

The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, September 17, 2019

*** *The Boston Globe***

Alex Cora looks forward to matching up with a Giant in his field

Julian McWilliams

Red Sox manager Alex Cora is looking forward to this upcoming series against the San Francisco Giants. The main story line going into it undoubtedly will be Carl Yastrzemski's grandson, Mike Yastrzemski, making his Fenway Park debut.

But for Cora, another important name in the series is Bruce Bochy.

The Giants manager is winding down a stellar 25-year career that's probably worthy of the Hall of Fame. He managed the San Diego Padres from 1995 to 2006 before taking over the Giants in 2007 and winning three World Series.

Cora is excited to pay his respects to Bochy.

"I was thinking about him the other day," Cora said Sunday. "He's been amazing. The way he goes about his business is great."

Cora came up with the Los Angeles Dodgers, playing with them from 1998 to 2004. So he saw a lot of Bochy as Padres manager.

"Even in San Diego when I played against him, it seemed like his bullpens were always good," Cora said. "Communication was awesome. For a guy to be around doing this for so long, that's impressive. I'm only two years into this, and there are certain days I'm just like, 'Wow, it's only two years?'"

Bochy's connection to the Cora family extends back to Cora's brother, Joey Cora. Joey's first year as a player was in 1987 with the Padres, in Bochy's last year as a player. To be in baseball that long says something, Cora said. More important, the ability to adjust through the decades says even more.

This year's Giants team wasn't supposed to be competitive. Instead, the club found itself in a battle for a wild-card spot for a good chunk of the summer. Cora gives credit to Bochy for that.

"They made a good run this year," Cora said. "They did an outstanding job throughout the season. Made some adjustments, and for what everybody thought it would be for them this season, it was actually the other way around."

Family business

For Red Sox fans, of course, Yastrzemski's grandson will be the center of attention.

Cora noticed Mike's swing during spring training, when Yastrzemski was still a member of the Baltimore Orioles. Cora liked some of the cuts he took against his Red Sox club and was surprised when Baltimore decided to trade the 29-year-old to the Giants.

Yastrzemski has capitalized on his chances, hitting .265 with 19 homers in just 362 plate appearances. Yastrzemski also will play left field, just like his grandfather did.

“For a guy that’s from a baseball family, you see all this stuff and it’s pretty cool,” Cora said. “I know how it feels, but this is kind of like another level. I know it’s going to be a special three days for their family.”

Cora hopes the Sox can tame Yastrzemski’s offense, though.

“Hopefully [his family] can enjoy watching him play defense,” Cora said with a smile.

Eovaldi to start

Nathan Eovaldi will get the start Tuesday, and he’s a full-go, it appears, for the remainder of the season. He lasted just 4½ innings in his last start against the Blue Jays, throwing 93 pitches and allowing three runs. His best outing was Sept. 5 against the Twins, when he allowed one run over five innings. Cora is hoping Eovaldi can get to six innings, a mark he’s reached just once this season, back in April against the Yankees.

What kind of baseball operations leader are the Red Sox looking for?

Alex Speier

With the Red Sox preparing for a search for a new head of their baseball operations department, the most obvious question is “Who?” Yet perhaps the more important question, the one that comes before the Red Sox can decide on the person to put in charge of their baseball decisions, is “What?”

Former Red Sox GM Ben Cherington once took stock of the nature of the position by noting a fundamental misunderstanding about the responsibility of leading a baseball operations department.

“It’s not 30 GM jobs. It’s 30 different jobs, period. They are just different jobs. Every one of them is different,” said Cherington. “The job is to be effective within that environment, within that job, with everything that comes along. Even that job can change a little bit over time, depending on who’s in it. My résumé when I took the job looks a lot different than Dave Dombrowski’s when he takes the job. Just by virtue of that, the job is going to be different. [Theo Epstein’s] job changed over time because when he started, his résumé looked a lot different than when he finished. Even though his title didn’t change, his job changed a lot over time. So the job is different. Every job is different.”

Now the Red Sox have a chance to redefine what they consider the job of the head of their baseball operation, and how they want it to differ from the one that the team asked Dombrowski to perform starting in late 2015. The way that the job is framed — and how the Red Sox view their own organization — will determine who emerges as an ideal fit.

Here are some of the questions the Red Sox face as they assemble their list of candidates to replace Dombrowski:

■ What are the payroll constraints?

The Red Sox have a significant strategic decision to make regarding how much they plan to spend on payroll in the coming years, and whether they plan to get under the luxury tax threshold in the next year or two. That decision, in turn, will frame the strengths they seek in a new head of baseball operations.

Obviously, the team wants someone with a well-rounded skill set, but the question of payroll looms as enormous given how it will shape the roster expectations and requirements of a new head of the department.

■ What kind of decision-making structure does the team want?

To secure Dombrowski’s services in 2015, the team had to entrust the president of baseball operations with immense and unquestioned authority in its baseball decisions. In his introductory news conference, Dombrowski said that incoming team president Sam Kennedy would not have a seat at the table in baseball

discussions about the team. He often presented ownership with binary choices that were to be accepted or rejected.

For instance, he recommended the team make the trade for Chris Sale in 2016. Though principal owner John Henry (owner of the Globe) leaned against the trade, he accepted the recommendation. In at least one instance — a proposed deal to add Carlos Beltran — the owners vetoed the pursuit of a deal. And in yet another instance — the signing of Steve Pearce this offseason — Dombrowski proceeded aggressively with little input before an agreement was reached.

Barring an effort to reel in an established “star” executive such as Epstein, Billy Beane, Jeff Luhnow, or Andrew Friedman, the Red Sox seem likely to seek a more collaborative model between ownership and their next head of baseball operations. The Sox spent the last four years with a strong roster foundation that allowed them to place a heavy emphasis on immediate needs that were pursued by Dombrowski in straightforward (and, for three years, effective) fashion. Their need for more long-range thinking suggests an area where ownership-level input is likely to increase.

■ Have the Red Sox fallen behind in the “MVP Machine” era?

In their book by that title, Ben Lindbergh and Travis Sawchik offer a window into how technology, analytics, and evolving training methods — and their integration into every aspect of a baseball operation, from scouting and player development to roster management — are altering the game from the ground up.

The Dodgers, Astros, Rays, and Yankees have emerged as organizations that consistently have elevated players’ performances beyond their perceived ceilings, allowing them to benefit from star-caliber performances by players acquired for pennies on the dollar while also cultivating incredible depth. The Red Sox now must ask themselves whether they possess the same analytical and technological resources — and are using them as effectively — as their competitors.

There are examples of the Red Sox taking an integrated approach to analytics, scouting, and development that have paid considerable dividends in recent years, including the emergence of Nate Eovaldi (after the Sox landed him from the Rays) as a star last October and Josh Taylor (acquired in a trade for Deven Marrero) as a late-innings contributor. In the draft, the team has found a number of undervalued talents in later-round picks, to the point where it’s become common for the club to land big-league talent (or players with trade currency) on day two of the draft (rounds 3 through 10).

Still, the search for a new leader of baseball operations represents an unusual opportunity for a team to get outside feedback in an insular industry, with a significant decision looming about whether to seek continuity or change in how the Red Sox are run.

Cherington succeeded Epstein without a search. Dombrowski replaced Cherington without a search. Dombrowski, once appointed, left intact the Red Sox baseball operations department, a reflection of the fact that the Red Sox had a more advanced baseball ops department than the Tigers.

The Red Sox continued to modernize their departments under Dombrowski, and they’ve had a significant build-up of their analytics infrastructure in recent seasons under assistant GM Zack Scott. But save for the input of manager Alex Cora, who offered insight at the field level as to where the Sox were in comparison to the Astros, the opportunities for external feedback were rare. Now, however, the team has a chance to take stock of whether it’s up to speed with the rest of the league in how it scouts, analyzes, and develops players.

Several evaluators around the game view the Red Sox as lagging behind the best current industry practices. Some of those evaluators believe that the team needs a new voice from the outside to modernize, perhaps overseeing the transition with one of the team’s current leaders (Scott, assistant GMs Eddie Romero or Brian O’Halloran, or senior VP Raquel Ferreira). Others believe that the Sox have created the framework for a fully loaded baseball operation and merely need a different decision-maker than Dombrowski to bring out its full potential, perhaps even one of the Gang of Four currently in charge of the department.

The Sox face a critical self-examination of where they are as an organization before they can determine who they need to guide their baseball operation.

This season has been a big swing and miss for Andrew Benintendi

Julian McWilliams

Andrew Benintendi never turned the corner this season.

At each step, like his Red Sox club, he was always grinding, trying to figure out a swing that he would feel was right one second then gone the next.

“He’s missing his pitches,” manager Alex Cora said of Benintendi’s recent skid, which has him hitting just .150 in the month of September. “Back to expanding the zone up and down. That’s something we have to work on the rest of the season and obviously the offseason.”

Benintendi holds an 11.6 percent swing-and-miss-rate, the highest of his career. He’s also chased outside the zone 33.5 percent of the time, also a career high. As a result, Benintendi has struck out 131 times this season, again a career high.

“This kid striking out 131 times, that’s not normal,” Cora said. “Outs are outs, but, no, I think that’s one of the things that happened this year. There are too many strikeouts on this team right now.”

The team striking out more than last year might be more anecdotal than factual. The Sox struck out 1,253 times last year. With two weeks to play this season, they have 1,252 strikeouts. The club will eclipse last season’s total, but not by a wide margin.

