

## ***The Boston Red Sox Friday, September 20, 2019***

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

#### **Triston Casas feels more at home at the plate and with the Red Sox**

Frank Dell'Apa

Red Sox manager Alex Cora was not impressed when he witnessed Triston Casas's batting style a year ago. Cora has changed his view, though, after Casas's 20-home run season with Greenville and Salem.

"Last year, taking BP, and you see his swing now," Cora said before the Red Sox met the San Francisco Giants Thursday. "And the improvement and the adjustments that he's made, and this is not innate to his swing, when he took BP here."

Casas has been named the Red Sox' minor league Offensive Player of the Year, Thad Ward Pitcher of the Year and Ryan Fitzgerald Defensive Player of the Year.

"This never gets old, coming to Fenway," Casas said. "Not too much has changed but I feel like I learned a lot in this first season and looking forward to the next one. Definitely, when I came here a year ago I was pretty rattled. But after the season I'm feeling a lot more comfortable with the organization and everything. I feel like the adjustment that I made from high school to where I am right now is pretty drastic."

Casas has also become more composed at the plate, via several "tweaks."

"Not too much, not an overhaul or anything," Casas said of his alterations. "But as the information gets a little bit better and the hitting coaches are able to relay a little bit more to me, we just tweaked a few things. But nothing too drastic. It was a lot of things. It was setup, positioning in the box, obviously a little bit of swing path, and changing my leg [position]. It made it a little bit better."

Casas, 19, homered in his final at-bat of the season to join Xander Bogaerts and Tony Conigliaro as the only Red Sox to total 20 or more home runs in a season as teenagers in the last 50 years. Casas totaled 19 home runs in 118 games with Greenville, then finished the season with two games at Salem in Class A-Advanced. Casas also struck out 118 times.

"Strikeouts are a part of the game, obviously, and I had more strikeouts than hits [110] this year, which is something I definitely need to improve on," Casas said. "But it's something I'm not really concerned with. It's part of the game and I'm going to keep swinging and doing my thing, but I'm not really thinking too much about it."

"Being more aggressive in the zone, going up there with a plan, trying to attack the first pitch, was definitely an adjustment I made, and carried into the rest of the season. I definitely dealt with it by understanding I've got a lot of opportunities and I can't dwell on failing right at the moment, and knowing I've got a lot of opportunities in the future. It's just a matter of putting them behind me, having short-term memory and trying again the next time."

Casas went from American Heritage High in Plantation, Fla., to turning down an offer to play at the University of Miami, after becoming the Sox' first-round draft choice last year.

The biggest changes for Casas?

"Definitely the quick turnarounds," Casas said. "You know, coming from high school, you play two or three times a week, maybe, and it's pretty different getting an off day every two weeks. That's probably

been the biggest thing, understanding that you've got a lot of games, a lot of at-bats, quick turnarounds. You're going to get the opportunity to fail, it's just a matter of coming out, putting it behind you, and putting your best foot forward the next day."

### **As his options become clear, Mookie Betts considers a legacy question**

Alex Speier

These are strange times for Mookie Betts, with widely divergent paths becoming visible.

Earlier this month, the firing of president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski underscored to the four-time All-Star the notion that at its heart, the game can be a cold-hearted business where decisions are made with little sentiment. That firing was not a revelation, but instead confirmation of Betts's long-held belief about the nature of contracts and negotiations — and the inevitability of change inside organizations.

On the other hand, the career-long Red Sox also has seen Fenway Park offering unconditional love for franchise legends David Ortiz and Carl Yastrzemski. Those two players spent 14 and 23 years, respectively, with the team, and will be associated with the franchise forever.

Betts has known nothing but the Red Sox, the organization with whom he signed in 2011 and has now played six big league seasons. Given what he's accomplished to this point — an MVP (with his 2018 campaign ranking as perhaps the greatest by a Red Sox since Yastrzemski's epic 1967 season), four All-Star Games, three Gold Gloves, a World Series — it's not hard to imagine "Mookie" standing alongside "Papi" and "Yaz" in the franchise pantheon.

Yet Betts certainly doesn't know how to forecast his relationship with the Red Sox next year, let alone in a decade or two. The 26-year-old understands that an organization that already has changed its head of baseball operations is preparing to make changes that will alter the roster. And so, Betts compartmentalizes: He appreciates how Ortiz and Yastrzemski are received, yet does not step back to think of his own place in Boston — or the growing question of whether his future will be in it — while observing the adulation for those legends.

"It's pretty cool that they have their career in one place, but you can be remembered in that same fashion even if you put on a couple different jerseys," said Betts. "It definitely doesn't hurt to only put on one jersey . . . [But the Yastrzemski celebration] doesn't sway me [about the future] one way or the other."

It is a business, after all, and there are aspects of it that Betts cannot control. And so for now, even as he recognizes that there are a number of possibilities hovering over the 2020 Red Sox, he remains focused on the remainder of 2019.

The outfielder on Thursday missed his fifth straight game because of left foot inflammation, but Betts ran before the game and hopes to return to the lineup (as the designated hitter — the Sox wouldn't have him play the outfield on the Tropicana Field turf) during the forthcoming four-game series against the Rays. Yet with the Red Sox on the cusp of elimination from postseason contention, and little for the team to accomplish aside from playing the role of spoiler, it might be natural to consider shutting down Betts for the duration of the year.

But that's not Betts's outlook.

"I'm not going to quit. I'm just not going to quit on myself or the team no matter where we are in the standings," said Betts, who is hitting .293/.391/.527 in 144 games. "If I can get out there and play, whether it's for something or not, I'm still going to go out and play."

Betts has 28 homers, putting him in reach of a second straight year of hitting 30 or more. He also has a shot at scoring 140 runs.

“Do I care? Not really. Would it be nice to do? Of course,” said Betts. “Within playing, those things can happen. But it’s not something where, ‘Oh, I’ve got to play to hit two homers.’ I’m going to play because I’m not going to quit.”

Hembree close

For Heath Hembree, the summer was misery. The discomfort in his pitching elbow would not go away, yet the righthander did not want to succumb to it, feeling that he could still help his team.

“It was a grind there in June, July, August right after the break. I couldn’t really get over that hurdle to get it feeling better. I was kind of waking up every day just hoping I could make it through the day,” said Hembree. “That was a bad feeling.”

