4-0 lead after two innings and protected it the rest of the way behind starter Tyler Glasnow and three relievers. Mitch Moreland’s sacrifice fly to deep center in the sixth and a solo homer to deep center by Michael Chavis in the seventh was all Boston could manage against the lanky right-hander, who has allowed just seven earned runs in six starts this season. Emilio Pagan, Jose Alvarado and Diego Castillo combined on the final seven outs.

“We didn’t do much here,” said Xander Bogaerts, who finished 0-for-4 with a pair of strikeouts. “This is a game of adjustments. We’ll have to prepare better for the next time we face them.”

The Rays did all the damage required through the first two innings. They took a 2-0 lead after just three batters in the first when Yandy Diaz stroked a leadoff double to left center and Daniel Robertson lofted a two-run homer just over the Green Monster. Robertson entered 0-for-11 in his career against Red Sox starter Chris Sale, but his lazy fly carried just far enough to put the visitors on top.

“I’ve still got to put my team in a better position early on,” Sale said. “First inning, two-run homer — that’s a tough spot to put my guys in.”

The Red Sox gave Tampa Bay a bit of a helping hand in the second. Sale walked Guillermo Heredia and Rafael Devers booted what would have been an inning-ending 5-4-3 double play on a grounder by Willy

Adames. Diaz followed with a two-out drive to deep center that eluded a leaping Jackie Bradley Jr., a two-run triple that made it 4-0.

“They only have two runs,” Cora said. “We have a shot. We don’t make a play, they hit a (triple) and that’s what it is.”

Sale used a pair of 6-4-3 double plays to escape the next two frames and was in command over his final three. He tossed a season-high 111 pitches and retired the final seven men he faced. Sale’s eight strikeouts made it 24 over his last three starts, a span of 17 innings.

“I keep saying the same things over and over, but it’s a step in the right direction,” Sale said. “Nobody wants to hear that. I’d rather be sitting up here talking about wins and all that, but at the end of the day you’ve got to do what you’ve got to do. I’m grinding.”

“It’s not fastball-wise where everyone hoped it would be, but he gave us seven,” Cora said. “After that second inning, he started pitching, using everything. He found command of the off-speed pitches. Like I’ve been saying all along, that’s a key for him.”

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

### **Boston Red Sox swept by Rays thanks to costly errors, scuffling offense in 5-2 loss Sunday**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Two costly errors and a few clear acts of frustration summed up another lifeless afternoon at Fenway Park for the inconsistent Red Sox.

Andrew Benintendi slammed his bat and helmet after striking out in the third inning and Rafael Devers aggressively threw his bat after striking out an inning later. Both Devers, who muffed a double play ball in the second inning, and Michael Chavis, who airtailed a throw in the ninth, made key errors that led to Rays runs in a 5-2 Sox loss.

Tampa Bay jumped ahead early for the second straight day, with Yandy Diaz hitting a double to lead off the game and Daniel Robertson giving the Rays a 2-0 lead two batters later with a homer to deep left.

In the second, Sale issued a one-out walk to Guillermo Heredia before getting Christian Arroyo to hit a tailor-made ground ball that Devers booted, allowing both runners to reach safely. Two batters later, Diaz hit a two-run triple to make it 4-0.

Boston’s offense had just two hits through five innings against starter Tyler Glasnow before scoring for the first time on a Mitch Moreland sacrifice fly in the sixth. Chavis hit a solo homer an inning later to make it 4-2 before Glasnow was relieved by Emilio Pagan.

Sale settled down after the first two frames to post his first seven-inning performance of the year, allowing just one hit in his final five innings. Though he dropped to 0-5 on the season with the loss, Sale exited having given up just two earned runs in seven innings while striking out eight Rays.

Tampa Bay added an insurance run in the ninth, when Chavis airtailed a throw trying to turn a double play that would have ended the inning. Avisail Garcia scored to put Tampa Bay up 5-2.

Rays relievers Emilio Pagan, Jose Alvarado and Diego Castillo retired the seven of Boston’s final eight batters to clinch the sweep of a rain-shortened two-game sweep. Tampa Bay increased its division lead to 7 1/2 games over the fourth-place Red Sox, who fell to 11-17.

Boston lost its fifth series out of nine so far this year, falling to 1-5-3 in series on the year. Boston is now 3-3 on its homestand, which will end with three games against the Athletics, beginning Monday.

Chavis homers again

Chavis was 2-for-3 on the day, hitting his third career home run to deep center off Glasnow in the seventh. His homer came off the bat at 108.5 mph and traveled 441 feet.

Martinez unavailable off bench

J.D. Martinez (back spasms) was not used as a pinch-hitter in a close game for the second straight day. If available, he likely would have been used in place of Christian Vazquez (with a runner on second) in the seventh.

Martinez is questionable for Monday.

Athletics up next

The Red Sox will conclude their 10-game homestand by welcoming the Athletics into town Monday. Oakland took three of four from Boston in the second series of the year.

Monday, 7:10 p.m. - RHP Frankie Montas vs. LHP Eduardo Rodriguez

Tuesday, 7:10 p.m. - RHP Aaron Brooks vs. RHP Rick Porcello

Wednesday, 1:05 p.m. - RHP Mike Fiers vs. RHP Hector Velazquez

### **Boston Red Sox inconsistent throughout first month but team leaders Chris Sale, Xander Bogaerts not losing confidence**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- For every step forward the Red Sox have taken as they've tried to climb out of their early-season hole, they've taken at least one step back. That's getting old for a group that has quickly grown tired of underperforming.

Though exactly one month, the Red Sox are 11-17 and have won just one of their nine series. A team that had three win streaks of eight or more games last year has put together three straight wins just one time this season and is under .500 (5-7) at Fenway Park.

The last week has been symbolic of the entire season, as the Sox followed up a three-game sweep of the division-leading Rays with two losses in Tuesday's doubleheader, two straight wins to split the series with the Tigers and back-to-back losses to Tampa Bay over the weekend. The inconsistency is alarming for a team that was dominant because of its remarkable consistency a year ago.

"We haven't been consistent," manager Alex Cora said. "If we pitch, we don't hit... you know the phrase. If one thing's going, another is not. Defensively, we show flashes then we don't. We haven't been able to put everything together."

Some Red Sox showed outward signs of irritation Sunday, with Andrew Benintendi and Rafael Devers each slamming their bats after strikeouts in a 5-2 loss. Even one of Boston's most mellow players, shortstop Xander Bogaerts, is feeling the frustration.

"I wouldn't want to say (we're) mad," Bogaerts said. "Disappointed might be a better word. Surprised obviously, too. We didn't expect to have a losing record."

Cora hasn't taken issue with Boston's effort level and has repeatedly said he doesn't believe in the team having a World Series hangover. Instead, the Sox are learning that wins aren't going to come as easy for their uber-talented roster as they did in 2018.

"It's a results-oriented game," starter Chris Sale said. "No one cares about the hard work. No one cares about the effort. We've got to start winning games. I appreciate the effort. I appreciate the hard work and I know on the other end of that comes success, but we've got to find a way."