In the case of Benintendi, though, it’s especially jarring because strikeouts aren’t his game — or, as Cora intimated, he can’t afford strikeouts to become a part of his game.

“Hopefully, that will change,” said Benintendi, who knows he’s chasing pitches that have led to the strikeouts. “I feel like, over the last two and a half or three years, I kind of controlled the strike zone. I’ve kind of lost that this year. I might be overthinking things and panicking a little bit.”

For what it’s worth, Benintendi is still hitting .271 with 39 doubles. But that’s not the player the Red Sox signed to be their everyday left fielder. His homer total is down to 13 this season. The OPS, which was .830, is .792. Not bad, but not what the Sox envisioned.

“The extra-base hits are the extra-base hits,” Cora said. “I do believe he’s a 20-homer guy, 45 doubles. A lot of people love the home runs and all of that, but I love the complete player.”

Benintendi has struggled on defense, too. The Sox outfield was heralded as the best in all of baseball last season, but Benintendi has been the obvious weak link this year. While Jackie Bradley Jr. and Mookie Betts remain elite, Benintendi’s been the outlier. He’s made some bad reads on balls throughout the year and misplayed some when at the wall in left. He went from a 3.8 ultimate zone rating last season to 1.5 this year, according to Fangraphs. Per Baseball Savant, Benintendi ranks in just the sixth percentile on outs above average and the 27th percentile on outfield jumps.

At the plate, though, is where the Red Sox have missed Benintendi the most. He and Cora sat down last weekend and devised a plan for what they feel needs to happen in the offseason. Benintendi told Cora how he’s going to get back on track.

“I’m just trying to keep it simple and find my path, my lower half, and work on my stride,” Benintendi said. “I’m kind of in between right now between striding and having to kind of just step. [It’s a matter of] trying to find an equal balance between those two.”

Cora mentioned that Benintendi was a bit banged up to start the year, which could have thrown off his mechanics.

“It felt like he was off from there,” Cora said. “He wasn’t able to hit the ball in the air as consistent. He wasn’t able to go the other way consistently. He wasn’t able to catch up with fastballs. He can do that. We know that.”

Cora is confident that Benintendi will improve next season. He went 2 for 4 in the team’s series finale against the Philadelphia Phillies, his first multihit game since Sept. 3.

“Maybe seeing a few fall will help get me going these last couple of weeks,” Benintendi said. “I just have to go up there and keep swinging.”

He’s seen them fall in the past, too. Is that something he could perhaps lean on?

“Maybe,” Benintendi said. “But that’s also the past. I’m just trying to break things down and not start over, but start fresh.”

For Yaz, ‘it’s definitely going to be emotional’ seeing his grandson at Fenway

Dan Shaughnessy

In the old days, it would have been Sherm Feller, Fenway’s voice of God, making the majestic announcement from upstairs in the PA booth.

Now batting . . . Number 8, Carl Yastrzemski. Left field. Yastrzemski.

Tuesday night at Fenway Park, Henry Mahegan will do the honors when Giants outfielder Mike Yastrzemski (No. 5 in your program) steps into the same batter’s box where his grandfather, Carl, stood all those years ago.

“It will be the first time since 1983 that the name ‘Yastrzemski’ will be announced,” says Grandpa Yaz, now 80. “It’s definitely going to be emotional. To see him come into Fenway Park where I played for 23 years, to have his name announced, that will be a great thrill for me.”

It might just be the highlight of this sorry Red Sox season.

The Red Sox are all about history. They play in a 107-year-old baseball museum that has essentially become part of the Freedom Trail. The Sox provide daily conversation and connect generations. We may be a Patriots town today, but nobody is ever going to wax poetic about holding their dad’s hand and stepping around pools of vomit the first time they walked up the stands at old Foxboro Stadium. With the old Boston Garden long gone, Fenway stands as our last local sports cathedral.

In a new century in which it is increasingly hard to find fans who saw Ted Williams play baseball, Carl Yastrzemski survives as the signature brand name for Baby Boomer Red Sox fans.

Yaz played his first Red Sox game 58 years ago, stroking a soft single to left in his first at-bat at Fenway Park on April 11, 1961 (attendance: 10,277). His career ended on a nondescript Sunday against the Cleveland Indians in 1983.

In between those moments, Yaz amassed 3,419 hits and 452 homers, played in two World Series, and won the MVP and Triple Crown in the 1967 season that saved baseball in Boston and cemented his Hall of Fame résumé.

He played in 3,308 major league games, second-most of all-time (Pete Rose is first). The Yastrzemski name was the soundtrack of our summer for 23 years and now it will play on the speaker system at Fenway again as the son of Yaz's only son makes his big league debut at Fenway Park Tuesday night.

"I'm sure there's going to be a lot of pressure on him," Grandpa Yaz says. "I just hope he will be able to overcome it and stay relaxed and play. Not try to do too much."

Yaz's son Mike — the dad of the Giants rookie — was a switch-hitting outfielder who played five seasons of minor league ball before a torn Achilles' tendon forced him to retire. He never made it to the big leagues and died following hip replacement surgery when he was only 43.

"I wish he was here to see his son this week," says Grandpa Yaz. "He loved him dearly and he was very proud of him. That will be a little bit of a down moment in all of this."

Mike Jr. played high school baseball at St. John's Prep in Danvers before playing four years for the big-time college program at Vanderbilt. He was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles in 2013 and lingered for six seasons in their farm system before he was traded to the Giants this spring.

Young Yastrzemski, 29, has been something of a rookie sensation, hitting .265 with 19 homers and 51 RBIs in 96 games. He hit three homers in one game against the Diamondbacks in August.

Does Grandpa Yaz (.266 with 11 homers and 80 RBIs as a rookie in 1961) wonder what took so long? Why would the moribund Orioles not give this kid a shot?

"I don't know," says Yaz. "I never talked to anybody about it. The only time that I talked to anybody was at spring training when I talked to the Orioles hitting coach and I said he should be more aggressive, and the next day he hit a home run. And they traded him the following day."

Typical Yaz. Stoic. Understated. Yaz is no helicopter grandparent. He'd never play the Hall of Fame card to make things easier for his progeny. Stoicism is the Yastrzemski Way. Grandpa Yaz got it from his own father, who had virtually no comment after watching rookie Yastrzemski go 1 for 5 against the Athletics in his 1961 debut.

"My dad was there that day," recalls Grandpa Yaz. "He didn't say too much. The only time he would say anything would be if I'd swung at a bad pitch. He started that when I was in high school. I could have four hits and he wouldn't say anything about the four hits. Just that I swung at a couple of bad balls. It was about learning the strike zone. He kept pounding at that."

In similar fashion, the Red Sox' all-time great leaves his grandson alone for the most part.

"We speak maybe once every two weeks," says Yaz. "I don't like to talk to him about hitting or anything else, because you see a game on TV and you can't tell too much. On TV, you don't look for little things, you just want to enjoy the game, but it's hard to enjoy it because you're so keyed up watching him. You want him to do well."

"When you first come up to the big leagues, you always have that question in your mind. Do you belong here? That stayed with me for a few months until I adjusted. It wasn't easy because I was following Ted Williams. I'm sure it isn't easy for Mike, either. But we're all happy he's doing so well."

Grandpa Yaz is uneasy about putting extra pressure on Mike this week.

"I hate talking about him even now," says Yaz. "I debated about whether to call you back. I'm very superstitious. I just don't want to be around and put any extra pressure on him."

“I felt the same way about my son. I can remember going to his minor league games one weekend. They played in Orlando when he was at Triple A. I went. Friday night he went 0 for 4. Saturday he went 0 for 4. I made up an excuse that I had to go home, and Sunday, when I’m not there, he went 4 for 6 with a triple.”

Yaz says, “I’ve been losing a lot of sleep,” watching Mike play West Coast games on TV, but the Hall of Famer has yet to see the kid play in the majors in person.

In this spirit, Grandpa Yaz says he will not be at Fenway for the big moment Tuesday night. He’s planning on doing a television interview with Mike early in the day, then going home to watch on TV. The Yastrzemski clan will take over a luxury box for Wednesday’s game, but on Tuesday, Yaz plans to leave the kid alone.

Seriously.

“I’m just going to do the interview and then I’m going home,” says Yaz. “We’ve got everything planned for Wednesday. We thought about going in on Tuesday, but decided against it. He’s going to have enough people bothering him and it might be a little easier on him if I’m not there watching him.”

This is the stoic Yaz we have come to know and love. He has been rare and reluctant at Fenway since 1983. He has been famous for throwing out an occasional ceremonial World Series first pitch (“I’m undefeated,” he brags. “The Red Sox always win when I do that”), then peeling out of the parking lot before the bottom of the first.

Does Yaz think he might go the full nine when he comes in to see Mike play Wednesday night?

“It all depends on how everything’s going,” says Yaz.

Even from Jersey and Van Ness Streets, outside the ballpark, where Yaz will be parked, you can hear the Sox public address announcer.

“Now batting, number 5, Mike Yastrzemski.”

If you are a Sox fan of a certain age, it’ll make the hair stand up on your forearms.

*** *The Boston Herald***

Mike Yastrzemski to make Fenway Park debut amidst breakout season

Jason Mastrodonato

The Baltimore Orioles are going to regret this one.

Mike Yastrzemski will make his Fenway Park debut Tuesday as a member of the San Francisco Giants, with whom he’s hit .265 with an .833 OPS and 19 home runs in just 96 games since being called up earlier this year.