Finally, in early August, Hembree landed on the injured list with elbow tendinitis and received a plasma-rich platelet (PRP) injection in hopes of healing. He was told that he might not pitch again this year, but he set his sights on getting back into games before the end of the season. Now, he is on the cusp of doing just that.

Hembree is slated to throw a simulated game against teammates prior to Friday’s game against the Rays. If that goes well, he could be activated next week.

“I’m excited about it. I was thinking about it yesterday in the dugout. I’m going to be anxious and nervous just to get out there and face hitters again. It’s been a while,” said Hembree (4.06 ERA with 10.8 strikeouts per nine innings) in 37 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings this year. “It would’ve been real tough going into the offseason and not being able to come back.”

Front office changes

The Red Sox made their first front office changes since firing Dombrowski. The team fired senior vice president of baseball operations Frank Wren and informed special assistant to the general manager Eddie Bane that his contract won’t be renewed.

Wren, who’d been brought to Boston in 2015 as one of the first hires by Dombrowski, was informed that the team is restructuring its scouting operations and looking to give new leadership opportunities to others. Bane joined the Red Sox front office in 2012, when Ben Cherington was GM.

The decisions were made at a time when the baseball operations department is being overseen by assistant GMs Brian O’Halloran, Eddie Romero, and Zack Scott, as well as senior VP of major league and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira.

Special assistant and VP of baseball operations Tony La Russa, hired by Dombrowski after the 2017 season, will remain with the team for at least one additional year.

“They asked me to stay and I want to,” La Russa said. “I have good relationships here.”

Four to 40

Andrew Benintendi’s first-inning double was his 40th of the year. He joins Betts, Xander Bogaerts, and Rafael Devers in reaching the plateau, marking the first time the Sox have ever had four players with 40 doubles in the same season and tying a major league record . . . J.D. Martinez (sore groin) is day to day. If he is able to play against the Rays, then like Betts, he would only be a consideration to serve as designated hitter. “So, we’ll have two DHs,” joked manager Alex Cora . . . Michael Chavis had been making progress in his return from an oblique strain early in the week but encountered soreness. The Sox are increasingly likely to shut him down for the season.

Prior to Thursday's game, the Red Sox honored Bruce Bochy of the Giants in an on-field ceremony for his 2,000th career win as a manager. He was congratulated on the field by Cora, Red Sox special assistant Tony La Russa, bench coach Ron Roenicke, coach Ramon Vazquez (who played for Bochy in San Diego), O'Halloran (an intern in San Diego when Bochy managed there), and VP of amateur scouting Mike Rikard (a Padres scout during Bochy's tenure).

### **Red Sox make first moves following Dave Dombrowski firing, parting ways with two front office members**

Alex Speier

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### **Eduardo Rodriguez wins his 18th as Red Sox take series finale from Giants**

Alex Speier

For the first time in his storied big league career, Giants ace Madison Bumgarner took the mound at Fenway Park on Thursday. Yet it was the San Francisco southpaw's Red Sox counterpart who delivered a performance that more fully resembled a vintage Bumgarner outing.

In the continuation of a breakthrough season, Eduardo Rodriguez delivered a dominant performance for the Red Sox. The lefthander allowed just one unearned run on a meager two hits while striking out 10 and walking two in a 5-4 victory.

With the win, Rodriguez (18-6, 3.53 ERA) moved closer to a trio of milestones. With two starts remaining this season, 20 wins, 200 strikeouts (he has 199), and 200 innings (he's at 191 $\frac{1}{3}$ ) are all in his reach.

"At the beginning of the season, I was really thinking 200 innings," said Rodriguez. "That was my goal this year, go 200 innings, 30-plus starts. I made the 30-plus already so now I'm looking for the 200 innings, 200 strikeouts."

The fact that Rodriguez is approaching such plateaus is a reflection foremost of the pitcher's talent, yet may also attest to a timely assist that helped turn potential into results.

Rodriguez has a four-seam fastball that has incredible late life when thrown in the upper half of the strike zone. But through 10 starts in 2019, during which he'd gone 4-3 with a 5.43 ERA, he hadn't been locating the pitch to that area.

On May 21, he allowed three homers to the Blue Jays in a 10-3 loss. In the wake of that outing, pitching coach Dana LeVangie and first baseman Mitch Moreland — a former college pitcher — convened with the lefthander for a conversation about what had transpired.

“It’s been an ongoing conversation with Eddie his entire career — he can throw his fastball up in the zone to most any hitter and have success,” said LeVangie. “You’ve got to take advantage of it while you’ve still got it.”

As Moreland listened to Rodriguez, he recognized some of the same mechanical battles that he had as a hitter: The pitcher was spinning in his delivery, rather than moving toward the plate in more aggressive, direct fashion.

“I was like, ‘I constantly fight that on a daily basis in my swing, so here’s a couple things that help me at times,’ ” said Moreland. “He’s smart, he knows what he’s doing, controls his body really well, and once we started talking about it he made the adjustment in two or three different moves. It took him a couple pitches and he seemed like he was locked in with it. You could tell he’d found it and really been locked in for most of the season.”

On Thursday against the Giants, the elevated four-seamer seemed to overwhelm Giants hitters. Rodriguez got 14 swings and misses on the offering — his season high had been nine — and then left them baffled when he broke two-seam fastballs, changeups, and cutters off the same pitch tunnel.

The execution of his arsenal has helped Rodriguez to dominate, getting swings and misses as well as bad contact in significant quantity. Since the Toronto game, Rodriguez is 14-3 with a 2.77 ERA. Over his last seven outings, he has a 1.00 ERA with 54 strikeouts and just one homer allowed in 45 innings. In four September starts, he has a 0.70 ERA with 39 strikeouts and seven walks in 25⅓ innings.

“It’s like watching David Price back in my days when I was scouting. You might see 95 percent fastballs in a start, they’d all be up in the zone, and it was electric,” said LeVangie. “It’s similar. Very similar.”

Rodriguez and the Sox fell behind, 1-0, in the first inning thanks to an error on second baseman Marco Hernandez that produced a run, but the Sox quickly struck back and Rodriguez never gave the Giants another opportunity.

Against Bumgarner, Andrew Benintendi led off the first with a fly that center fielder Kevin Pillar could not corral while fighting the sun on a cloudless day, a misplay that was ruled a double. After Christian Vazquez walked, Rafael Devers stayed on a 2-2 cutter and dropped it into shallow right for a run-scoring single. Xander Bogaerts followed by volleying a single to center on a 1-2 curveball that gave the Sox a 2-1 advantage.