Sale and Bogaerts-- two clubhouse leaders who each signed long-term extensions in recent weeks-- both said the team has not lost confidence in its abilities. Bogaerts believes something as small as a blooper or infield hit going in Boston's favor could propel the Sox to a long winning streak. Sale took a broader view.

"I think if you take a look around this room, see the names on the stickers and the numbers on the backs, we have the guys to do it," Sale said. "This is basically the same team that won the World Series. We're not losing confidence. We're not taking back from the effort. We're not hanging our heads and we're not going to point fingers. That's not who we are."

The Red Sox have three more games at home against Oakland before hitting the road for seven games against two of the American League's weaker teams in the White Sox and Orioles. That stretch, which is followed by an eight-game homestand, will give the Sox a good opportunity to pile up some wins and close the gap on Tampa Bay.

The Sox aren't planning any drastic changes, instead believing that talent will soon take over and propel the team back to its rightful place near the top of the standings. To do that, they'll have to keep grinding.

"We've got to keep swinging the bats and throwing the ball and just know that on the other side of all this, there's going to be some green grass," Sale said. "It's not easy to swallow now, but, hey, we'll be there. We know who we are. We know who we've got. And we'll be there."

### **Rafael Devers' error costs Boston Red Sox in Sunday loss; defensive inconsistency still an issue for third baseman**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Through one month of the season, Red Sox third baseman Rafael Devers is right where Boston hoped he wouldn't be: near the top of the league in errors.

Devers ranks second in baseball with eight errors through his first 28 games, trailing only Detroit's Gordon Beckham. His latest, which came in the second inning of Sunday's loss, was perhaps his most costly of the year.

With Boston trailing 2-0, starter Chris Sale issued a one-out walk before getting Christian Arroyo to hit an easy grounder that Devers booted, allowing both runners to reach safely. Two batters later, Yandy Diaz capitalized on the mistake, hitting a two-run double that gave Tampa Bay a 4-0 lead.

Considering the previous four contests between the Sox and Rays this year have been decided by a total of five runs, a four-run lead appeared daunting for a Sox offense going up against Tyler Glasnow. The early advantage was enough for the Rays, who won 5-2.

"That's a tailor-made double play," manager Alex Cora said, "and we paid the price."

Devers was second in baseball in errors last year, committing 24 in 121 games. He was praised by Cora and others throughout spring training for improved defense but has been wildly inconsistent so far in the regular season.



“We see the great plays and then that happens,” Cora said. “Honestly, as the manager and as a (former) defensive player, I’d rather him make the routine plays than the five-star plays. That’s a mark of consistency. We have to keep working on it.”

As of Sunday afternoon, the Red Sox are tied for the second-most errors in baseball with 22. They were tied for seventh-best in that category a year ago, committing just 77 on the season.

Devers has accounted for more than 36 percent of those errors and is clearly frustrated about his lack of improvement. His body language told the whole story Sunday, as he hung his head after the play and slammed his bat after striking out two innings later.

“He actually takes it harder (when he commits an error than strikes out),” Cora said. “It’s the other way around.”

Devers has a large cast of supporters behind him, with Cora and infield coach Carlos Febles on the coaching staff and teammates Mitch Moreland and Xander Bogaerts among his mentors. Bogaerts, who broke in as a 20-year-old third baseman in 2013, sympathizes with the 22-year-old.

“I made my good amount of errors at that age so I know what he’s going through,” Bogaerts said. “When you’re young like that, whenever you make an error like that, those runs seem to score. That makes you feel much worse.”

Bogaerts and the rest of those in Devers’ corner will continue to encourage him defensively, but his continued struggles could lead the Red Sox to consider decreasing his playing time. Rookie Michael Chavis, who has played third throughout his minor-league career, could see some time there once the three second basemen-- Dustin Pedroia, Brock Holt and Eduardo Nunez-- return from the injured list.

The 2018 Red Sox were consistent enough across the board to make up for errors like the one Devers made Sunday. The 2019 team, which fell to 11-17 with Sunday’s loss, has not been so far.

“For us to give our pitchers breathing room and a chance to go deep into games, we have to make the routine play,” Cora said. “We didn’t today.”

### **Boston Red Sox’s Brock Holt scratched from rehab game with right shoulder soreness**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox utility player Brock Holt was scratched from his rehab game at Pawtucket on Sunday with right shoulder soreness, according to the team. Holt is day-to-day.

Holt has been sidelined since April 6 with a scratched cornea in his right eye. He resumed his rehab assignment Friday after a short break, going 1-for-3 with three walks for the PawSox.

Pawtucket’s game Saturday was rained out in Rochester and Holt was scheduled to play Sunday before his shoulder ailment popped up. It’s unclear how this setback will affect his timetable to return to the Red Sox.

Holt played through his eye injury for six games, going 1-for-16 with seven strikeouts before hitting the injured list. He tried various contact lenses and had his original rehab assignment stopped before deciding to let the eye heal on his own and heading back to the minors Friday.

Holt is one of three Sox infielders currently on the IL, along with Eduardo Nunez and Dustin Pedroia. Nunez will begin his rehab stint with the PawSox on Monday and Pedroia will head to Portland on Thursday.

### **Boston Red Sox notebook: J.D. Martinez might be available to pinch-hit in right situation, Brian Johnson throws bullpen**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- A collection of notes from Sunday at Fenway Park, where the Red Sox are taking on the Rays in the series finale of a rain-shortened two-game set.

Martinez might be available as pinch-hitter

Designated hitter J.D. Martinez is out of the lineup for the second straight day with back tightness. Manager Alex Cora said Boston will try to avoid using him off the bench but could in the right situation.

“J.D. is better, but not better,” Cora said. “He’s still tight. We’ll try to stay away from him today. If needed, we’ll use him... depending on how he progresses throughout the day. I think not starting him is the smarter thing to do.”

Martinez was unavailable in Saturday’s game and did not pinch-hit in two obvious situations in the eighth inning. He’s questionable to return to the lineup Monday night.

Johnson throws bullpen, next one set for Wednesday

Left-hander Brian Johnson (left elbow inflammation) threw a fastballs-only bullpen at Fenway on Sunday. His next bullpen is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday.

Johnson has been on the injured list since April 6. He’s not yet close to a return.

“He’s at the beginning stages of getting on the mound,” Cora said.

Rotation set for Oakland series

Eduardo Rodriguez, Rick Porcello and Hector Velazquez are scheduled to start against the Athletics to begin the week, Cora said. That would put David Price and Chris Sale in line to pitch the first two games in Chicago on Thursday and Friday.

Josh Smith, who was called up for a spot start that was rained out Friday, will be available out of the bullpen. Boston plans to carry 13 pitchers and 12 position players until its infielders (Dustin Pedroia, Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt) return.