He had previously played against the Red Sox only in spring training games, when he still was a member of the Orioles, who drafted him in the 14th round out of Vanderbilt in 2013. After he never posted an OPS higher than .832 in any full minor league season, the O’s gave up on the 29-year-old and sent him to the Giants this year for 27-year-old minor league starter Tyler Herb, who has a 5.82 ERA in the minors since the trade.

Ahead of Yastrzemski’s visit to Fenway this week, Red Sox manager Alex Cora said he was shocked by the trade.

“I saw him in spring training and he’s a good player, good swing,” Cora said. “People are excited he’s going to be there. He’s having a good season. ... The narrative with the kid is good. He had a good spring training, too. Took some good swings against us a few times.

“Very surprised with the moves that happened, but it worked out for him and he’s done an outstanding job for the Giants.”

Cora never has had an extended conversation with Yastrzemski’s grandfather, Red Sox legend Carl Yastrzemski, but has talked to him a few times when the Hall of Famer shows up in spring training.

“I know it’s going to be a special three days for their family and hopefully they can enjoy him watching him play defense and he doesn’t do too much offensively against us,” Cora said.

Mike Yastrzemski has been playing mostly corner outfield for the Giants (Carl, a seven-time Gold Glove, played mostly left field at Fenway) but made his first start in center field over the weekend.

Giants manager Bruce Bochy told reporters in San Francisco that he would start the younger Yaz in all three games at Fenway this week.

Mike Yastrzemski told the San Francisco Chronicle he expects his grandfather to be in attendance for at least one of the games, but noted it was his late father, Carl Michael Yastrzemski Jr., who had a bigger impact on Mike’s development as a player, though the father died of a heart attack at 43 when Mike was 14.

“He was a better teacher than my grandfather,” Mike Yastrzemski told the Chronicle. “I actually learned that from my grandfather more than anyone. He would say that to me even when my dad was alive. If I worked with my grandfather, he’d say, ‘Don’t listen to me. Listen to your dad. He knows better than I do,’ which I think speaks volumes as a Hall of Famer saying that about someone.”

Another Red Sox-Giants connection

Yastrzemski isn’t the only tie to the Red Sox from the Giants.

Former Red Sox prospect Mauricio Dubon, who was dealt to the Brewers in the Travis Shaw trade before he was sent to the Giants mid-season this year for Drew Pomeranz, is hitting .302 with an .874 OPS in 16 games with the Giants since his call-up.

Cora also is looking forward to seeing Bochy, a sure-fire Hall of Famer who will be retiring after this season.

“I was thinking about him the other day, all the odd years and even years,” Cora said of the Giants’ World Series titles in 2010, ’12 and ’14. “You win one, you don’t. I’ll take that in my career. He’s been amazing.

“For a guy to be around doing this for so long, that’s impressive. I’m only two years into this and there are certain days where you’re like, ‘Wow, it’s only two years.’ ”

Benintendi in a down year

Andrew Benintendi’s disappointing season has led Cora to believe the fourth-year big leaguer will have a bounce-back season in 2020.

Benintendi is hitting just .272 with a .793 OPS and a whopping 135 strikeouts in 514 at-bats. That number is up from 106 strikeouts in 579 at-bats last year.

“This kid striking out 130 times, that’s not normal,” Cora said Sunday. “Outs are outs but no, that’s one of the things that happened this year, there’s too many strikeouts on this team right now. A man on third, less

than two outs, we swing and miss. Man on second, no outs, we swing and miss. Something we didn't do last year."

The Red Sox struck out just 1,253 times last year but already have struck out 1,252 times this year with two weeks still to play.

Benintendi was hurt earlier in the year after fouling two balls off his foot in Baltimore and that messed up his mechanics, Cora said. He needs to clean up his approach ahead of 2020.

"For him to strikeout 130-something times, he knows it," Cora said. "He has a few ideas about what he's going to work on during the offseason and where we're going to take him. This guy is going to bounce back.

"The extra-base hits are extra-base hits. I do think he's a 20-homer guy, 45 doubles, a complete player. A lot of people love the home runs, I love the complete player. He can be a .400 OBP guy with 20 bags, 20 homers, 45 doubles and play good defense. We'll take that player."

*** *MassLive.com***

Mike Yastrzemski will play all 3 games vs. Boston Red Sox; grandfather Carl Yastrzemski will be in attendance Wednesday

Chris Cotillo

Giants outfielder Mike Yastrzemski will play all three games against the Red Sox at Fenway Park this week, his manager, Bruce Bochy, told reporters (including Ron Kroychick of the San Francisco Chronicle).

Yastrzemski, a rookie, is the grandson of Hall of Famer and Red Sox legend Carl Yastrzemski, who called Fenway Park home from 1961 to 1983. The elder Yastrzemski plans to do a TV interview with his grandson before Tuesday's game, leave before first pitch and then attend Wednesday's game, according to Dan Shaughnessy of the Boston Globe.

"I'm just going to do the interview and then I'm going home," Carl Yastrzemski told Shaughnessy. "We've got everything planned for Wednesday. We thought about going in on Tuesday, but decided against it. He's going to have enough people bothering him and it might be a little easier on him if I'm not there watching him."

Mike Yastrzemski, an Andover native, has hit .265 with 19 homers and 51 RBIs in 96 games for the Giants, who acquired him in a minor trade with the Orioles in March. The Vanderbilt product has played 55 games in left field this year, so it's entirely possible he'll take the same spot on the field his grandfather did for more than two decades.

The Giants and Red Sox will face each other in a rare interleague series from Tuesday to Thursday. First pitch is scheduled for 7:10 p.m. on each of the first two nights before a 1:05 p.m. matinee Thursday.

Boston Red Sox GM search: Ben Cherington not a candidate to return to organization

Chris Cotillo

Former Red Sox general manager Ben Cherington is not expected to be a candidate to replace Dave Dombrowski as the team's front office head, Jason Mastrodonato of the Boston Herald reported over the weekend.

Cherington, who now serves as the Blue Jays' vice president of baseball operations, was Dombrowski's predecessor in Boston, running the team from Oct. 2011 to Aug. 2015, when he was ousted by the

surprising decision of Dombrowski. Cherington's familiarity with the organization and his penchant for building farm systems led to some speculation he could return with Dombrowski having been fired earlier this month.

Mastrodonato's report that he won't be a candidate doesn't come as too much of a surprise, as Cherington's split with the Sox four years ago was not the most amicable. Less than two years after building a World Series champion in 2013, Cherington was replaced by Dombrowski in mid-August, declining an offer to remain with the organization in a less powerful role.

It's unclear if Cherington, 45, has interest in becoming a baseball operations head again or is content to remain in his assistant role under Jays president Mark Shapiro and general manager Ross Atkins. He's the second ex-Sox GM to fall out of contention for the opening in the last few days after Diamondbacks GM Mike Hazen signed a contract extension to remain in Arizona.

Speculative candidates for the Red Sox include Yankees VP Tim Lincecum, Cubs VP of player personnel Jason McLeod, Diamondbacks assistant GMs Amiel Sawdaye and Jared Porter and Red Sox assistant/interim GMs Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott.

Boston Red Sox pitchers who worked construction, 3 jobs a day benefitting from 'life-changing' major league money

Christopher Smith

Red Sox reliever Trevor Kelley proudly has his daughter's 3D ultrasound photo displayed in his locker at Fenway Park. She's due Oct. 14.

The first-time father plans to spend this winter as a stay-at-home dad after he worked multiple jobs each offseason since the Red Sox drafted him in the 36th round (1,071 overall) in 2015 out of UNC.

"My schedule last year, at least four times a week I would wake up at 6 and I'd leave for construction until about 3 o'clock, then go work out," Kelley told MassLive.com. "Then I would (teach) baseball lessons. Then I would ref beach volleyball at night. I'd get home at like 10, 11 o'clock at night, wake up and do the same thing the next day."

Kelley received only a \$1,000 signing bonus out of UNC. Most minor leaguers who receive small bonuses must work offseason jobs because of low minor league salaries.

But Kelley will be able to spend a lot of time with his growing family this offseason after Boston added him to the 40-man roster July 2. He made his major league debut that evening vs. the Blue Jays in Toronto.

The Red Sox optioned him back to Triple-A Pawtucket just two days later (July 4). But as a member of the 40-man roster, Kelley was required to receive at least the minimum minor league salary for 40-man members with at least one day of major league service time. The minimum is \$90,400 or \$594.74 before taxes for each day in the minors.

The major league minimum is \$555,000 before taxes. It calculates to \$2,983.87 each day a player is on the major league roster.

"Making it to the big leagues in July was a dream come true," Kelley said. "Now getting back here in September is life-changing, what it does for me and my wife right now."

Kelley isn't the only Red Sox player who has worked multiple offseason jobs and is seeing his hard work rewarded with major league money.

"Working every day is just part of it," Kelley said. "In the minor leagues, it's part of it."

Minor league salaries often are disturbingly low — and players lost minimum wage protection with the “Save America’s Pastime Act.”

The major league minimum salary of \$2,983.87 per day is more than many minor league players earn in a month. Minor league salaries can be as low as \$1,160 per month (before taxes and clubhouse dues) for Class-A affiliate players and as low as \$2,150 a month before dues and taxes for first-year Triple-A players, ESPN.com’s Jeff Passan reported.

Minor and major league players receive pay checks only during the baseball season; not in the offseason.