One inning later, that same quartet delivered three more runs with a two-out rally. Benintendi flicked a Bumgarner cutter to the opposite field for a single, moved to third when Vazquez hit an opposite-field popup down the right field line for a single, and scored when Devers hit a soft fly to center that fell in front of Pillar. Devers hustled into second on the RBI single, a 90-foot advance that became significant when Bogaerts flicked a soft single to right, scoring both runners to put the Sox ahead, 5-1.

“Buzzard’s luck,” Giants manager Bruce Bochy lamented of the rally.

The Red Sox bullpen nearly imploded over the final two innings, giving up two runs in the eighth inning and one in the ninth. Marcus Walden, Matt Barnes, and Brandon Workman combined to allow four hits and four walks in those innings, with Workman’s bases-loaded walk in the ninth to Pillar forcing in a run to narrow the score to 5-4.

But after running the count full to Evan Longoria, Workman (15 saves) dropped a hammer of a curve. Longoria swung at the offering as it kissed the dirt in front of the plate, and the Sox closed out a win to improve to 80-72 on the way to their final road trip of the year.

## **This Fenway series was a grand time for the Yastrzemskis**

Stan Grossfeld

There were screams of joy in the Yastrzemski house on the North Shore when San Francisco Giants outfielder Mike Yastrzemski laced into a 96-mile-an-hour Nathan Eovaldi fastball Tuesday night and sent it rocketing toward the center-field bleachers at Fenway Park.

Carl Yastrzemski — the man they call Yaz — who hit 237 home runs at Fenway Park in a 23-year Hall of Fame career, wasn't screaming to his grandson; he was talking directly to the ball.

It had been 19 million minutes since Yaz last homered at Fenway Park in 1983, and No. 8 was taking nothing for granted. He knows that center field is the deepest part of the park, and he was trying to will the ball into the bleachers.

"I just kept saying, 'Get up, get up,'" said Yaz. "I didn't think he hit it high enough."

The ball landed 401 feet away, a couple of rows deep, and Mike Yastrzemski ran around the bases the way his grandfather used to: very classy, no bat flip, no pointing toward the heavens. After laboring in the minors for 703 games, the 29-year-old rookie had hit his 20th homer since being called up by the Giants May 25.

Back at the Yastrzemski home, "The phones started blowing up," according to Carl's wife Nancy.

Yaz sat back and took it all in.

"I was kind of stunned, to tell you the truth," he said. "I was just happy. It was a storybook finish.

"For him to strike out the first time up and then come back, walk his second time up, and then hit the home run his third time up, he showed great concentration. He's tough mentally."

Later that night, Mike added a ground-rule double to deep center.

"If he pulled it a few more feet, it would've been another home run," said Yaz, who watched all 15 innings on TV.

"I'm used to it," he said. "I watch the Red Sox at 7 o'clock and the Giants at 10:15 p.m. So I watch 18 innings a day."

Yaz believes there may have been some divine intervention at work at Fenway that night. His only son, also Mike Yastrzemski, and also a former minor leaguer, died in September 2004 of complications after hip surgery. He was just 43.

"I'm sure he was looking down on him," said Yaz. "They were close — very, very close."

On his father's birthday, Aug. 16, young Mike Yastrzemski had his best day, hitting three home runs, including the game-winner, against the Arizona Diamondbacks.

The Andover native also feels there was some divine intervention at Fenway.

"For sure," he said. "Having my dad and grandfather and great-grandfather watching over me definitely had something to do with it."

But he's definitely his own man. When the Giants called him up, they offered Mike No. 8, but he turned it down. He chose No. 5.

“If you want to call it superstition, you can, but it just felt right,” he said. “I wore 5 in Sacramento and it worked out pretty well for me.”

On Tuesday morning, Yaz came to Fenway hours before batting practice to show his support for Mike. He made it clear he wasn't going to stay for the game, though.

He almost never does. After playing in more baseball games for one team than anybody else in baseball history, he likes to watch on the big screen in the comfort of his own home, with his wife, two dogs, and two cats. (There are also two horses.)

Yaz says he can see pitch location better on TV. Plus, the last time he had attended one of Mike's games, he thought his grandson was pressing too much because of it.

On Tuesday, Yaz walked the outfield in front of the Green Monster with his grandson, and warned him about the caroms being different off the scoreboard than off the wall above it. He gave Mike a hug and beat the traffic home.

Mike patrolled the same plot of land that his grandfather mastered in a Hall of Fame career. Mike, who was in the lineup batting leadoff and playing left field, remained serene and calm. When asked who would be more nervous — him or his famous grandfather — he didn't hesitate.

“Him, for sure,” he said. “I'm just going to have fun. This is the greatest thing ever.”

Tyler Beede, a Giants pitcher from Worcester who was Mike Yastrzemski's roommate at Vanderbilt, said the players were abuzz in the dugout before the game.

“Everyone said he was going to hit his 20th home run tonight,” said Beede. “He was locked in. He was all business.”

Mike said he felt the love of Red Sox Nation all night long. But he didn't hear from his grandfather after the game.

“No, I'm sure he was sleeping,” he said. “I think he stayed up, but the second the game was over, he was out cold.”

On Wednesday, Yaz agreed to throw out the first pitch to his grandson. Mike was thrilled.

“It's definitely something I'll remember forever,” he said. “Has an opposing player ever caught a first pitch before?”

He also gently needled his 80-year-old grandfather.

“I told him not to short-hop it,” said Mike. “He said, ‘I'll probably throw it over your head.’ ”

Just before game time, Yaz came out of the Red Sox dugout with his game face on. He went to the mound and threw a high-arcing strike, perfectly framed by his grandson.

Then Yaz joined family and friends in a packed fifth-floor suite overlooking the Green Monster. Even Jaxon McCarthy, Yaz's 6-month-old great-grandson, was in attendance, nibbling on a hot dog.

Yaz was in good spirits, even though he missed Mike's first at-bat.

“Yeah, it took me a while to get up here,” he said with a grin. “I had to ice my elbow.”

Yaz watched his grandson ground out to second base in the second inning, then he hugged family and friends and walked arm in arm with Nancy to the parking lot.

“I’d rather watch it on TV,” he said.