Smith might keep his roster spot for the rest of the homestand, as relievers Bobby Poyner (May 4) and Travis Lakins (May 6) are not eligible to be recalled until late next week. Potential relief additions other than those two include Josh Taylor (who is on the 40-man roster) and non-40-man guys like Jenrry Mejia and Erasmo Ramirez.

**Eduardo Nunez injury: Boston Red Sox infielder will start rehab assignment Monday with PawSox**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox infielder Eduardo Nunez will begin a rehab assignment with Triple-A Pawtucket on Monday, manager Alex Cora said.

Nunez will leave Boston on Sunday night and meet the PawSox in Buffalo for a five-game series that begins Monday. He has been on the injured list since April 19 with a mid-back strain.

Cora said he thinks Nunez will need about 20 at-bats before being activated. It’s possible he returns for Boston’s three-game series in Baltimore, which begins May 6.

“We need at-bats from him,” Cora said. “I think that’s the most important thing. He’ll play third, play second. I don’t know. It’s more about the at-bats than repetitions in the field.”

Nunez has hit .159/.178/.182 in 17 games this season, playing both second and third for Boston. Cora hopes his offensive production will increase once he’s fully healthy.

“He understands the back is different with changing swings for a while there,” Cora said. “His swing is back to where it was in spring training. Now it’s about competing.”

Nunez is one of three Sox second basemen currently on the IL, along with Dustin Pedroia and Brock Holt. Holt began his rehab stint with the PawSox on Friday and Pedroia will join Portland for his beginning Thursday.

### **Dustin Pedroia injury: Boston Red Sox 2B to begin rehab assignment Thursday with Portland**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia will likely begin a rehab assignment with Double-A Portland on Thursday, manager Alex Cora said Sunday. Pedroia will remain with the Red Sox through their homestand (which ends Wednesday afternoon) before reporting to Portland.

“We’ll see how it goes,” Cora said. “He hasn’t played in a while. He needs at-bats. He needs to play.”

Pedroia left Boston’s April 17 game in New York after feeling a “pop” in his surgically repaired left knee and was placed on the 10-day injured list a day later. Doctors determined there was nothing seriously wrong with his knee and that his absence would be a short-term one.

“He’s a lot better,” Cora said. “The way that night (went), it was like that was it right there. You talk ‘pop’ and ‘knee,’ you don’t feel comfortable with it. He feels good. He’s moving well.”

Pedroia, who spent all of last year rehabbing after having a cartilage reconstruction procedure in Nov. 2017, has been involved in mapping out his return plan. His timetable for rejoining the roster is not yet known, though the first game of a homestand on May 10 could make some sense.

“The player has input on this,” Cora said. “I know sometimes it feels like we’re cutting them short or whatever, but it’s just the way it goes nowadays. We do our best to let them know how we feel about it, what we’d like to do. It’s not like they go over the program or the team. But if they feel they’re fine, that’s within the rules.”

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

### **Sale: ‘I know who we are ... and we’ll be there’**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Whether examining himself or his team, Red Sox ace Chris Sale is in equal parts disbelief at the moment.

Who could have predicted that Sale would be 0-5 with a 6.30 ERA in his first six starts of the season after Sunday’s 5-2 loss to the impressive Tampa Bay Rays at Fenway Park?

And who could have predicted the Red Sox -- the team that won the World Series on the back of 108 wins last year -- could be 11-17 and 7 1/2 games behind the Rays on April 28?

Yet for all that disbelief, Sale also strongly believes that things can and will turn dramatically in the other direction for both himself and his team. Sale simply refuses to believe that everything that was so good such a short time ago can suddenly go bad.

“I think if you take a look around this room, you see obviously the names on the stickers and numbers on the back,” said Sale. “We’ve got the guys to do it. It’s basically the same team that won a World Series. We’re not losing confidence. We’re not taking back from the effort. We’re not hanging our heads. We’re not pointing fingers. That’s not who we are. That’s not how we got where we are.”

Though the results are markedly different, Sale sees no change in the process that led to such great results in 2018.

“We’re doing the same things, just not getting the same results,” said Sale. “That’s hard from the other side of it, but at the end of the day, there’s only so much you can do and we’re doing it. You’ll see our guys out there taking early BP. You’ll see our guys taking ground balls, fly balls. Pitchers throwing bullpens. We’re doing our thing. We’re doing what we need to do to succeed.”

At some point soon, however, the process needs to translate into results. And why it hasn’t so far is hard to put a finger on. At the beginning of the season, it was the rotation. Then it was the offense. At times, the defense has had untimely breakdowns, such as the error by third baseman Rafael Devers in the second inning of Sunday’s loss that led to two unearned runs off Sale.

“I mean, it’s obvious, we haven’t been consistent,” said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. “If we pitch, we don’t hit, if we don’t hit -- you know the phrase, whatever -- one thing is going, the other one is not. Defensively we show flashes, then we don’t. We haven’t been able to put everything together.”

“It’s just, the success isn’t there. I’ve got every single person in this clubhouse’s back,” said Sale. “I know what we can do. I know who we have. I know what we’re capable of. Just gotta stay on it. We’ve got to keep striking the iron. Got to keep swinging the bats, throwing the ball, and just know that on the other side of this there’s going to be some green grass.”

Sale is convinced the Red Sox will find a way to regain their form.

“It isn’t easy to swallow now, but hey, we’ll be there,” Sale said. “I know who we are, I know what we’ve got, and we’ll be there.”

As for Sale, he made incremental progress for the second straight start. He pitched a season-high seven innings and just two of the four runs he allowed were earned. Sale walked three and struck out eight, seeming to find himself over his final few innings. He said that pitching coach Dana LeVangie helped him spot something early in the game that led to his success after.

“Just kind of my takeaway. Hand out of my glove,” Sale said. “Dana came up to me after the third or fourth inning and was telling me some things with my delivery, just getting some things a little bit more crisp, getting things more in line. After that, it was obvious. Things were getting a little bit better, I was able to get my fastball extension and I think my breaking ball had a little bit more depth on it.”

An obvious missing ingredient for Sale remains velocity. Though Sale’s four-seamer averaged just 91.6 mph on Sunday, he got some results, generating six swinging strikes of the 36 he threw. When the Rays put his four-seamer in play, they were 1-for-8.

“I’ve still got to put my team in a better position early on,” said Sale. “First inning, two-run homer, that’s a tough spot to put my guys in. Still building. I feel like a broken record saying the same things over and over but at the end of the day, I need to be a little bit better.”

There’s nothing Sale can do about what has already happened, and he won’t sugarcoat it either.

"I'm sitting here like a broken record," Sale said. "What am I, six starts in? ... I don't want to sit here and say the same things over and over, but hopefully sooner rather than later [it will change], that's for damn sure.

"Like I said, this is a results-oriented game. No one cares about the hard work. No one cares about the effort. We've gotta start winning games."

### **Pedroia to begin Minor League stint Thursday**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Despite the many setbacks he has had with his surgically repaired left knee, Dustin Pedroia isn't giving up.