“It’s less than minimum wage in most states,” Red Sox rookie reliever Josh Taylor said. “It really is a grind. In the minor leagues if you didn’t sign for (big bonus) money, you’re definitely having to work in the offseason to get by. Just about every minor leaguer works.”

Red Sox righty Josh Smith also described 40-man roster money as “life-changing.”

“Because when you’re in the minor leagues, you’re making \$10,000 a year,” Smith said.

‘Now I’ll be able to work out at a baseball facility’

Taylor emerged as one of Boston’s top relievers in 2019, posting a 2.98 ERA in 45 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings.

The Phillies signed the lefty as an undrafted free agent Aug. 12, 2014, after he spent that summer pitching in the Northwoods League, a collegiate baseball league. He never received a lucrative signing bonus. The Phoenix native worked customer service at the Phoenix Convention Center during offseasons.

“I’d work out on the docks and help with the trucks; like back them in and everything,” Taylor said.

The Red Sox added him to their 40-man roster last November. He made his major league debut May 29. He has spent all but three days on the 25-man roster since then.

“I finally won’t have to work in an offseason, which is nice,” Taylor said. “I can actually afford to work out at a nicer, actual facility this offseason. Usually, I was working every day. So after work, I’d go to LA Fitness and get my workout in. But now I’ll be able to work out at a baseball facility and get everything done there and have more focus on getting ready for spring training.”

Kelley also will train more this offseason.

“I’ve had to grind in the offseason and sacrifice a whole lot of time that could go to baseball,” Kelley said. “When it comes to spring training, that’s when I really lock in and make up ground that I lost in the offseason.”

Taylor said the salary increase “definitely helps you move forward in life.”

“Even just getting put on the (40-man) roster, even if you are in the minor leagues, you’re making at least five times, six times as much as you made in the minor leagues,” Taylor said.

A minor leaguer player on the 40-man roster who is under contract for the first time and has no major league service time receives a minimum salary of \$45,300.

Red Sox 22-year-old pitching prospect Denyi Reyes is an example. The Red Sox added him to the 40-man roster last November to protect him from December’s Rule 5 Draft. He has yet to make his major league debut. He spent the entire 2019 season at Double-A Portland where he earned at least \$45,300.

“Minor leaguers, that’s a long offseason,” Red Sox reliever Heath Hembree said. “You’ve got to cover all of September if you’re not in the big leagues. Spring training, you have to kind of make it through

February. Even big league spring training, you get the big league meal money, which is nice. It's a nice pay raise just being in big league spring training as a minor leaguer.

"It's completely different being on the minor league side," Hembree added.

Hembree who appeared in 256 minor league games, is earning \$1.3125 million in 2019, his first year of salary arbitration.

"On my end now, I've done OK," he said. "Still, during the offseason money is going out and nothing's coming in."

'I made \$10,000 a year playing baseball'

Josh Smith received only a \$1,000 signing bonus like Kelley did.

He signed with the Reds on June 18, 2010, after they drafted him in the 21st round (637th overall) that year. He lacked negotiating power as a fifth-year senior out of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.

"It was take \$1,000 bucks or go to the workforce," Smith said. "I took my \$1,000. After taxes—I still have my stub, actually, hanging up. I have a little fishing room where I tie lines and I have some baseball achievements and stuff like that. I saved my stub; \$653."

His \$1,000 bonus dropped to \$653 after taxes.

Smith made more money during the offseason than during the baseball season until he became a member of a 40-man roster. The Reds selected his contract from Triple A in 2015.

"I would get up 5. I would be at the gym by 5:45," Smith said. "I'd be at work by 8. I'd get off about 5 or 6. It was construction. So it just kind of depended on if the job was a deadline that week or whatever; we'd have to stay late. And then I'd give pitching lessons, usually from 6-10. I'd go home and go to bed. That was my offseason for four months."

Smith, who no longer has to work during the offseason, also pointed out insurance in the majors is much better than in the minors.

He closed on his first house in 2018, approximately seven and a half years after signing his first professional contract.

"I made \$10,000 a year playing baseball," Smith said. "So you can't buy a house. So I never did. I lived with my parents."

He became a minor league free agent after the 2017 season. That delayed the purchase of a home until after he signed with the Mariners in March 2018.

"I was blessed enough to make enough money where we were able to buy a house," Smith said. "It was right around the time we had our son. And my wife, she works full-time. So that obviously helps."

'Just about to everybody that's a lot of money'

Red Sox manager Alex Cora has received some criticism for a 21-man pitching staff this September. Having that many pitchers is just not real baseball, right?

The September active roster will reduce from as many as 40 players to a 28-player maximum in 2020. Good, right?

Not if you're an underpaid minor leaguer hoping for an opportunity to showcase your talent in the majors and earn a month salary that would provide some financial security.

A player earning the major league minimum will receive \$86,532 (before taxes) if he's on an active roster for all 29 days this September.

"Just about to everybody that's a lot of money," Yankees' Mike Tauchman said. "It's a big deal. I think it's a good way to reward somebody financially that's had a really good year in the minor leagues."

Hembree said, "I was a product of the September call-up in 2013 with the Giants. Having those couple of paychecks going into the offseason was nice. I'm not going to lie. The pay obviously is nice. But just kind of had the opportunity to be able to be a part of the big league atmosphere and just get your feet wet, get a little bit more experience."

The Red Sox added lefty Robby Scott to the 40-man roster in September 2016. Boston had purchased his contract from Yuma of the independent North American League in 2011.

He stood out in the minor leagues and received a chance to show what he could do in the majors while also earning some real money that September. Scenarios like this won't happen as often starting in 2020.

Ryan Dull, who pitched for the Yankees this year, made his major league debut for the Athletics as a September call-up in 2015.

"It can be life-changing, especially for a guy who has had to work for everything," Dull said.

"Low-round draft picks, it can change everything," Dull added. "They might not have to work that extra job in the offseason. They save it right, they might be able to afford a down payment in the future. It gives them a little bit more of a sigh of relief, especially guys with families already that have been struggling in the minors."

Dull finished his degree at UNC Asheville after signing.

"So I had a place to stay," Dull said. "But some of the guys I work out with ... would work in the factories and shipping just like moving boxes. They'd work until the wee hours of the morning."

*** *The Lawrence Eagle Tribune***

Mike Yastrzemski headlines 9 things to watch as Giants visit Fenway Park

Chris Mason

Around the Horn is a weekly column from Chris Mason, where the Eagle-Tribune beat writer offers nine thoughts from the Red Sox clubhouse.

Though the Sox and Giants are both going to miss the playoffs, this week's installment focuses on a plethora of storylines that make a seemingly meaningless series in the standings worth watching.

1. Young Yaz

Thirty-six years after a Hall of Fame career came to an end, another Yastrzemski will be patrolling the outfield at Fenway Park.

Carl's grandson Mike, an Andover native, has been the surprise of the season in the National League. Traded from the Orioles after spring training, the young Yastrzemski finally cracked the majors at 28 years old, and has run with the opportunity.

“For a guy, from a baseball family, you see all the stuff, it’s kind of cool,” Alex Cora told reporters in Philadelphia. “It’s another level. I know it’s going to be a special three days for their family and hopefully they can enjoy him watching him play defense and he doesn’t do too much offensively against us.”

The Red Sox wouldn’t be the first team Yastrzemski has punished with the bat, as he’s gone deep 19 times and scored 56 runs in his 96 games.

“The narrative with the kid is good,” Cora said. “He had a good spring training, too. Took some good swings against us a few times. Very surprised with the moves that happened, but it worked out for him and he’s done an outstanding job for the Giants.”

2. Bochy’s swan song

A Hall of Fame managerial career is also winding down, as Bruce Bochy is entering the final weeks of his career.

The three-time World Series champion could notch win No. 2000 against the Red Sox (he’s currently at 1998), and given his own team’s regression this season, Cora has a greater appreciation for Bochy’s every-other-year titles in 2010, 2012, and 2014.

“I was thinking about him the other day, all the odd years and even years,” Cora said. “You win one, you don’t. I’ll take that in my career. He’s been amazing. ... The way he goes about his business is great. In San Diego when I played against him, it seemed like his bullpens were always good. Communication was awesome. For a guy to be around doing this for so long, that’s impressive. I’m only two years into this and there are certain days where you’re like, wow, it’s only two years.”

3. BC’s Shaw has arrived

Another local standout, Boston College’s Chris Shaw, is on the Giants roster as a September call-up.

The first baseman was a first-round pick in 2015, and terrorized Triple A pitchers this season, taking them deep 21 times and driving 70 runners home in just 75 games with the Sacramento River Cats.

4. An old prospect returns

Remember that Travis Shaw for Tyler Thornburg trade?

It’s OK if you’ve repressed the memory, but Shaw wasn’t the only player the Red Sox sent to Milwaukee for the injured reliever. They also included shortstop Maurico Dubon, who was flipped again to San Francisco at the deadline for none other than Drew Pomeranz.

Baseball can be weird, but Dubon has a bright future worth watching.

5. MadBum sighting

Giants ace Madison Bumgarner will make his first career start at Fenway Park on Thursday afternoon as an era comes to its final days.

In their recent run, no two Giants were more iconic than Bumgarner and Bochy — the lefty allowed one run in 36 World Series innings en route to three rings — but is set to hit free agency at the season’s end. He may be leaving San Francisco alongside his manager.