At 8:05 p.m., after stopping to sign a couple of Yaz T-shirts for fans, he got into a chauffeur-driven SUV with tinted windows, motor already running, and headed home, presumably in time to see his grandson’s RBI single in the ninth inning.

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

### **Red Sox top prospect Triston Casas feeling good after 20-homer season**

Jason Mastrodonato

The Red Sox could get used to seeing Triston Casas around Fenway Park.

After becoming the first Sox minor leaguer with 20 homers in a season before turning 20 years old since Xander Bogaerts, Casas made his return to Fenway on Thursday to be honored as the organization’s minor league hitter of the year.

“When I came here a year ago I was pretty rattled,” said Casas, who was drafted 26th overall out of American Heritage High School in Florida last June. “After the season I had, I’m feeling pretty comfortable. Feeling good.”

A strong lower half supports his 6-foot-4 frame, which allowed him to hit 19 homers at Single-A Greenville and another in two games at High-A Salem to end the year with 20. It’s worth noting the balls used in the minors below the Triple-A level are different than those used in the majors and the minor leagues did not see a spike in home run totals this year.

Casas also hit .256 with a .350 on-base percentage, all while being two years younger than the average player in the South Atlantic League.

“He was in high school last year at this time,” farm director Ben Crockett said. “He’s got bat speed, somebody who can use all fields, makes adjustments within a count and yet he has tremendous power and can drive the ball out of the park anywhere on the field. He’s really dangerous, but has the potential to be a complete hitter.”

Casas said he’s been overhauling his swing throughout the year but considers himself somebody who always has been blessed with power.

“It’s something I’ve had since I was younger,” the first baseman said. “I don’t know how to describe it. I feel like it’s a lot of hard work I put in but it’s a nice thing to have.”

Manager Alex Cora was impressed with video of Casas he saw this year.

“I saw Casas last year taking (batting practice),” Cora said. “We see his swing now, the improvement and the adjustments that he’s made, and it’s night-and-day to his swing when he took BP here.”

Before their 5-4 win Thursday over the Giants, the Red Sox also honored Thad Ward as the pitcher of the year, Ryan Fitzgerald as defensive player of the year, Jarren Duran as the baserunner of the year, Darel Belen as Latin program position player of the year, and Nixson Munoz as Latin program pitcher of the year.

Cora said the farm system is in better shape than most people think.



“Duran, what he did early in the season, and how athletic and explosive he is,” Cora said. “Bobby Dalbec, what he did throughout the last month and a half, going to a higher level and being able to dominate the strike zone and hit the ball out of the ballpark.

“I’ve been saying all along, out of the walls of Fenway, people have their thoughts about our minor league system, but we do feel that we have some guys who are developing and getting better in the lower levels. We’re going to be fine in the upcoming years.”

Wren out of front office

Senior vice president of baseball operations Frank Wren was fired Thursday, according to multiple reports.

Wren was hired shortly after Dave Dombrowski took over the team in 2015. They worked together for 11 years with the Expos and the Marlins from 1987-98 before Dombrowski added Wren as a talent evaluator to assist him in “all aspects of baseball operations.”

The two often were seen together at Fenway Park, and after Dombrowski was fired earlier this month there was speculation Wren would soon be out the door as well.

Betts could play in Tampa

Mookie Betts (toe inflammation) has a chance to play this weekend in Tampa, but won’t play the outfield on the turf, Cora said.

J.D. Martinez (left groin tightness) is day to day and won’t play any outfield in Tampa either.

“So we’ll have two DHs,” Cora said.

Sam Travis is going through the concussion protocol and should play in Tampa.

No decision has been made on surgery for David Price (wrist), but he’s going to see a specialist and “we’re moving in that direction,” Cora said.

Michael Chavis (oblique) was expected to be ready to play in Tampa, but he was sore Wednesday and might be shut down for the year.

Workman saves another

Brandon Workman notched his 15th save of the season in dramatic form Thursday.

He struggled in the ninth, loading the bases with zero outs, but then struck out Brandon Crawford and Mike Yastrzemski, walked Kevin Pillar to force one run, and struck out Evan Longoria with a curveball in the dirt to end the game with the tying run at third base.

“It’s probably my best pitch,” he said of his curve.

Said Cora, “It’s such a good one, because he throws it on the top shelf of the strike zone and he’s able to bounce it, or it’s close enough to the bottom of the zone that you have to offer. It’s not that easy. You look at the numbers, and it’s crazy to see .120 and .190 (average against).”

Yaz heads home

Yastrzemski didn’t start in the game but pinch-hit in the eighth to a standing ovation and roped a single to left. He also dropped a fly ball in front of the Green Monster for an error in the bottom of the inning. He was 4-for-13 with a double, a home run and two walks in the three-game series. ...

The Red Sox are averaging 3 hours, 25 minutes per game this year, eight minutes longer than any other team.

“I don’t know if you guys have noticed but I think we’re the only team that visitors come here and they use multiple signs with nobody on,” Cora said jokingly. “We slow it down but the opposition slows it down more than we do. Maybe that’s the reason our games are longer. Did I say that?”

### **Eduardo Rodriguez collects win No. 18 as Red Sox avoid sweep by Giants**

Jason Mastrodonato

Eduardo Rodriguez keeps getting better and better.

While Chris Sale and David Price will end the season on the shelf with injuries, and Nathan Eovaldi and Rick Porcello are nursing ERAs over 5.00, Rodriguez is having his best games of the year this September.

The 26-year-old left-hander struck out 10 while allowing just one run on two hits in the Red Sox’ 5-4 win over the San Francisco Giants Thursday afternoon at Fenway Park.

His fastball was sitting at 92-95 mph but looked overpowering when paired with his dynamite changeup. He generated 14 swings and misses on the heater and lowered his season ERA to 3.53, seventh-best in the American League.

Rodriguez also picked up his 18th win of the season, tied for second-most in the league, while his 199 strikeouts rank ninth behind Sale, who has 218 but hasn’t pitched in five weeks.

With two more starts this season, Rodriguez still has a shot at the Sox’ first 20-win season since Porcello won the Cy Young in 2016.

“At the beginning of the season, I was really thinking go 200 innings,” Rodriguez said. “That was all my goal this year, go 200 innings, 30-plus starts and I made the 30-plus already so now I’m looking for the 200 innings. With 200 strikeouts, that’s something you can’t control. You go out there and execute the pitches and if they swing and miss, they strike out. So if it happens, it happens.”