The second baseman is expected to start another Minor League rehab assignment on Thursday for Double-A Portland, the same day the Red Sox open a seven-game road trip in Chicago.

Pedroia started the season in extended spring training, then played three games on a Minor League rehab assignment for Triple-A Pawtucket.

The 35-year-old veteran was activated for Boston's home opener against the Blue Jays on April 9. However, his return was short-lived. Pedroia was able to play just six games over a nine-day span. That sixth game was on April 17 at Yankee Stadium, when he felt and heard a pop in his knee and had to exit the game in the second inning.

That setback wasn't as big as Pedroia and the Red Sox originally feared.

"A lot better [now]," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "The way that night [was], it felt like that was it right there. When you talk pop and knee, you don't feel comfortable with it. I think he feels good. He's moving well. We've been through this the last year. Hopefully we keep getting information, I know there's new spikes, new brace, there's a lot of effort into this, so now it's just go out there and see how it goes."

After a 2017 season in which Pedroia played 105 games -- most of them with discomfort in his knee -- he had a cartilage replacement procedure done that offseason that no position player has ever had.

Without a precedent to go by, the Red Sox and Pedroia have had to do with unpredictability. His return last season lasted just three games before arthroscopic surgery in July. This time, Pedroia hopes he can find a way to stay on the field. His rehab assignment is likely to be longer than the three-game stint earlier in the season.

"We'll see how it goes," said Cora. "He hasn't played in a while. He needs at-bats. He needs to play. They'll go over the program and see where we're at."

The Red Sox came under some scrutiny for the brief length of the last rehab assignment, and Cora elaborated on that a little on Sunday.

"One thing I don't know if you guys are aware of, but it's a little bit different back in the day than when I played," Cora said. "The player has input on this. I know sometimes it feels like we're cutting them short or whatever, but it's just the way it goes nowadays. We do our best to let him know how we feel about it, what we like to do. It's not that they go over the program or the team but if they feel they're fine, that's within the rules. That's how it works."

Infielder Eduardo Núñez, who has been out since April 18 with a mid-back strain, will start a rehab assignment for Triple-A Pawtucket on Monday at Buffalo. Brock Holt is already with Pawtucket, as he rehabs from a scratched cornea in his right eye.

There was also news on lefty Brian Johnson, who has been on the injured list with left elbow inflammation since April 6. Johnson threw a bullpen session on Sunday, the first since he suffered his injury. Johnson will throw another one on Wednesday.

J.D. 'better', but out again

The Red Sox again posted a lineup without star slugger J.D. Martinez for Sunday's 5-2 loss against the Rays. The DH was out a second straight day with back spasms. Cora didn't rule out that Martinez could pinch hit before the game, but Martinez did not make an appearance in the loss.

"J.D. is better, but not better, you know?" Cora said pregame. "Still tight. I think we'll try to stay away from him today. If needed, we'll use him later on depending on how he progresses during the day. Not starting him is the smarter thing to do."

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

**Instead of waiting for the real Chris Sale, maybe we should redefine what that means**

John Tomase

We've recycled the phrase since his first start, but it has grown as stale as his fastball. Perhaps it's time to stop waiting for "the real Chris Sale."

Maybe we're looking at him.

On Sunday, Sale delivered another flawed outing in a 5-2 loss to the Rays that dropped the Red Sox to 11-17 and Sale to 0-5. He probably deserved slightly better -- he limited Tampa to four hits and two earned runs while striking out eight over seven innings -- but let's not get carried away. He pitched well enough to take a no-decision instead of another L.

He allowed a two-run homer in the first to a batter who hadn't left the park since last July, and he compounded a Rafael Devers error by serving up a two-run triple with two outs an inning later. His fastball, briefly back in the 95-97 mph range a couple of starts ago, slipped back to 91-92, and Sale once again didn't trust it. Nearly half of his 111 pitches were sliders.

At this time last year, Sale was 2-1 with a 2.31 ERA and the Red Sox had won four of his six starts. Now he's winless with a 6.30 ERA and the Red Sox are 0-6 when he takes the mound.

MLB Power Rankings: Where do the Sox stand after their slow start?

If there's a positive, it's that Sale settled down and limited Tampa to one hit over his final five innings, but by that point the damage had been done. Six starts into the season, Sale has run out of things to say.

"I keep saying the same things over and over, but it's a step in the right direction," Sale told reporters. "I know nobody wants to hear that. I'd love to be sitting up here talking about wins and all of that, but at the end of the day, you've got to do what you've got to do and I'm grinding. I'm trying to find a way. It doesn't matter what I show up with on a given day. It doesn't matter where our team is at or who we're facing or who's in the box, whatever. Got to find a way to win. It's kind of the double-edged sword of this game. It's fun when you're on one side but it kind of sucks when you're on the other side of it, so you've just got to do what you've got to do to get on the right side and keep winning games."

That 4-0 hole on Sunday proved insurmountable against overpowering Rays right-hander Tyler Glasnow, who featured an upper-90s fastball while striking out nine and limiting the Red Sox to two runs over 6.2 innings. He looked more like Sale than Sale.

Unfortunately, that guy has been missing in action since last July, and while it's too soon to say he's not coming back, it's clearly time to be concerned.

"I'm sitting here like a broken record," Sale said. "What am I, six starts in? I've sucked every bit of every last one of them. I don't want to sit here and say the same things over and over, but hopefully sooner rather than later. That's for damn sure. Like I said, this is a result-oriented game. No one cares about the hard work. No one cares about the effort. We've got to start winning games. I appreciate the effort. I appreciate the hard work, and I know on the other end of that comes success, but we've got to find a way."

With the Red Sox just two games out of last place, Sale deserves a large portion of the blame. Had he produced at even last April's level, the Red Sox would be at least 15-13, and probably even better, since he wouldn't have killed the bullpen with a series of four- and five-inning starts.

The Red Sox haven't seen that Sale in a while, but baseball can be cruel that way.

"I mean it's a love-hate relationship," Sale said. "I've loved this game for the same reason I hate it. Today is one of those days where, don't give up a two-run homer in the first inning, maybe we've got a chance, or you find your groove a little bit earlier, or this or that, whatever. I've got to find a way. I've got to find a way."

He's still searching and we're still waiting, and it's enough to make you wonder exactly who the real Chris Sale is, anyway.

## **\* NESN.com**

### **Red Sox Wrap: Boston Sinks Lower In AL East Standings After Loss To Rays**

Dakota Randall

The Boston Red Sox entered their rain-shortened weekend series against the Tampa Bay Rays with a chance to pull within 3 1/2 games of first place in the American League East.

Instead, the perplexingly punchless Red Sox dropped both games at Fenway Park, perfectly punctuated by Sunday afternoon's 5-2 loss to the division-leading Rays. Boston now sits a staggering 7 1/2 games back over a month into their World Series championship defense.

Chris Sale took the loss to drop to an impossible-to-fathom 0-5 on the season. The Red Sox are 0-6 in his six starts. That being said, there were some promising signs from the ace left-hander on what was an otherwise discouraging, drizzly day in Boston.