6. E-Rod’s real goal

The best pitcher on Boston's staff this season, Eduardo Rodriguez's record sits at 17-6. He still has a shot at a 20-win season, but is more interested in chasing down another benchmark.

"I still have three more starts," Rodriguez said after another gem in Philly. "There's a chance out there. My real goal is 200 innings. That's my real goal. Wins and losses, you see the game, 1-0 game and I give up a run. Wins depends on how the games go. I'm thinking about 200 innings and if 20 happens, it happens."

Rodriguez has currently tossed 185 1/3, so there's a real chance he hits it.

7. Other Sox milestones

If you're into round numbers, Rafael Devers has 29 home runs, J.D. Martinez is at 97 RBIs, and Mookie Betts has raised his batting average to .293. All three sluggers could hit benchmarks against the Giants.

8. No Panda

If Red Sox fans were hoping to boo Pablo Sandoval this week, they're out of luck. The third baseman underwent Tommy John surgery earlier this month and won't be joining the team in Boston.

"I think that's why he had the surgery," Bochy cracked.

Though the Sox are still paying the trainwreck of a signing \$19 million this year, Sandoval was an oddly productive player for the Giants before his season came to an end.

9. Can Xander catch Trout?

Probably not, but AL MVP frontrunner Mike Trout's season is officially over due to a foot injury.

He'll finish with 45 homers, 104 RBIs, and a .291/.438/.645 slash line in 134 games played. Xander Bogaerts would need a white-hot finish to seriously enter the conversation, and he'd probably have to pass Houston's Alex Bregman, too.

*** *RedSox.com***

Papi: 'At some point, I started losing hope'

Ian Browne

As David Ortiz held court Monday afternoon with two reporters who covered his entire playing career with the Red Sox, he looked like the Big Papi of old. He moved without pain. He laughed easily. He communicated freely even after discussing his harrowing experience over the past three months.

This was noteworthy because it in no way described how Ortiz looked or felt just a few short weeks ago.

Ortiz feared first for his life, and then for his quality of life, when doctors at Massachusetts General Hospital performed a third surgery on him in early July as a result of complications that stemmed from the gunshot wound he suffered in the Dominican Republic on June 9.

"I thought I wasn't going to be able to be who I am right now and go back to normal, you know? At some point, I started losing hope," said Ortiz, in what is a startling admission from someone who has always carried himself without fear, be it on the baseball field, in public or with his family.

The first surgery was performed in the Dominican in the hours after the shooting -- for which Ortiz still has no explanation. Doctors operated on his damaged intestines and liver, and they had to remove his gallbladder.

The second happened just after he was transported via a medivac from the Dominican to Boston in order to make sure the first surgery was done correctly, which it was.

But as the weeks went by, Ortiz wasn't turning a corner. He wasn't able to eat or drink without a feeding tube. Doctors then figured out why he wasn't recovering.

"They discovered that this bullet gave me a bacteria that they had never seen before," said Ortiz. "They had this team, antibacteria team. They were really on me, hard, because they want to get this out of my body. The reality is that they did, but they fought with it. The reason why they went in the third time is because the bacteria had my intestine all kinked. It wasn't able to function."

In the hours after the first surgery, things were moving so fast and Ortiz was out of it enough that at least he couldn't fully comprehend what was happening to him. But the entire process around the third surgery was jarring to him.

"Now I know what I'm dealing with," Ortiz said. "Now I know where I got damaged and I know that those parts weren't working the way the doctor expects. They started talking about a third surgery. Then, when I was hearing all that, you get scared because you don't know if you're going to be able to survive. But then I survived, and my next thing to worry about was, 'What am I going to be like after everything?' That's when you really start worrying about things."

Food for thought

Once it became clear to Ortiz that he would survive, he became worried about one of the most simple joys in life -- being able to consume and appreciate food again.

"I spent six weeks without eating or drinking. I had this tube going from my nose to my stomach that was the one that was going to dictate ... whatever I got in my stomach, that tube would get it back out," said Ortiz. "I used to move it sometimes trying to drink water, because I would get so thirsty."

What does Ortiz remember as the lowest point?

"I guess when you start losing hope," said Ortiz. "Before and after I got my third surgery, I was losing weight and I wasn't looking right."

But then Ortiz turned a corner that he is still basking in each day.

"Right after I got my third surgery, a week after, I still wasn't able to swallow or drink anything. Think about that. It was bad," said Ortiz. "But on the other hand, Dr. [David] King and everybody there was very confident. They motivate you. Dr. King, every time he kept on telling me not to worry and that I was going to be fine. He never gave me any doubt. Even when he told me he was going to have to go in again because of the bacteria, he was not worried about anything."

In the ensuing weeks, Ortiz had to train his body to eat again.

"So one week went by after I got my last surgery, and then food start making sense to me," said Ortiz. "The smell started coming to my attention, so I told my sister to make me this soup which she makes, which is delicious. I basically started fighting with myself, training my stomach. When you spend that much time without eating ... your stomach is a muscle, which is trained. I start having soup and I would get full right away."

"My appetite started coming back, but I wasn't able to eat anything solid yet until I got to my house [in late July]. So once I got to my house, Dr. King would tell me, 'Look, you're going to have a small portion today, and if it feels good, you get bigger portions and you start increasing it like that. And let me know if you start feeling sick or something.' But I never did. I was good."

That scary night

The striking thing to Ortiz about the night he was shot is that the day couldn't have started any more innocently.

"All I can remember is that I had a wonderful day that day with my kids," said Ortiz. "I went to a facility where they were driving cars and playing around and all of a sudden I decided to go with a friend of mine. This one place -- it's a very nice place, a lot of big-time people go -- I sit down and have a drink, and all of a sudden, I got shot. It's something that I will not forget about."

Ortiz wanted to emphasize how safe an environment he felt he was in.

"I was there for an hour and a half, two hours. Hanging out, having conversation with people. This place wasn't a club," said Ortiz. "This place was like, on a patio, that kind of type of place where you go have lunch, have a drink, go have conversation. That was a little confusing for people here when they first started talking about [the shooting], thinking that it was a club. It wasn't a club. It was an outdoor patio, basically, where you just sit down and they serve you."

"I go there like, pretty much, once in a while when I'm back home, only on Sunday, and never heard of a problem. Man, I've never heard of anything bad happening there before. I think my experience was the first one ever happening there."

At first, Ortiz was almost numb to the pain. And then it started to seep in.

"Yeah, I mean, I got shot, and to be honest, I wasn't hurting [at first]," said Ortiz. "I felt like a little burn, but I don't even look at that. I know that I was hurting because of the impact and the sound. I started hurting later, probably when I was about to walk into the surgery."

"You know how your body needs to have a certain point so you stabilize and you know what you're doing? I felt like that was walking away from me, at some point. Not right away, but at some point, I wasn't feeling as strong as I feel [normally], and I guess it was because I was bleeding, and that's what happens when you get shot, I guess."

The first fortunate thing that happened for Ortiz is the flawless way doctors in the Dominican handled his first surgery. The second was when the Red Sox -- in conjunction with Ortiz's wife, Tiffany -- made the joint decision to get him on a medivac to Mass General.

Ortiz barely remembers the transport.

"I didn't feel any of that," Ortiz said. "I was still doped up from the medication. I remember one thing. I remember telling my Dad, 'Dad, cover my feet. I'm feeling a little cold.' And then I passed out. The next time I woke up was when I got to Mass General. I don't even know when they took me out of the airplane once I got here. All I know is I opened my eyes once I got out of the ambulance going into Mass General and then, boom, pass out again. They took me to the [operating] room again."

Getting to the bottom of it

If there's one thing troubling Ortiz, it's that he still has no idea why someone shot him. There has certainly been tabloid gossip, all of which Ortiz says is patently false.

"There were so many rumors out there. But like I told them, the Dominican is a country that social media informs you somehow, some way, because there is no consequence," said Ortiz. "There are people that ... come out there with some things that aren't true, just because they want to get followed or get some likes. There are a lot of rumors, a lot of bad things came out, but none of them were related to what really happened to me."

Ortiz recently hired former Boston Police Department commissioner Ed Davis to work in conjunction with Dominican authorities in an effort to find out why he was targeted.

At this point, Ortiz doesn't have much to go by.

"I have no clue," Ortiz said. "It's more based on being in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Papi can go home again

Regardless of what the independent investigation uncovers, Ortiz said that he will go back to the Dominican Republic in the next couple of months, maybe by late November or December.

And contrary to what you might think, Ortiz said it will be a joyful moment when he returns to his homeland.

"I have my family and my friends over there," Ortiz said. "It's going to be really good to go back home and be able to spend time with my family and stuff. I can't wait."

How can Ortiz go back so easily after what occurred?

"I'm a strong person, mentally. I have seen things worse happening to people, and people get through it. So I guess that's going to my case," Ortiz said. "I feel safe. I feel fine. I'm just not going to be walking around back home like I used to. I don't have no problem with nobody, so I don't feel like I have to be all full of fear and stuff like that. In my case, I never thought something like that would happen to me, especially back home. But once it happens, you have to be more careful."

In the coming weeks, Ortiz will go back to work for FOX in October as a studio analyst during the MLB postseason. And the weekend before Thanksgiving, he will host his annual golf tournament, which has been relocated from the Dominican to Miami this year.

At some point, Ortiz will be able to fully decompress and take complete stock of all he's gone through.