Rodriguez’ dominance over the Giants, a light-hitting team that will miss the playoffs, may not seem remarkable. But pair it with what he’s done over his last seven starts and it’s looking like a shame the Sox will miss the playoffs without a chance for their budding ace to pitch in October.

He has a 1.00 ERA in his last seven games with 54 strikeouts in 45 innings. Among the teams he’s faced in that span are the Yankees and Twins, who lead the league in home runs, the Phillies and the Rockies (at Coors Field).

“People can talk about bullpening and openers and all of that but at the end of the day give me five good starters, starters who can go deep into the game and it makes life easier,” Sox manager Alex Cora said. “We lived it last year. People can get creative and talk about all this cool stuff that is going on right now, over 162 games it’s not that easy. It’s not that easy.”

“Starting pitching is very important, it’s still very important. October is a different animal. It’s different, but at the same time people need to realize the more you see the bullpen the more you get hit. We won last year because we hit bullpens and we won because our starters went deep into the game. Did we get creative in the middle of the game? Of course we did. We have to. But it’s not like there is a book out there saying this is the way you do it. No. It doesn’t work that way.”

The Giants scored first on some sloppy defense, but the Sox came back with five runs in the first two innings against Madison Bumgarner.

Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts drove in all five of the runs on four singles. Devers has 110 RBI while Bogaerts has 109.

Bumgarner, a free agent after this season, lasted five innings and saw his ERA Jump to 3.86.

The Red Sox bullpen nearly blew Rodriguez' 5-1 lead in the eighth, when Marcus Walden allowed two to score and Matt Barnes narrowly escaped, recording the final out of the inning with runners on second and third.

Brandon Workman struggled in the ninth but ended the game with the tying run on third.

Workman said the whole team is pulling for Rodriguez to get 20 wins.

"He's had a hell of a season," he said. "He's thrown the ball really well. I think he's knocking on the door of 200 innings as well. So if he can be 20 win, 200 inning, that's benchmarks in two different areas for starters. So that would be incredible."

Rodriguez will start again Tuesday against the Rangers and then again next Sunday against the Orioles in the final game of the year if he's still got a shot at 20 wins.

"There's been a lot of talk about that," Cora said. "We set the rotation for him to go as many times as possible with regular rest. He can hold the workload. If he doesn't win that one, we'd probably make an adjustment. He's still got a shot, so he'll be ready for his next one in Texas."

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

### **2018 Red Sox draft picks Triston Casas, Thad Ward, Jarren Duran among minor league award winners**

Bill Koch

Though still a teenager, Triston Casas appeared far more comfortable facing the assembled media at Fenway Park this time.

The consensus No. 1 prospect in the Red Sox system was back Thursday afternoon to collect some hardware. Casas was among the honorees as Boston handed out its annual Minor League Awards.

"When I came in here a year ago I was pretty rattled," Casas said. "After this season I'm feeling a lot more comfortable in the organization. I'm feeling good."

Casas was named the club's Offensive Player of the Year after an impressive full-season debut at Greenville and Salem, a pair of Class A affiliates. The 19-year-old corner infielder posted an .830 OPS in 118 games, collecting 20 home runs and 26 doubles. Casas is the first Red Sox minor leaguer to hit 20 home runs in a season before turning 20 since Xander Bogaerts in 2012.

"I feel like throughout the year I've made a lot of adjustments, and it's led me to where I am today," Casas said. "I'm pretty happy with where I'm at, but I'd like to get into the offseason and try to perfect it."

Casas was Boston's first-round selection out of a Florida high school in the 2018 Major League Baseball draft, coming off the board at No. 26 overall. Two other members of that class were also honored on Thursday, with fifth-round pick Thad Ward named Pitcher of the Year and seventh-round pick Jarren Duran named Baserunner of the Year.

“I’ve been saying all along outside the walls of Fenway people have their thoughts about our minor league system,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “We do feel that we have some guys that are developing and getting better in the lower levels. We’re going to be fine in the upcoming years.”

Ward served as a starting pitcher in just seven of his 61 career appearances at Central Florida, but the 22-year-old right-hander dominated in 25 starts with Greenville and Salem in 2019. He pitched to a 2.14 earned-run average and struck out 157 in just 126 1/3 innings. Opponents hit just .198 against him.

“It was a first full season having to face a full lineup of guys who can actually kind of hurt you,” Ward said. “Having to learn how to pitch through the full lineup several times, that took a lot of learning. I was happy with the way I was able to adjust with that.”

Duran was named the Baseball America Class A Player of the Year after slashing .387/.456/.543 in 50 games at Salem. The 23-year-old Long Beach State product played 82 games after being promoted to Double-A Portland and batted .292 from July 21 through the end of the season. Duran stole 28 bases with the Sea Dogs and 46 overall.

“When I first got (to Portland) I was like, ‘Do I actually belong here? Am I supposed to be here?’” Duran said. “I think it was just self-doubt that held me back. Once I started to believe in myself again I just did what I needed to do and went back out and had fun.”

Infielder Ryan Fitzgerald (Defensive Player of the Year), outfielder/first baseman Darel Belen (Latin Program Position Player of the Year) and left-hander Nixson Munoz (Latin Program Pitcher of the Year) were also honored by the Red Sox. Fitzgerald made 121 starts at Class A Salem and posted a .960 fielding percentage at shortstop. Belen collected 104 total bases in 64 games and Munoz pitched to a 2.40 ERA, with both players competing for Dominican Summer League Red Sox Blue.

Thursday’s final honoree was side-arming right-hander Trevor Kelley, who was named the recipient of the Lou Gorman Award. Created in 2011 and named after the former Boston general manager, the award recognizes a player who has “demonstrated dedication and perseverance in overcoming obstacles while working his way to the major league team.” Kelley was selected in the 36th round of the 2015 draft and debuted with the Red Sox this season on the back of a 1.79 ERA in 52 appearances at Triple-A Pawtucket.

### **These Red Sox have only been elite when Eduardo Rodriguez takes the mound**

Bill Koch

We’re 20 years removed from Billy Chapel throwing a perfect game to Gus Sinski at the old Yankee Stadium.

‘For Love of the Game’ featured a retiring Kevin Costner and a loyal John C. Reilly acting as pitcher and catcher for the middling Tigers. The powerful Yankees were the victims in what was ultimately the final outing of Chapel’s mythical Hall of Fame career.