As for the offense, the Red Sox got an RBI sacrifice fly from Mitch Moreland and a solo homer to center field from Michael Chavis. Boston totaled just six hits on the afternoon, while Tampa picked up the win despite finishing with only five base-knocks.

Boston fell to 11-17 with the loss, while the Rays improved to 18-9 with the win.

Here's how it all went down:

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

Anemic.

Once again, the Red Sox presented an unpalatable brand of baseball.

#### **ON THE BUMP**

— Through two innings, this looked like yet another confounding, velocity-deprived outing from Sale. When all was said and done, however, Sale turned in what might have been his most encouraging effort of the season.

The Red Sox ace surrendered four runs (two earned) on four hits over seven innings. He walked three and struck out eight while hurling a season-high 111 pitches, 72 of which were for strikes.

As for the four runs, two of them came in the first inning on a Daniel Robertson homer over the Green Monster. In the second frame, Sale induced what should have been an inning-ending double play, but Rafael Devers committed an error, setting the stage for a two-out double by Yandy Diaz.

In those two innings, Sale's fastball sat somewhere between 89-92 mph while his slider lacked its trademark bite. His command also was way off, as it's been in pretty much all of his outings this year. And, to be honest, some of those warts popped up over the course of his next five innings of work.

However, Sale's velocity increased as he went deeper into the game — touching 96 mph — and he pitched with the pace and presence that Red Sox fans are used to.

Sale now has a 6.30 ERA for the season.

— Marcus Walden pitched a perfect eighth with a strikeout, the latest impressive appearance from the suddenly reliable right-hander. He now has a 2.03 ERA in 10 relief appearances.

— Heath Hembree got the ball in the ninth and did his Heath Hembree thing, allowing one run on one hit and a walk while striking out two. He now has a 4.73 ERA, and one has to wonder whether he's losing the trust of his manager, Alex Cora.

#### IN THE BATTER'S BOX

— For the fifth time in seven games, the Red Sox offense managed just four runs or less.

— Rays star right-hander Tyler Glasnow dominated over 6 2/3 innings, allowing two runs on six hits while striking out nine and walking one. He improved to 5-0 with a 1.75 ERA.

— Chavis had the lone offensive highlight for Boston, demolishing this Glasnow offering over the center field wall:

The rookie infielder finished 2-for-4 and now has three homers and five RBIs since being called up last week.

— Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr. and Christian Vazquez finished with a hit apiece. Devers finished 2-for-3.

— The Red Sox stranded 10 men on base.

#### TWEET OF THE GAME

Because virtually nothing positive happened after this moment:

#### UP NEXT

The Red Sox will begin a three-game series with the Oakland Athletics on Monday. First pitch at Fenway Park is scheduled for 7:10 p.m. ET.

**\* *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

**BSJ Game Report: Rays 5, Red Sox 2 – Another series loss keeps Sox reeling**



Sean McAdam

## HEADLINES

Sale continues to go forward: It didn't look good for Chris Sale three batters into the game. He allowed a long leadoff double and two batters later, surrendered a two-run homer, putting the Sox in a 2-0 hole. In the next inning, the Rays added two more, though those were unearned. After that, Sale tossed five shutout innings. On the one hand, it marked the sixth straight start in which Sale got the nod and the Red Sox lost. But on the other, he did manage to pitch through the seventh and finished strong, retiring the last seven and 10 of the last 11 batters. He allowed only two hits after the first inning. "I guess that's the one and only positive out of this," said Sale of getting through seven. "But I still have to put my team in a better position early on. I'm still building and I feel like a broken record saying this over and over, but at the end of the day, I need to be better." Alex Cora noted Sale's velocity wasn't great — he was mostly 92-93 with his fastball — but that didn't seem to bother him. He also made a mechanical adjustment after the first two innings that allowed him to turn his outing around.

Devers' error a big factor: The Sox were already down 2-0 in the second. Sale walked Gil Heredia, but then got Willy Adames to hit a grounder right at Rafael Devers at third. It appeared to be the perfect double-play ball, but Devers bobbled the ball and instead of the Sox being out of the inning, the Rays had runners at first and second with one out. Two batters later, Yandy Diaz doubled to center, scoring two unearned runs. For Devers, it was his eighth error of the season in 28 games. "I was his age and I made a good amount of errors," said Xander Bogaerts, "So I kind of know what he's going through. When you're going like that, whenever you make an error, those runs seem to score, so that makes you feel even worse. When I see him hang his head, all I can say is 'Keep your head up and try to catch the next one.' But he's down. I know how bad that is."

Pearce lost at the plate: The season is more than a month old and Steve Pearce has four hits. Four. And only one of them is for extra bases. He's got a slash line of .103/.167/.128 with one RBI, or, the same as David Price. On Sunday, he was 0-for-4 with a double play and a strikeout. He's hitless (0-for-10) on the homestand. And yet, because of the unavailability of J.D. Martinez, he was in the lineup for the second straight day. "Right now, he's searching," conceded Cora. "You see him in the batter's box, in the cage, in the dugout — he's looking for something to click. Sometimes, he's out in front on breaking balls and behind on fastballs, caught in between. Timmy (Hyers) and Andy (Barkett) will keep looking for answers and help him out to the point where he contributes offensively."

## TURNING POINT

Trailing 4-0, the Sox had runners at second and third and just one out in the sixth, finally showing signs of life, and with the heart of the batting order due, appeared ready for a big inning. Instead, they got just one run (from a sacrifice fly) and missed a big chance to put runs on the board.

## ONE UP

Michael Chavis: Chavis continues to mash the ball, collecting a single and a homer — his third in a little more than a week.

## TWO DOWN

Xander Bogaerts: With a rare off-day at the plate, the shortstop was 0-for-4 and didn't get the ball out of the infield.

Heath Hembree: Brought in to keep the score where it was in the ninth, Hembree allowed a leadoff double and a run.

## QUOTE OF NOTE

“I just think we’ve got to continue to get better — real quick.” Xander Bogaerts.

#### STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

Mookie Betts picked up a walk and leads the Sox with 17 of them.

Christian Vazquez extended his hitting streak to four games.

The 111 pitches by Chris Sale represented a single-game high for Red Sox pitchers this season.

The Sox still have won only one series this year.

#### UP NEXT

The Red Sox begin a three-game series with the Oakland A’s Monday at 7:10 p.m. with LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (2-2, 5.88) vs. RHP Frankie Montas (4-1, 3.10)

#### **Red Sox unable to get any traction**

Sean McAdam

The end of April is near, and still, the Red Sox spin their wheels.

Two steps forward, one back. Just when it seems like they seem ready to snap out of their early-season lethargy and put together a streak to get them back to the .500 back, they revert to form and watch helplessly as the mud flies everywhere, making for an unsightly mess.

When they swept the Tampa Bay Rays last weekend at Tropicana Field, it looked like a delayed wakeup call had finally been answered. So, naturally, they promptly returned home and dropped two games on the same day to the thoroughly otherwise unimpressive Detroit Tigers.