"Man, I'm telling you, I've been living an experience the past three months," said Ortiz. "It's a life experience, man, and just thanks to God, I'm happy to be here. Happy for the opportunity to be here. Thanks to God every day, I'm so thankful and grateful."

*** *WEEI.com***

David Ortiz opens up on shooting, darkest days, investigation

Rob Bradford

David Ortiz looks the same. He sounds the same. But things can never be totally the same.

For that, the former Red Sox slugger can thank that night on June 9. That is when Ortiz was shot and ultimately came very close to losing his life.

"The only thing that made me mad was when you look at the scar that you have and the way things happen to you for no reason, that makes you angry," he said in a wide-ranging interview on the Bradfo Sho podcast, with MLB.com's Ian Browne also participating. "But at the same time what made me peaceful was being able to thank God for me continuing to be alive, being here. It's a balance you need to create mentally so you don't crazy about it. I have seen people before where worse situations happen where they either can't survive or the rest of their life is a struggle. Thank God that's not my case. I went through a tough situation but I'm on my way back to being normal. So I'm grateful."

Ortiz has been slowly re-emerging into the public eye, initially throwing out the first pitch at Fenway Park exactly three months after his incident in the Dominican Republic and then offering details of his existence in the park's interview room Monday afternoon. He continues to rediscover the ability to function in a normal capacity while getting ready to assume his usual postgame television duties for Major League Baseball's postseason.

There is a lot of catching up to do.

There is the story of the night Ortiz was shot in the back, the moments after when a good samaritan got him to the hospital in seven minutes (half the time the trip would normally take), the battle he faced in the weeks following the incident and the mystery that still surrounds the case.

"I have no clue. I have no clue," Ortiz said when asked if he had any idea why he was shot. "It's more based on being in the wrong place at the wrong time."

While a description of the incident itself is eye-opening, the revelation of Ortiz's low point is perhaps the most surprising. As he explained, it wasn't until the days after he was transported to Boston and Massachusetts General Hospital where the real challenge began.

That was when the doctors at Mass General discovered a bacterial infection they told Ortiz the medical staff had never previously encountered.

"I started getting scared about this once I was going through the process," he said. "That I had to get a third surgery. After I'm here, yeah, because now I know what I'm dealing with. Now I know where I got damaged and I know that those parts weren't working the way the doctor expects. They started talking about a third surgery. Then, when I was hearing all that because you get scared, when that happens, you get scared because you don't know if you're going to be able to survive. But then I survived and my next thing to worry about was, what am I going to be like after everything? That's when you really start worrying about things."

"I thought I wasn't going to be able to be who I am right now and go back to normal, you know? At some point, I started losing hope because I have a second surgery that basically was going to be ... it was basically they went into to make sure everything that they did back home was the right thing to do. And I don't know if that counts as a surgery or not, but they went in. You expect things to start going back to normal at some point because they figured everything was fine but then all of a sudden, I got this bacteria that they had never seen before."

Just as Ortiz felt he was in the wrong place at the wrong time during the night in the Dominican Republic, his presence in Boston -- where he had been transported to via a specially equipped plane ("To be honest with you I didn't feel any of that (expletive). I was still doped up from the medication. I remember one thing. I remember telling my Dad, 'Dad, cover my feet. I'm feeling a little cold.' And then I passed out. The next time I woke up was when I got to Mass. General. I don't even know when they took me out of the airplane once I got here. All I know is I opened my eyes once I got out of the ambulance going into Mass. General and then, boom, pass out again.") -- was the right place at the right time.

"It is the best thing that can ever happen to a guy ... that was the best thing that happened to me, to be honest with you," Ortiz said. "At Mass. General, they discovered that this bullet gave me a bacteria that they had never seen before. And you know if they had never seen it before, we're going to put some things together. They had this team, anti-bacteria team who, man, these people, they were on me like nothing before. They were really on me, hard, because they want to get this out of my body. The reality is they did, man, but they fought with it."

The story of the days during Ortiz's recovery included the physical and the mental. And part of the latter was coming to grips why this whole thing happened.

Almost immediately following the shooting theories were surfaced regarding the motivation behind the attack. Ultimately, the officials in the Dominican Republic determined that this was a case of mistaken identity.

"There were so many rumors out there," he said. "But like I told them the Dominican is a country that social media informs you somehow ... because there is no consequence. There are people that they come out there with some things that aren't true just because they want to get followed or get some likes. There are a lot of rumors, a lot of bad things came out but none of them were related to what really happened to me. That's why I hired an investigator (former Boston police chief Ed Davis) to make sure what I was told by the Dominican authorities was it. That's how it has been. I can complain about that, but ... That's why I feel like I want to have this type of conversation with you all so you all get to know what really happened. I don't really know what end up happening, what was the reason. But I have no choice to guide myself based on what the Dominican authorities told me."

The next step to the recovery process? Ultimately returning home to the Dominican Republic.

"I feel safe. I feel fine," Ortiz said. "I'm just not going to be walking around back home like I used to. It's not like I feel safe, safe, safe because people get shot in this country also. But I don't have no problem with nobody so I don't feel like I have to be all full of fear and stuff like that. Sometimes situations happen to you because you either case less ... In my case I never thought something like that would happen to me, especially back home. But once it happens you have to be more careful."

"I'm a strong person mentally. I have seen things worse happening to people and people get through it. So I guess that's going to my case."

MORE FROM ORTIZ

On the night of the incident: "All can remember is that I had a wonderful day that day with my kids. I went to a facility where they were driving cars and playing around and all of a sudden I decided to go with a friend of mine. This one place, it's a very nice place, a lot of big-time people go and I sit down and have a drink, and all of a sudden, I got shot. It's something that I will not forget about."

"I was there for an hour and a half, two hours. Hanging out, having conversations with people. This place wasn't a club. This place was like, on a patio, kind of type of place where you go have lunch, have a drink, go have conversation. That was a little confusing for people here when they first started talking about it, that it was a club. It wasn't a club. It was an outdoor patio basically where you just sit down and they serve you."

What it was like to get shot: "I mean, I got shot and to be honest, I wasn't hurting. I don't know if No, I didn't feel it. I felt like a little burn but I don't even look at that. I know that I was hurting because of the impact and the sound. I started hurting later, probably when I was about to walk into the surgery."

"You don't want to know! I guess everybody is different so it all depends. In my case, the only explanation I can give you is that I feel like something was burning and I was basically losing ... you know how your body needs to have a certain point so you stabilize and you know what you're doing? I felt like that was walking away from me, at some point. Not right away, but at some point, I wasn't feeling as strong as I feel and I guess it was because I was bleeding and that's what happens when you get shot, I guess."

On it was like at the hospital: "To be honest with you, right before the doctors got me into the room, I started feeling this weird pain and then I started getting worried right there. But I was already all taken care of, basically, the doctor told me, don't worry, we got you, we're going to take care of you. Then I passed out. They put me on [anesthesia], so I didn't get to know any more about me until the next day."

"The hospital got loaded, an hour after, I guess, but the doctors and everybody couldn't believe it was me that was on that bed, you know what I'm saying? The news had gone across the country right away in less than an hour. I know there's a lot of people, they were like, man, they say that you got shot and the news

was spreading out, I thought it was somebody [kidding> me or something like that. A lot of people thought it wasn't true, that I got shot, sitting in a bar and stuff like that. You don't see that every day."

*** NBC Sports Boston**

Mookie Betts and the \$35 million question -- is anyone worth that much?

John Tomase

The question shouldn't be if Mookie Betts is worth \$30 million a year, but this:

Is anyone?

Sox set team record for HRs allowed in a season

Look across baseball, and the game's longest, largest contracts consistently crap out. Presumed AL MVP Mike Trout, who signed a historic 12-year, \$430 million deal, is an exception, because of course he is. Until a foot injury ended his season, he was rampaging towards his first 50-homer campaign, though a lot of good it did the Angels, who are already guaranteed their fourth straight losing season.

And that's part of the problem. In a sport where few teams have the resources or will to spend beyond \$200 million, a \$30 million contract can tie up 15 percent of the payroll.

In the same winter that Trout signed the biggest contract in sports history, two other young stars in their primes also cashed in, and it's hard to argue either team got its money's worth in Year 1. They should be viewed as cautionary tales before the Red Sox make a similarly monster expenditure on Betts.

Former NL MVP Bryce Harper, 26, received \$330 million from the Phillies over 13 years, while Manny Machado, 27, scored a 10-year, \$300 million contract from the Padres.

The returns thus far are decidedly meh. Harper is hitting .253 with 31 home runs, 102 RBIs, and an .864 OPS. Machado's at .256-30-82-.797 and leads the NL in double plays with 24.

In a season with more homers than ever, 30 ain't what it used to be. Daniel Vogelbach, Mitch Garver, and Kole Calhoun are just three of the game's 48 sluggers with at least 30 bombs. Among position players, Harper (3.4) and Machado (3.0) rank 62nd and 70th, respectively in WAR, right behind Angels utilityman David Fletcher (?!?) and Yankees fire hydrant Mike Tauchman.

This shouldn't come as a surprise. The players who swim in the deepest end of the salary pool almost always end up needing a life preserver, and sooner than you'd think.

Consider the rest of baseball's 10 richest contracts. Giancarlo Stanton (\$325 million) has been limited to nine games by injuries and like Harper has basically delivered one outlier MVP season amidst a sea of pretty good. He signed his 13-year deal with the Marlins at age 25.