That’s Hollywood, of course. But a real-life example is playing out for the Red Sox this season, and it involves Eduardo Rodriguez.

Thursday’s 5-4 victory over the Giants on a gorgeous afternoon at Fenway Park was the latest example. Rodriguez picked up his 18th win of the season, and Boston is 24-8 in games where he starts. The Red Sox are 56-64 otherwise, a wretched return for a club with the highest payroll in the sport.

“Billy, we don’t stink right now,” Reilly famously said to Costner during one mound conversation on that fateful cinematic day. Christian Vazquez could be secretly relaying the same message to Rodriguez every time he goes to work right about now. To say Boston stinks is certainly a bit harsh, but it’s been a different team with a particular left-hander on the mound in 2019.

“He’s had a hell of a season,” said Brandon Workman, who escaped a jam in the top of the ninth inning to preserve the result. “He’s thrown the ball really well. I think he’s knocking on the door of 200 innings as well, so if he can do 20 wins-200 innings – those are benchmarks in two different areas for starters. That would be incredible.”

Rodriguez made his 32nd start on Thursday and exited at 191 1/3 innings on the season. He’s also at 199 strikeouts – 200 and 200 seem almost assured. Chances at those final two victories will come during a three-game series at Texas and during a three-game home series against Baltimore.

“My goal at the beginning was to get 200 (innings),” Rodriguez said. “I’m really close to that right now – 20 wins is something the guys are pushing. If it happens, it happens.”

“You know how baseball is. You can have games where you give up one run or no runs and you’re going to get a no decision. Everything depends on how the games are going to go.”

Rodriguez’s overall point is accurate. He entered having allowed one earned run in each of his last two starts – a loss against the Yankees and a no decision against the Phillies. Boston fell 5-0 against New York and squeezed to a 2-1 win over Philadelphia.

Those results illustrate why a pitcher’s win-loss record has been generally devalued within the sport. Rodriguez can’t control his offense refusing to score runs or his defense failing to make routine plays. What he can do is dominate opposing hitters to the tune of a 1.00 earned-run average through his last seven starts, including three scoreless outings.

“It’s like he just has a plan and he’s been able to execute throughout all these starts,” said Xander Bogaerts, who singled twice and drove in three runs. “It’s been really impressive to see, especially me being (the designated hitter) today. Seeing it on the TV – I had a different type of view. It was amazing how much the ball was moving.”

Picture this version of Rodriguez – even 85% of this current workhorse – lining up alongside what Chris Sale, David Price and Nathan Eovaldi are supposed to be. Career-average seasons from those three pitchers in 2020 would have the Red Sox back to postseason contention in short order. Whether or not any member of that trio can stay healthy enough to make 30 starts is up for debate.

Rodriguez is the lone member of Boston rotation coming out of spring training who has followed the script this season. There will be no happy ending for his team, but personal satisfaction remains within reach.

### **Red Sox 5, Giants 4: Eduardo Rodriguez continues his stellar season**

Bill Koch

The lone constant in the Red Sox starting rotation this season delivered yet another strong performance Thursday afternoon.

Eduardo Rodriguez was as brilliant as the cool sunshine that bathed Fenway Park. The left-hander continued his blitz toward 200 innings of work and maintained hopes of reaching 20 victories.

The Giants were powerless to stop him. An unearned run in the top of the first inning was all they could manage against Boston’s de facto ace, as Rodriguez buzzed his way through six frames and turned things over to the bullpen. The Red Sox flirted with a bullpen meltdown and ultimately avoided a sweep in this series thanks to a 5-4 victory.

“He’s been outstanding,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “What else can we say? It’s been going on for a while.”

Boston was in cruise control with a 5-1 lead until Marcus Walden issued a two-out walk in the eighth. Mike Yastrzemski singled to left and Kevin Pillar grounded a two-run double inside the bag at third, cutting San Francisco's deficit in half. Matt Barnes was summoned and the bases were loaded when he buried a curveball in the dirt to strike out Stephen Vogt.

There was more trouble to come in the ninth, as Brandon Workman loaded the bases with nobody out and threatened to suffer the 26th blown save recorded by the Red Sox this season. Strikeouts by Brandon Crawford and Yastrzemski nearly pulled Workman out of the jam, but Pillar drew a walk to make it a one-run game. Evan Longoria swung over the top of a curveball on 3-and-2 to end it, a brassy pitch selection by Workman with the tying run just one ball away.

"It's probably my best pitch," Workman said. "In the biggest spot we're probably going to stick with the best pitch. That's what we went with."

Rodriguez allowed just a pair of singles and struck out 10, his fourth time reaching double digits this season. San Francisco swung and missed 21 times on his 107 pitches, 14 of those coming on his four-seam fastball. Rodriguez didn't allow a runner to reach scoring position after the first, controlling the Giants with what has become an expected display of power and precision.

"Every time I go out there I have a really good plan for the lineup I'm going to face," Rodriguez said. "I throw the pitches with confidence. I think that's been the change for me this year."

Mauricio Dubon's leadoff single to left and a Pillar grounder under the glove of Marco Hernandez at second gave San Francisco runners at the corners in the first. Longoria lifted a sacrifice fly to left and the Giants had a quick 1-0 lead. Buster Posey struck out swinging to end the inning and Rodriguez wasn't seriously threatened again.

"Physically he's at another level right now," Cora said. "It seems like he's getting stronger."

The Red Sox took the lead before Rodriguez threw his next pitch. Run-scoring singles by Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts staked Boston to a 2-1 advantage in the first, as four straight hitters reached safely against Madison Bumgarner. Devers served a soft liner into right and Bogaerts went sharply back through the middle.

"I wasn't picking up his ball too well, but I was fortunate enough to put the barrel on the ball," Bogaerts said. "Just put the bat on the ball – I didn't barrel much today. He's a really good pitcher."

The top of the order did the damage again in the second, staging a two-out rally to make it a 5-1 game. Four consecutive singles by Andrew Benintendi, Christian Vazquez, Devers and Bogaerts were enough to condemn Bumgarner to defeat. Devers looped a run-scoring liner to center and Bogaerts sent a two-run flare into shallow right.

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

### **Red Sox's Eduardo Rodriguez set goal to throw 200 innings; that should mean more than 20 wins**

Christopher Smith

Red Sox starter Eduardo Rodriguez earned his 18th victory Thursday, but he was one ball away from a no-decision.