Then, after rebounding for a split of their series with the Tigers, picking up two straight, they canceled that out with two losses in a rain-shortened sweep to the Rays.

They sit 7.5 games behind first-place Tampa, which, not so incidentally, is where they were before they went to Tampa 10 days ago.

So much for momentum. So much for progress.

“We’ve got the guys to do it,” said Chris Sale, who tripped in the first two innings before carrying the Sox into the seventh in a 5-2 loss. “This is basically the same team that won a World Series. We’re not losing confidence. We’re not hanging heads. We’re not going to point fingers. That’s who we are, that’s how we got where we are. We’re doing the same things, but we’re not getting the same results.”

In point of fact, however, the Sox aren’t doing the same things they did a year ago.

Too often, they’re beating themselves, as they did Sunday when yet another error by Rafael Devers opened the door for two more unearned runs, leaving the Sox with 15 of those this season. In all of baseball, only Gordon Beckham has committed more errors than Devers this season.

They’re also not delivering the big hit when they need it most, as they did almost as a matter of routine in 2018. In their four losses on this homestand, they’re a combined 1-for-34 with runners in scoring position. By accident, you would think, a team would have more success than that.

And while the pitching has vastly improved from the wretched first two weeks, this startling fact remains: The Red Sox have lost all six of Sale’s starts this season. By way of comparison, the Sox didn’t lose their sixth Sale start until June 1 a year ago.

When your No. 1 starter takes the mound, the expectation is that your team is going to win the vast majority of those games. But like so much else associated with the 2019 Red Sox, expectations and reality aren't conflating.

"That's obvious — we haven't been consistent," said Alex Cora after the Sox lost yet another series, dropping them to 1-5-3 in that department. "We pitch, we don't hit; we hit, we don't pitch — you know those streaks. One thing's going, another is not. Defensively, we show flashes, then we don't. We haven't been able to put everything together."

Xander Bogaerts, who's been one of the few consistent performers on the roster, expressed hope that a little thing — "a blooper with the bases loaded" — could turn around the team's sagging fortunes, while trying out a series of words to describe the team's feelings about the poor start.

For now, though, the analysis and the self-flagellation only gets them so far. What's needed is an honest-to-goodness winning streak to put some distance between themselves and the crater-sized hole they've dug for themselves.

"I know what we can do, I know what we have," said Sale. "I know what we're capable of. We just have to stay on it. We've got to keep striking the iron — swinging the bat, throwing the ball — and just know that on the other side of all this, there's going to be some green grass. It's not easy to swallow, but we'll be there."

At some point, however, faith and hard work aren't enough.

As Sale likes to remind people, however, this isn't a try-hard league. At bottom, it's about the results, which, as if it's not painfully obvious, the Red Sox currently lack.

"No one cares about the hard work, no cares about the effort," acknowledged Sale. "We've got to start winning games."

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

### **The Red Sox have improved, but they are still inconsistent and underwhelming**

Chad Jennings

For three weeks, the Red Sox were bad. Just plain bad. Dropped fly balls. Base-running blunders. Starting pitchers who couldn't last. In their first 19 games, the Red Sox had back-to-back wins only once. They were awful.

For the past 10 days, they've improved a little. Now they're merely inconsistent and underwhelming. They won three straight, then got swept in a doubleheader. Won two more, then got swept over the weekend. Sunday's 5-2 loss to the Rays was a second step back after two steps forward. They might not be awful, but they're still not good. They're certainly not as good as they should be.

"If you take a look around this room, you see obviously the names on the (lockers) and numbers on the back," Chris Sale said. "We've got the guys to do it. It's basically the same team that won a World Series. We're not losing confidence. We're not taking back from the effort. We're not hanging our heads. We're not pointing fingers. That's not who we are. That's not how we got where we are."

For a full minute and 40 seconds, Sale went on.

"We're doing the same things," he said. "Just not getting the same results. That's hard from the other side of it, but at the end of the day, there's only so much you can do, and we're doing it. You'll see our guys out there taking early BP. You'll see our guys taking groundballs (and) fly balls. Pitchers throwing bullpeners."

We're doing our thing. We're doing what we need to do to succeed. It's just, the success isn't there. I've got every single person in this clubhouse's back. I know what we can do. I know who we have. I know what we're capable of. Just gotta stay on it. We've gotta keep striking the iron. Gotta keep swinging the bats, throwing the ball, and just know that on the other side of this there's going to be some green grass. It isn't easy to swallow now, but hey, we'll be there. I know who we are, I know what we've got, and we'll be there."

It's been a month, and the defending champs still haven't found a bit of traction. They're six games below .500 and 7 1/2 games out of first place. These numbers show they've found a few bright spots but very little consistency:

6

That's the number of active Red Sox hitters with an OPS above .750. It's also the same number of active Red Sox hitters with an OPS below .750. It's an even split. The top of the order has been good. Andrew Benintendi, Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez, Mitch Moreland, Xander Bogaerts and Michael Chavis are pulling their weight, all nearly above .800 in OPS. With just a few more walks, Moreland would join them.

But the other Red Sox hitters have been dreadful. Rafael Devers has at least hit for average and a good on-base percentage, but he still hasn't homered. Christian Vázquez has four home runs but only a .267 on-base percentage. Jackie Bradley Jr., Steve Pearce, Tzu-Wei Lin and Sandy León? Forget it. Bradley is the only one of that bunch with an OPS even in the .400s, and he's hitting just .150. Pearce has four hits in 39 at-bats. León and Lin are on the roster strictly for their gloves.

With Martinez out of the lineup the past two games because of back spasms, the bottom third of the Red Sox lineup has been filled with light hitters. Bradley and Pearce, in particular, have provided significantly less than expected at the plate.

10 | 1

That's the number of Sale's starts that lasted at least seven innings last season, followed by his number of seven-inning starts this season. Sunday was the first.

"I guess that's maybe the one and only positive out of this," Sale said.

Sale lobbied to go back out after he finished the sixth inning with 101 pitches. Alex Cora allowed it, and Sale finished with another scoreless frame. Take away a costly Devers fielding error in the second inning, and this would have been easily Sale's best start of the year (despite his average fastball velocity being back down to 91.6 mph). A two-run homer in the first inning was his biggest mistake.

Six starts into the season, Sale remains a mystery. His average fastball velocity jumped to 95.5 mph two weeks ago, but it's declined each of his past two starts. He's allowed just two earned runs each of his past two outings, but the Red Sox have still lost each of his six starts this season.

"I've sucked every bit of every last one of them," he said.

.898 | .418 | 1.247

That's Mookie Betts' OPS across nine-game stretches this season — his first nine games, then his next nine games, then the past nine games (the middle nine includes a 10th game when he came off the bench but didn't get an at-bat). That's a roller coaster of extremes for one of the game's great all-around players.

Betts' first nine games were arguably worse than the OPS suggests. He had three hits in his first game and three more in his ninth game, but in between he was awful. In his second nine games — from April 6 to April 17 — he was even worse. Just three hits total, only one for extra bases.