Alex Rodriguez makes the list twice, first for his landmark \$252 million contract with the Rangers in 2001, and then for the \$275 million deal he renegotiated with the Yankees in 2008. You'll get no argument with contract No. 1, which included three MVP awards and more than 350 homers. Contract No. 2 is one of the worst in sports history, highlighted by scandal and injury and eventually ending with the Yankees paying A-Rod not to play at all in 2017.

More encouraging is what the Rockies have received from third baseman Nolan Arenado, who is completing a fifth straight All-Star season in the first year of his eight-year, \$260 million extension. So far, so good.

The same cannot be said of former Triple Crown winner Miguel Cabrera, whose eight-year, \$240 million extension runs through 2023. He has 10 home runs after hitting three last year, and eventually he may receive the A-Rod treatment from Detroit, which owes him a staggering \$124 million over the next four years.

Cabrera's might not even be the worst deal running through 2023. Remember Robinson Cano? The Mariners signed him for 10 years and \$228 million at age 31 in 2014. He delivered three All-Star appearances in his first four seasons before falling off the face of the earth. The Mets subsequently chose to eat his salary to acquire All-Star closer Edwin Diaz, and he has delivered 13 homers and 37 RBIs this year.

Then there's Albert Pujols, whom the Angels swiped from the Cardinals at age 32 in 2012 with a 10-year, \$240 million deal. He has made one All-Star team since.

Cabrera, Cano, Pujols, and A-Rod (the 2nd time) were all players on the wrong side of 30 signed in a different era, one could reasonably counter. Today's owners recognize that the biggest contracts should be reserved for stars like Betts in their 20s, who are more likely to deliver, especially in the first half of their deals.

Ask the Twins how that worked out when they signed 27-year-old MVP Joe Mauer to an eight-year, \$184 million contract in 2011. He limped to the finish line as a broken-down first baseman/DH.

Or the Cubs, who jumped on Gold Glove outfielder at Jason Heyward when he was 26, figuring they'd lock in his prime for eight years and \$184 million in 2016. He has instead delivered below-average production for four straight seasons.

Or the Rockies, who watched All-Star shortstop Troy Tulowitzki break down shortly after signing a 10-year contract in 2011 at age 26. Or the Tigers, who gave Prince Fielder \$214 million at age 28. Or the Yankees, who must be wondering what kind of player Stanton will be moving forward.

A case can be made that Betts is a better all-around player than all of them, with a diverse enough skillset to maintain value even if one or two of the component parts regress. But the Red Sox already know what it's like to pay someone \$30 million and wonder if it was wise. Left-handers David Price and Chris Sale represent worse long-term investments than Betts, and both are already breaking down. Their bad money may render any discussion of extending Betts pointless, with owner John Henry deciding that he will not, in fact, tie up nearly half of his payroll in three players.

If that's the case, and the Red Sox trade Betts this winter, they will lose a tremendous talent. They may also be doing right by the long-term interests of the franchise, because the lengthier and richer the deal, the more likely history suggests it will be to miss.

*** *The Athletic***

'He was making mistake after mistake': But now Colten Brewer is a full-fledged major leaguer

Chad Jennings

After more than five years of pro ball, Colten Brewer was about to be released. He just knew it. He was 24, never pitched above Class-A, and even though he'd barely risen in the Pirates minor league system, his path was littered with burned bridges. Some of them were his fault, some of them weren't, but his career – if you could call it that – was hanging by a thread. He'd been stress eating for weeks and put too much weight. He'd already reached out to an independent league coach about job opportunities.

But in that winter of 2016, Brewer clung to one glimmer of hope: the minor league phase of the Rule 5 draft. He knew no one would take him in the first part of the Rule 5, the part that gives overshadowed prospects a shot at the big leagues. Brewer was focused on the later rounds when teams basically exchange

minor league filler to plug holes and give lost prospects a fresh look. It almost never works, but Brewer needed that fresh look in the worst way.

When the Yankees called his name with the 29th pick, Brewer said he literally doubled over at his home in Texas.

“Like, right when it happened, I just went, ‘Whew,’ like I just finished a marathon,” he said. “I was like, these people don’t know who the hell I am. They just know I can throw hard, that’s it. And that’s what I showed up doing.”

Less than three years later, Brewer is in the Red Sox bullpen, and he’s been there most of the season. His 4.50 ERA and 1.78 WHIP show he’s a long way from figuring out big league hitters, but the Red Sox keep using him because they like his two offspeed pitches, his cut-fastball sits in the mid-90s, and there have been stretches – like the month of June, when he allowed one earned run in 12 1/3 innings – when he’s shown real promise and ability. Brewer is quiet, mild-mannered and polite in the clubhouse, committed to making the most of second, third and fourth chances, and rewarding the faith of those who never gave up on him.

“This is one you pull for just a little bit more,” said Mike Leuzinger, the scout who signed him. “I can’t imagine anyone thought three years ago that this guy would be pitching for the defending World Series champion. He had a better chance of pitching for the Grand Prairie AirHogs.”

And for a while there, a last-gasp independent league is exactly where Brewer thought his career was heading.

Canton, Texas, sits just east of Dallas, an hour’s drive along Interstate 20, and if it’s known at all, it’s for a massive monthly flea market called First Monday Trade Days. World’s largest, it claims. The latest census put Canton’s population at 3,581 people.

Among them were the Brewers and the Leuzingers.

Back in 2011, Brewer was a senior at Canton High School while Leuzinger was an area scout for the Pirates. When Leuzinger heard about a local kid with real potential, he was less than optimistic. He’d heard that sort of thing before, and what were the chances his local high school was actually developing its first-ever major league player?

When he got a look at Brewer, though, Leuzinger saw a big kid with a good delivery. Brewer’s velocity could touch the mid-90s, and he could really spin a curveball. Great parents. Strong makeup. Leuzinger’s reports were so glowing that the Pirates took Brewer with the first pick of the fourth round. Brewer was so naïve, he thought all drafted kids got a million dollars. They don’t, and he didn’t, but he signed anyway.

And then he disappeared.

Three and a half years later, Brewer had only 11 official games on his professional resume. He’d languished in extended spring training, and he’d suffered a few injuries here and there, but mostly he’d screwed up. He’d blown curfew and shown up late for workouts. Enjoyed too many beers and had too little sleep. When Leuzinger would stop by the Pirates minor league complex in Florida, he’d inevitably be pulled aside to talk about Brewer. Mostly “ticky-tacky” stuff, Leuzinger said, but always something.

“And I’d be like, ‘Again?’” Leuzinger said. “It just floored me that he was making mistake after mistake. He has no one to blame but himself for those mistakes. It wasn’t Pittsburgh’s fault at all.”

Brewer’s agent acknowledges his client could have been more professional, but he still can’t believe how harshly the Pirates punished him for infractions not uncommon to a kid drafted out of a small-town high school. The Pirates did not respond to multiple requests for their take on Brewer’s tenure, but Brewer

concedes Pittsburgh gave him chances. Teams don't give up on fourth-rounders easily. Brewer just couldn't get out of his own way, and then he couldn't see a way out.

He now recognizes it as immaturity. He took too much for granted. Ignored the value of routine. Brewer's not wired to pitch with a chip on his shoulder, so when his career began to slip away, his confidence went with it. He felt buried, then felt pressure to be perfect, then he grew frustrated. Eventually, there was an incident with a Pirates strength coach that, Brewer admits, "just crossed a line," and he was suspended.

"Just slow the development down is what I did, basically," Brewer said.

To see and hear Brewer today is to see the everything Leuzinger saw in him as a teenager. Still big, still throwing hard. He's 26 with a soft Texas drawl and no hint of a reckless streak, unless you count the color-splashed tattoo on his forearm. Red Sox pitching coach Dana LeVangie said he's found Brewer agreeable, easy to work with, and open to criticism. If anything, he's understated. He's certainly not insubordinate.

"I don't think he ever tries to burn bridges with purpose," LeVangie said. "At times we've had to have conversations about certain things and how he goes about it, but he's never pushed back."

Perhaps it would have been kinder for the Pirates to simply release him — "He was so far in debt over there with his poor decisions that he was never going to get out of it," Leuzinger said — but then there would have been no Rule 5 draft, no final vote of confidence, and no sudden revelation about a fastball that was better than he realized.

Kids do dumb things when they don't know what they're doing, and Brewer clearly has both regrets and frustrations about his time with Pittsburgh. It also feels like a lost chapter from someone else's book.

"It feels like 10 years ago," he said. "It feels like a childhood memory, just to see the life-change 360 that I've made for my career."

By the time Brewer found himself at rock bottom with Pittsburgh, Leuzinger had already moved on. He'd joined the Yankees scouting department in 2013 and was only a few years into the job when the Pirates left Brewer exposed to the minor league Rule 5 draft in 2016. Leuzinger wrote a lengthy email to his boss, Damon Oppenheimer, suggesting the Yankees take Brewer, but Leuzinger said he paused before hitting send. He knew his own reputation was on the line.

All those years ago, Brewer actually expected the Yankees to draft him out of high school. He'd talked to them more than any other organization. His advisor and soon-to-be-agent was Billy Martin Jr., the son of the former Yankees manager. Brewer still believes the Yankees would have taken him if he'd been available 27 picks later, but what Brewer didn't realize was how often Leuzinger had popped into the stands to watch him pitch, and what he couldn't fully appreciate was how highly Leuzinger thought of him and his family. And through all those transgressions, Leuzinger's opinion never changed.