Closer Brandon Workman loaded the bases with no outs in the ninth and Boston leading by two runs. He struck out the next two hitters, then walked in a run.

But Workman punched out Evan Longoria with a full count to end the game. The Red Sox won 5-4 over the Giants here at Fenway Park.

One more pitch outside of the strike zone by Workman and Rodriguez's run at 20 wins would have ended. That's why his pursuit of 200 innings is more important. He actually has control over whether he reaches 200 innings in his final two starts.

He's at 191 ½ innings. He never pitched more than 137 ½ innings in any season until this year.

Wins are not in a pitcher's control. Rodriguez left with a 5-1 lead and the bullpen nearly blew it. He might pitch seven scoreless innings in his next start and leave with the game tied 0-0.

Jacob deGrom's 2018 National League Cy Young season also shows how starting pitchers have no real control over wins. deGrom won only 10 games, but he led the league in ERA (1.70), ERA+ (218) and FIP (1.98).

Rodriguez entered this year with two goals: pitch 200 or more innings and make 30 or more starts.

"I've made 30-plus already," he said. "Now I'm looking for the 200."

He also should be proud of 200 innings because knee injuries prevented him from making more than 24 starts in any other season. He also had an ankle injury that caused him to miss much of the second half last year.

Would 20 wins or 200 innings mean more to him?

"My goal at the beginning was to get 200, so I'm really close to that right now," Rodriguez said. "I mean 20 wins is something. The guys are pushing for me now and if it happens, it happens. You know how baseball is."

Rodriguez pointed out how he could give up one run or no runs and still receive a no-decision.

"Everything is going to depend on how the games are gonna go," he said.

He's right. But as long as he pitches well in his next two starts, he'll reach 200 innings. He should do it. He has been dominant since May 26 with a 14-3 record and 2.77 ERA (42 earned runs, 136 ⅓ innings) in 22 starts.

### **Red Sox dismiss Frank Wren, VP of player personnel and one of ex-boss Dave Dombrowski's top assistants**

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox have dismissed Frank Wren, senior VP of player personnel and one of former president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski's top assistants. The organization also didn't renew special assignment scout Eddie Bane's contract.

Dombrowski hired Wren on Sept. 25, 2015. He had worked under Dombrowski in the Marlins front office. They were both there in 1997 for the Marlins' first World Series title.

Wren worked as Orioles GM in 1999 and Atlanta's GM from 2007-14.

Bane spent seven years in the Red Sox organization. He served as director of scouting for the Angels when they drafted Mike Trout.

Dombrowski was fired Sept. 8 with one year remaining on his contract. Boston is in the process of searching for a new GM.

### **Eduardo Rodriguez earns 18th win for Boston Red Sox on road to 20; 'For some people, it doesn't mean anything. For others, it means a lot'**

Christopher Smith

Eduardo Rodriguez earned his 20th win of the 2019 season Thursday. He has two more starts remaining to try to reach 20.

The lefty tossed 6 innings, allowing one unearned run, two hits and two walks while striking out 10. The Red Sox won 5-4 over the Giants here at Fenway Park.

Brandon Workman walked the bases loaded in the ninth but escaped after walking in the Giants' fourth run.

Rodriguez finished with 21 swings-and-misses, including 14 on his four-seam fastball.

What does 20 wins mean in this era?

"For some people, it doesn't mean anything," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said pregame. "For others, it means a lot. You should ask (Madison) Bumgarner and David (Price) and Chris (Sale) and all the starting pitchers."

In the world of sabermetrics, a pitcher's win total has become less important. Mets ace Jacob deGrom showed just how little value should be placed on wins when he received the 2018 National League Cy Young. deGrom won only 10 games, but he led the league in ERA (1.70), ERA+ (218) and FIP (1.98).

That said, Rodriguez would become just the 11th American League pitcher in the past 10 years to win 20 games. Three others have a chance this season. Justin Verlander has 19 wins. Gerrit Cole and Domingo Germán each have 18. Germán's season might be over, though. He was placed on administrative leave under MLB domestic violence policy Thursday.

Rodriguez is enjoying a breakout season after several injury-plagued seasons (mostly knee problems). So winning 20 would be a special achievement for the lefty.

Cora pointed out Rodriguez was helped out by strong run support early in the season. The lefty posted a 4-3 record and 5.43 ERA in his first 10 starts. Since then, he has gone 14-3 with a 2.77 ERA (42 earned runs, 136  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings) in 22 starts dating back to May 26.

He's also closing in on 200 innings. He's at 191  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings. He never pitched more than 137  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings in any season until this year.

"Obviously early in the season he was giving up five and we were scoring eight," Cora said. The last two games he's given up one; we don't score. Obviously people see that. But when you start winning games, it means you're hanging out, out there (during starts) for a while."

"And 200 innings is something that is huge for that," Cora added. "I don't know. I think it means a lot. It does, honestly. And for him to get 200 innings and win 20, that would be great. If it doesn't happen, 200 innings is something I think every starter wants to do. It means your offseason program, everything you work on in spring training and what you did throughout the season, it worked. Thirty starts, 200 innings, all those numbers, it's very important for all of them."

### **Red Sox average longest games in MLB and Alex Cora thinks opposing teams have contributed**

Christopher Smith



The Red Sox have averaged the longest games in Major League Baseball this season. They have played four games over 5 hours and 16 games over 4 hours. They have played 30 games over 3 hours, 40 minutes.

Their average game length of 3 hours, 25 minutes is 8 minutes longer than the Brewers who have averaged the second longest games (3:17).

"I don't think we can do anything about that unless they change the rules and all that," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "Our guys are running off the field. They're ready to go after eight pitches of warmups. There's other stuff that comes into play that slows down the game."

Cora said one of those factors is teams using multiple signs between the pitcher and catcher.

"I know if you guys have noticed it but I think we're the only team that visitors come here and they use multiple signs with nobody on (base)," Cora said. "We slow it down. But the opposition slow it down more than we do. Maybe that's the reason our games are longer."

Story in numbers

Sox remain MLB's top pace-of-play offender; why not start games earlier for fans?

The Boston Red Sox are averaging the longest games in Major League Baseball for a third straight year (tied with Dodgers in '18). They lead the American League for a fourth straight season.

Of the 124 pitchers who have logged 100 or more innings this year, only one (Wade Miley, 19.5) has averaged less than 20 seconds between pitch, per Fangraphs.com.