The most recent nine games, though, Betts has been his elite self again. And he's been consistent. Six of his past nine games have included multiple hits, with a home run and four doubles in his past four games. Even when he went hitless in the second game of Tuesday's doubleheader, he managed to draw three walks. He

had just one hit Sunday but also walked. He's reached base in 21 of his past 41 plate appearances. With Betts finally off and running, the Red Sox can hardly blame their star hitters for not pulling their weight. The biggest names in the lineup are performing.

2 — 2 — 2 — 2 — 5

Those are the most consecutive starts at second base for Eduardo Núñez, followed by Brock Holt, Dustin Pedroia, Tzu-Wei Lin and Michael Chavis. Sunday's game made it five in a row for Chavis, by far the most second-base stability the Red Sox have experienced all season.

The Red Sox expected some mix-and-match at second base, but not like this. Not with Holt scratching his cornea on Opening Day, Núñez hurting his back in mid-April and Pedroia going back on the injured list 10 days after being activated.

With some stability at the position has come, at last, some offensive production. The Red Sox had easily the game's least offensive production from second base, but Chavis hit another home run Sunday, making him the seventh Red Sox hitter to ever hit three homers in his first eight career games. The others: Devers, Will Middlebrooks, Mo Vaughn, Sam Horn, Billy Conigliaro and Jerry Moses. Chavis has given the offense a little added depth at a key time. Pedroia, Holt and Núñez might each be at least a week away from returning.

.355 | .833 | .238

That's Vázquez's slugging percentage through his first 10 games this season, followed by his slugging percentage during a five-game outburst, and finally his slugging percentage the past seven games.

Overall, Vázquez's production looks like that of a player who's hit for a low average and not drawn many walks but has at least hit for good power. He's slugging .443 for the year. But three of his four home runs came during that five-game stretch in the middle of April. Take away that stretch and he's doubled twice and homered once. Even with that, he hasn't doubled since April 13.

When the Red Sox traded Blake Swihart, they got rid of a catcher with some offensive upside in favor of two catchers known primarily for their defense. León has never been much of a hitter, but he'd caught Sale's past two starts before Vázquez was back behind the plate on Sunday. Why start Vázquez? Needed offense, Cora said. Despite his slumps, Vázquez is the best-hitting catcher for the Red Sox.

5-7 | 6-10

That's the record for the Red Sox when they commit no errors, followed by their record when they commit at least one error. They're 1-4 in games with multiple errors, including Sunday's loss.

One year ago, the Red Sox had the sixth-fewest errors in the majors, only four away from having the third-fewest. This year, they're tied with the Mets for the second-most. Only the Mariners have more. Sunday was their fifth multi-error game, and those errors led to three unearned runs. Devers botched a potential double-play ball in the second inning, and Chavis made a bad throw trying to turn two in the ninth. Cora said the second error was a matter of Chavis being inexperienced at the position. Devers' error was his eighth. Only Seattle shortstop Tim Beckham has more.

"Inconsistency," Cora said of Devers. "We see the great plays and then that happens. Honestly, as a manager, as a defensive player, I'd rather him make the routine plays rather than the five-star plays. That's a mark of consistency. We're going to keep working on it. He was solid until that one. He had been good defensively, and then that happened."

No other active Red Sox player has committed more than one error this season (Swihart had three and Núñez has two).

8.79 | 3.33

The Red Sox rotation ERA in the first 13 games and in the past 15 games. At this rate, it might take the starters a month to allow the same number of runs they allowed in the first two weeks. It's a rotation

turnaround that has happened despite Nathan Eovaldi going on the injured list, and despite Sale's velocity still falling well below what it was at this time last year.

The rotation seems to have turned the corner, at least a little bit. David Price has been good all year, Eduardo Rodriguez had a 3.00 ERA in his past three starts, and Rick Porcello had a 3.86 in his past two (both Red Sox wins). Sale, too, has had better results lately, but without a win to show for it.

"We haven't been consistent," Cora said. "If we pitch, we don't hit. If we don't hit — you know the phrase, whatever. One thing is going, the other one is not. Defensively, we show flashes, (then) we don't. We haven't been able to put everything together."

The rotation is coming around, the back of the bullpen has been good all year, and the top of the lineup is getting the job done. Even after two more losses, the Red Sox look better than they did two weeks ago, but that's a low bar.

"No one cares about the hard work," Sale said. "No one cares about the effort. We've got to start winning games. I appreciate the effort. I appreciate the hard work, and I know on the other end of that comes success, but we've got to find a way. We've got to keep grinding and doing what we're doing. Just hope the other end of it changes, because we're doing everything we've got to do. It's just not there right now. But we'll get there. We will get there."

## **\* *The Tampa Bay Times***

### **Tyler Glasnow leads the way as Rays beat Red Sox again, 5-2**

Marc Topkin

BOSTON — There are days when Tyler Glasnow makes it look so easy.

When he uncoils that long frame that makes him seem right on top of the plate, makes the curveball spin and the fastball sizzle, dominates hitters to where they don't seem to have much of a chance.

He has teased and flashed that form at times, especially after being acquired by the Rays on July 31 from the Pirates, with outfielder Austin Meadows and prospect Shane Baz, for Chris Archer in what might turn out to be one of their greatest heists.

Now it seems to be the norm.

Which would really make Glasnow extremely special.

Sunday's start was his sixth of the season, and he was on his game again, leading the majors-best Rays to a 5-2 win over the Red Sox, and a sweep of their rain-shortened two-game series.

That he was sharp, cruising through the first five innings while mixing in a changeup and allowing Boston just two runs while working into the seventh, was certainly impressive.

"I thought he was outstanding," manager Kevin Cash said. "He kind of picked up where he's been all season. To limit that offense like that in this ballpark is really challenging. And it speaks volumes to how good his stuff was."

That he could maintain this level of performance, and anything even close to the results, 5-0 with a 1.75 ERA thus far, would be truly remarkable.

And yet, his Rays mates say, very much realistic.

“Yeah, he’s this good,” pitching coach Kyle Snyder said. “He’s always been really good. I think he’s finally started to realize it. The confidence is starting to grow. The approach is just a little different than probably what he’s done in the past just in terms of trusting his stuff.”

“His stuff has grown so much the last couple of years that he’s able to do that. He’s able to take an all-power approach and really limit the art to what he does.”

Catcher Mike Zunino, who saw his share of elite arms in Seattle, is also a believer that this is the real Glasnow.

“I don’t see why not,” he said. “Obviously that’s a high ask. But he’s worked extremely hard and as long as he continues to trust his stuff, and his health stays in the right direction, he’s got the stuff to absolutely last.”

Glasnow, 25, was 1-5, 4.20 in 11 starts last season for the Rays after they got him and returned him to the rotation; the Pirates had dumped him to the bullpen.

While Glasnow worked hard this winter to refine his pitches and get his 6-foot-8 body into even better shape, the biggest difference has been in his mental game.