There's not enough upside in the minor league Rule 5 to take a guy who might cause trouble, so when Leuzinger wrote his email, he told the Yankees everything he knew about Brewer. Everything. He wrote about all the incidents with the Pirates, all of the "debt" that Brewer had accumulated over the years, all of the mistakes along the way.

"My last paragraph was, 'Now for the good news,'" Leuzinger said. "I really, truly believe this guy is a big leaguer."

Leuzinger believed in the man behind the mistakes. Leuzinger's own children had gone swimming in the Brewers' family pool. The scout understood the values Brewer's parents had instilled in their boy. He could not excuse, nor believe, the mistakes Brewer had made, but he also could not accept those mistakes would be the defining moments of Brewer's career.

He hit send.

“All but begged for him,” Leuzinger said. “I was right on this kid’s makeup from the get-go, and that’s what I was talking to Damon about in my email. I was like, I know I got this one right.”

Martin was telling the Yankees the same thing. Plenty of his clients had begged for a change of scenery only to be disappointed when the grass was no greener on the other side, but Brewer was the rare player who really did need fresh, open pasture. Martin had literally grown up in the Yankees manager’s office, and he called nearly everyone he knew in the organization to tell them about the big kid from Canton.

“I’m sure I wore them out during that time period,” Martin said.

The moment Brewer was taken in the Rule 5 draft, he began losing some of the weight he’d stress-eaten onto his 6-foot-4 frame that the winter. The weight off his shoulders was more significant. Brewer set his mind to starting over, and he showed up in Yankees spring training hell-bent on staying in line and throwing as hard as he could.

As Brewer remembers it, it was during his second Yankees workout that minor league pitching coordinator Danny Borrell introduced himself and explained that the Yankees had been intrigued by the cut on Brewer’s fastball. To that point, Brewer believed his fastball had arm-side run. Any glove-side cut was a mistake, not a weapon.

“I started thinking to myself, wait, do I have a cutter?” he said.

That was the very first revelation of his brand new career. During his four-plus seasons with the Pirates, Brewer never pitched above High-A, never struck out a batter per inning, and when he got to full-season ball, he never had an ERA below 4.00. In his only season with the Yankees, he never allowed a run in A-ball, had a 2.18 ERA in Double-A and finished with 10.2 strikeouts per nine innings. He flew through the Yankees system in a single year, including a brief but unsuccessful stop in Triple-A. Believing he needed to keep his name on the radar, Brewer made plans to pitch in the Dominican Winter League, but offers came pouring in from 15 different teams, two of which eventually offered big league deals. He skipped winter ball and signed with the Padres. Instead of an independent league roster, his name was on San Diego’s 40-man. His confidence soared.

Borrell and fellow Yankees pitching coordinator Scott Aldred had helped Brewer harness and utilize his fastball’s natural cut. Brewer now believes the Pirates’ emphasis on a “tall and fall” delivery – staying on top of the ball, getting a good downward plane – had surely worked for a lot of pitchers but had caused his fastball to lose its natural arm-side run. Brewer thought it was a problem. The Yankees embraced it as a gift.

The Yankees also trusted him. They let him pitch in a big-league spring training game, then made him a Double-A closer during the regular season. Brewer developed a daily routine. Little things like putting on his left shoe before the right became second nature. He never thought he’d do things like that, but he’d become focused on the game again, taken responsibility for his career, and rediscovered the joy of coming to the ballpark.

By the time Brewer signed with the Padres, the overhaul was complete, and he could lock in on the nuts and bolts of pitching. He learned to hit different spots, letting his fastball’s movement do the work for him in missing bats. He kept the same curveball he’d been using since high school, even carried it into 11 big league games with San Diego before the Red Sox traded for him this winter. He spent the month of August in Triple-A but has otherwise been in the majors. Through 62 big league games this season, he has one of the lowest hard-hit rates in the majors, but also one of the highest WHIPs.

“Learning to pitch in the big leagues is really fucking hard,” Brewer said.

Sometimes, the same could be said for growing up.

“Kids are going to do dumb things,” Martin said. “At the end of the day, you’ve got to try to judge a kid by what’s in his heart.”

One more thing about that winter of 2016. That was the year Paw Paw died. Brewer’s paternal grandfather, Glenn Brewer, had an aggressive form of leukemia and passed away on Oct. 25, 2016. He had moved years earlier to Canton, Texas, to raise his family. He was the reason the Brewers settled into that town in the first place. Paw Paw was good with his hands, the kind of guy who could fix anything. An online obituary showed him grinning beneath a cowboy hat.

“Glenn loved fishing and watching his grandchildren play ball,” the obituary said.

To this day, Brewer remembers Paw Paw saying he looked forward to watching young Colten play ball someplace that sold beer at the concession stand. He was talking about pro ball. He was talking about the big leagues.

“I remember sitting there, with him lying on his death bed,” Brewer said. “And I was like, ‘I’m making it. I’m making it for you.’”

The Rule 5 draft came six weeks later. Sixteen months after that, Brewer stepped onto the mound at Petco Park for his big league debut. He was 1,400 miles away from Canton, even farther from the Pirates minor league complex, and there was Budweiser for sale in the stands.

Catching up on where the Red Sox GM search stands

Jen McCaffrey

It’s been just over a week since the Red Sox fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski and began a search for his replacement.

After the team’s odd decision not to hold a press conference addressing his dismissal or the haphazard timing of it all, we’re left only with assumptions. Several names have been tossed around as possibilities to take the top job in Boston. Here are a few thoughts on the search:

- One name that seemed like a natural fit to take over in Boston was Mike Hazen, the Arizona Diamondbacks executive vice president and general manager. Hazen, who’d previously spent 10 years in Boston including one as general manager under Dombrowski in 2016, took the job in Arizona following the 2016 season. Hazen has helped bring the Diamondbacks back into contention over the last few seasons, as they’re on the cusp of their second playoff appearance in three years, a feat they’d last accomplished in 2002. While Hazen is from Massachusetts and the opportunity to lead the Red Sox would seem enticing for a local guy, it very much felt like Hazen had unfinished business with Arizona. So in that sense, it wasn’t surprising to see the Diamondbacks announce late last week they’d signed Hazen to a multi-year deal. That effectively ended any speculation of a move to Boston. Hazen said he felt he could have asked Arizona to explore options with Boston if they came to him, but ultimately decided to remain with the Diamondbacks

However, Hazen’s extension does not preclude his assistants, including former Red Sox executives Jared Porter and Amiel Sawdaye, from pursuing the Red Sox vacancy.

- In the interim in Boston, a quartet of second-in-commands have been thrust into the lead role. The foursome consists of assistant general managers Eddie Romero, Brian O’Halloran and Zack Scott, joined by senior vice president of major and minor league baseball operations Raquel Ferreria. Ferreria is among the longest-tenured executives with the Red Sox, having joined the club in 1999, and while her name has been floated as a potential candidate for Dombrowski’s role, it’s unlikely she’d want such a public-facing job. Ferreria isn’t a fan of public speaking, something she made abundantly clear at last month’s Saberseminar conference at Boston University. She even quipped at the time that she wore her 2018 World Series ring in case anyone wanted to try it on since she assumed she’d be so boring as a speaker. Her behind-the-scenes work is lauded by her colleagues and her relationships with players, particularly Mookie

Betts and Xander Bogaerts, is unmatched. But a big part of the job as general manager is speaking with the media, especially in Boston, and it doesn't seem like Ferreira wants that kind of role. It also doesn't mean she can't still have a tremendous influence behind the scenes, just as she's had for the better part of the last two decades.

- Red Sox principal owner John Henry was reportedly with the team in Philadelphia over the weekend. Henry very rarely travels with the team, but his presence makes sense during a stretch of such instability and with so much work to be done on finding their next top executive as soon as possible.
- Speaking of Red Sox ownership, their only remarks since Dombrowski's firing have been a Wednesday interview on WEEI with their public face, team president and CEO Sam Kennedy. Kennedy said the Sox opted not to have a press conference because they weren't going to elaborate more on the reasons for firing Dombrowski. He did admit that leaving manager Alex Cora to answer all the questions in his pregame media session the following day, was unfair to Cora. "There's no question that Alex was in a bad spot and we definitely regret that," Kennedy said in the interview. He added that Cora would be an important part of their future, indicating Cora's job wasn't on the line despite the firing of Dombrowski. And in praising Dombrowski for his time in Boston, Kennedy added, "Obviously you don't make a change, unless you're ready for new leadership in that specific department."
- Yet another familiar name mentioned this past week in regard to replacing Dombrowski was former Red Sox general manager Theo Epstein. Epstein resigned in 2011 to take over as director of baseball operations for the Chicago Cubs and though his tenure in Boston brought the first World Series championship in 86 years to the city, it ended on a rough note following an awful collapse down the stretch in his final season. There's always been some thought Epstein would like to return to Boston, as Peter Gammons noted in this piece last week, but to me it seemed as though that was more an end-of-career type move. Maybe not. The Cubs are undergoing some significant changes in their front office as it is, moving Jason McLeod — another former Red Sox executive — from overseeing the amateur draft and the farm system to a role more focused on player personnel and the day-to-day operations of the big-league team.

The Athletic's Sahadev Sharma reported that McLeod was asked if the new role meant he's not interested in Boston's front office vacancy. McLeod didn't directly answer the question but said, "I still aspire to someday get into that type of position." That seems to leave the door open for the Red Sox, should they inquire.