“Just mentality and confidence,” he said. “Just going out and believing in my stuff. Just really going out and competing.”

Glasnow deserves the credit for making the change, but some of the influence came from rotation mates Charlie Morton, whom he knew from Pittsburgh, and Blake Snell.

“The mind-set stuff is very, very evident to me, how locked in he is during his game,” Snyder said. “He’s taken it to another level. The conviction, in the body language, you can see all of that.”

Glasnow showed it all Sunday, especially after being handed a 2-0 lead in the first, thanks to Daniel Robertson’s first homer of the season, then having it doubled on another big hit by Yandy Diaz.

Glasnow fired blanks the first five innings, pitched into and, thanks to a longer leash from Cash this Sunday than last, out of trouble in the sixth. He got the first two outs of the seventh for a solid 102-pitch outing. Adding the changeup as a new weapon since he was facing the Sox for the second straight start was a crafty move, too.

“He threw a changeup for strikes against lefties. He has that heater with movement against righties. He was getting a lot of swings,” Boston shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. “He’s a young kid, this guy. He’s had good stuff against us every time.”

Glasnow isn’t going to have all good days over his 32-33 starts. And there will be some games when he pitches well yet bad things happen. But if this sixgame start truly is a glimpse of what’s to come, the Rays would be ecstatic.

“Ever since we acquired him you’ve seen continual progress,” Cash said. “This year he’s just taken off. He’s pretty special when he’s out on the mound. He made really good hitters have difficult at-bats against him.”

“I think he’s totally capable of doing this. I don’t know if it’s ever fair for the expectation of any pitcher or anybody to just go out and dominate the way he has. We have to allow for hiccups here and there. But I know when he’s on the mound or when it’s his day to start, we’re feeling really good about ourselves. And I think that’s the best way you can really validate the performance, the previous performance, and what you think is going to take place.”

## **\* Associated Press**

### **Sale drops to 0-5 as Rays beat Red Sox 5-2**

BOSTON -- Chris Sale is still searching for answers -- and a victory, too.

The Boston Red Sox ace remained winless in six starts this season, giving up Daniel Robertson's two-run homer in the first inning and Yandy Diaz's two-run triple in the second during a 5-2 loss to the Tampa Bay Rays on Sunday.

"I keep saying the same things over and over: It's a step in the right direction," Sale said. "Nobody wants to hear that, but I'd love to be sitting up here talking about wins and all that. At the end of the day, you've got to do what you've got to do. I'm grinding. I'm trying to find a way."

Sale (0-5) gave up four runs -- two earned -- four hits and three walks in seven innings with eight strikeouts, lowering his ERA from 7.43 to 6.30. After signing a \$160 million, six-year contract in spring training, the 30-year-old left-hander is off to the worst start of his big league career.

Tyler Glasnow (5-0) gave up two runs and five hits in 6 2/3 innings with nine strikeouts, tying for the big league lead in wins. Glasnow has allowed two runs or fewer in all six starts this season. The 25-year-old righty was excited to have faced Sale.

"He's an unbelievable pitcher. He's been one of my favorites for a long time," Glasnow said. "I still am able to step back and realize how cool the situation is, just to be able to throw against guys like that."

After getting swept in Florida by the Red Sox in a three-game series last weekend, the AL East-leading Rays won both games in the rain-shortened series at Fenway Park. Tampa Bay improved to a major league-best 18-9 and has won eight of nine series this year.

"I could care less really," Rays manager Kevin Cash said of the return sweep, "It's more about winning games. It doesn't matter who it's against."

The Red Sox dropped to 11-17, 7 1/2 games behind the Rays.

"We've got to start winning games," Sale said. "We've got to find a way, keep doing what we're doing and just hope the other end of it changes. We're doing everything we've got to do. It's just not there right now."

Boston slugger J.D. Martinez missed his second straight game with back spasms.

Sale's second pitch of the game was a slider that was about 2 feet wide, then he missed badly inside with another slider before Diaz hit a changeup to the base of the Green Monster for a double. After striking out the next hitter, Robertson hit Sale's first pitch -- a 91 mph fastball -- into the seats above the Green Monster.

Diaz tripled over center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr.'s leaping try, driving in two runs that were unearned because third baseman Rafael Devers booted Willie Adames' potential inning-ending double-play grounder for his eighth error, second in the majors behind 11 by Seattle infielder Tim Beckham.

"Obviously, velocity wasn't there," Boston manager Alex Cora said. "Early in the game he struggled with command, but after that he found it."

### **TRAINER'S ROOM**

Rays: RHP Hunter Wood was reinstated from the family medical emergency list and RHP Austin Pruitt was optioned to Triple-A Durham.



Red Sox: Cora said 2B Dustin Pedroia (10-day IL, left knee irritation) will most likely start a rehab assignment with Double-A Portland Thursday. ... INF Eduardo Nunez (IL, mid-back strain) is slated to start a rehab assignment with Triple-A Pawtucket Monday.

#### HIS TURN

Diego Castillo worked the ninth for his third save. Five relievers have saves for the Rays this season.

#### SWEEP SUCCESS

The Rays hadn't swept a series of two games or more in Fenway Park since a two-game set in September 2012.

#### HAPPY NEWS

At the end of the eighth, the Red Sox showed highlights of the Celtics' Game 1 victory over Milwaukee in the NBA playoffs, playing the song from the Bee Gees "You Should Be Dancing" or better known as "Gino" in the background to Boston fans. It's played after Celtics wins at TD Garden.

#### UP NEXT

Rays: RHP Ryne Stanek (0-0, 1.32 ERA) will start Monday's opener of a four-game series in Kansas City.

Red Sox: LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (2-2, 5.88) looks to build off his best start Monday in the opener of a three-game series at home versus Oakland. He gave up only one run and two hits over six innings Wednesday.

#### **Red Sox's Pedroia eyes rehab stint this week**

BOSTON -- Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia will likely begin an injury rehabilitation assignment Thursday at Double-A Portland to test his balky, surgically-repaired left knee that caused him to miss all but three games last season.

Pedroia, 35, started the season on the injured list and played in just six games before leaving the April 17 game at Yankee Stadium after he felt something "pop" while running down the first-base line. The 2008 AL MVP is batting .100 with two singles in 20 at-bats.

"He hasn't played in a while. He needs at-bats. He needs to play," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said before Sunday's game against Tampa Bay. "We'll go over the program and see where we're at."

Cora was not definitive, saying "most likely" that he was starting the assignment.

"The player has input on this," Cora said. "I know sometimes it feels like we're cutting them short or whatever, but it's just the way it goes nowadays. We do our best to let them know how we feel about it, what we'd like to do. It's not like they go over the program or the team. But if they feel they're fine, that's within the rules."

After being checked by doctors following the game against the Yankees, it was projected the IL stay would be short term.

"He's a lot better," Cora said. "You talk 'pop' and 'knee,' you don't feel comfortable with it. He feels good. He's moving well."