Red Sox's David Price leads the league in time between pitches (29.6). Eduardo Rodriguez averages 25.6 seconds, Rick Porcello 24.2 seconds and Chris Sale 23.0 seconds.

Cora didn't give his opinion on whether he is in favor of a pitch clock. But he thinks the minor leaguers who have used them are beginning to work at a faster pace.

"If you look at the kids that are coming up, they do a good job under the pitch clock," Cora said. "You see the difference. I just think the game slows down."

The 2019 season marks the third straight year the Red Sox have averaged the longest games in Major League Baseball (tied with Dodgers in '18). They lead the American League for a fourth straight season.

**Casas wins 2019 Red Sox minor league Offensive Player of the Year; Ward is Pitcher of the Year**

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox will present their minor league awards here at Fenway Park on Thursday.

Triston Casas won Red Sox minor league Offensive Player of the Year. The 2018 first-round draft pick, who is only 19, slashed .256/.350/.480/.830 with 20 homers, 26 doubles, five triples and 81 RBIs in 118 games at Low-A Greenville and two games at High-A Salem this season.

Thad Ward, a 22-year-old righty out of UCF, won Pitcher of the Year. The 2018 fifth-round pick combined to go 8-5 with a 2.14 ERA and 1.16 WHIP in 13 starts at Greenville and 12 starts at Salem.

Ryan Fitzgerald, the Defensive Player of the Year, is a 25-year-old undrafted free agent out of Creighton. The Red Sox view him as a major league talent.

All the awards:

Offensive Player of the Year: Triston Casas, first base/third base

Defensive Player of the Year: Ryan Fitzgerald, shortstop, third base, second base

Pitcher of the Year: Thad Ward, right-handed pitcher

Baserunner of the Year: Jarren Duran, outfielder

Latin Program Position Player of the Year: Darel Belen, outfielder/first base

Latin Program Pitcher of the Year: Nixson Muñoz, left-handed starter

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

### **Eduardo Rodriguez's rise remains a bright spot**

Chris Mason

The tantalizing potential has been talked about since Eduardo Rodriguez arrived in Boston.

You don't trade a pitcher of Andrew Miller's caliber for nothing. But, up until this season, that promise wasn't fully realized for one reason or another.

Rodriguez endured medical issues — knee dislocations sidelined him in 2016 and 2017, and a badly sprained ankle hurt last year — but the most important change may have been between the ears.

Though he has the nastiest fastball-changeup combination on the team, Rodriguez was prone to nibbling in two strike counts, driving his pitch counts up and exiting games early. "Five and dive," was a joke Alex Cora once cracked.

That's changed in 2019.

Rodriguez has taken the leap the Red Sox long hoped he would. Penciled into the back of what should have been a vaunted rotation, the young lefty is the last man standing at the front. It's been months in the making.

"Best shape of his life" stories are as common as afternoon thunderstorms in Fort Myers, but Rodriguez truly was back in February. Arriving at camp with added muscle, the determination was clearly there, and apparently a checklist was, too.

"Going into spring training, he had some goals," Cora said. "He's been talking about them. He's physically at another level right now. It seems like he's getting stronger. The velocity is up, the changeup action is a lot better, he's adding a breaking ball, he has a cutter backdoor, frontdoor sinker. There's a lot of weapons there. You can't run against him. He does an outstanding job holding runners. He's doing everything."

Rodriguez has been downright dominating opponents for over a month now — he's posted a 1.00 ERA in his last seven starts — and yesterday against the Giants was no exception. San Francisco only managed two hits and one (unearned) run off Rodriguez in six innings of work.

With the well-deserved victory, he improved to 18-6. With two remaining, Rodriguez has a real shot at joining the 20-win club.

Was that one of his goals?

“At the beginning of the season, I was really thinking go 200 innings,” Rodriguez said. “That was all my goal this year, go 200 innings, 30-plus starts and I made the 30-plus already, so now I’m looking for the 200 innings.”

Sitting at 191 1/3, his greatest goal is certainly an attainable one. Rodriguez’s next strikeout will also be his 200th of the season, another fine benchmark.

While numbers are always nice notches to have, they symbolize something greater with Rodriguez: He’s delivering on that promise from wire-to-wire.

“Consistency has been really key for him,” Xander Bogaerts said. “Especially these last couple months of the second half. He’s faced some strong teams also. It’s not like he’s been facing beneath-.500 teams. It’s been good teams and he’s been giving quality starts. Especially with some of our starters out, he’s been picking up the slack.”

After a few seasons of will-he-put-it-all-together whispers, Rodriguez has picked up more than his fair share of the slack in 2019.

### **Usual suspects carry Red Sox to win at Fenway Park**

Chris Mason

Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts provided the offense, Eduardo Rodriguez was excellent, and the Red Sox knocked off the Giants, 5-4, in yesterday’s series finale.

When they’ve won at Fenway Park this season, it’s often using this formula.

The two infielders have been far and away Boston’s most consistent hitters, and when Rodriguez starts at home, the Sox are 13-3. When anyone else does? They’re 24-38.

Here are five takes from a beautiful fall afternoon at the ballpark:

#### 1. Devers wins battle

Tasked with a tough left-on-left matchup against Madison Bumgarner, Devers still got the better of the Giants ace.

He went 2 for 2 with a pair of RBI singles in his first at-bats against the legendary lefty, and the second was particularly impressive, as Devers stayed on a two-strike cutter and pulled it into right field.

He’s the first player under 23 years old to post a 110 RBI season since Miguel Cabrera did it back in 2005.

#### 2. Bogaerts wins, too

Like his partner-in-slugging, Bogaerts hit RBI singles in his first two at-bats against Bumgarner, driving three runners home. They weren’t rockets, but they found outfield grass.

“I was fortunate to put the barrel on the ball — or just the bat on the ball,” Bogaerts corrected. “I didn’t pick it up too well. He’s a great pitcher.”

#### 3. E-Rod dominates

Rodriguez threw six innings of two-hit, one run ball. The de facto ace of the ‘19 Sox, his teammates have come to expect it at this point.

"He's had a hell of a season," Brandon Workman said. "He's been kind of a model of consistency. He's taking the ball every fifth day. He's gone out there, pitched deep into ballgames. He's close to 20 wins. He's close to 200 innings. So those would be two great benchmarks for him to be able to reach."

#### 4. Workman's great escape

Given a 5-1 lead, the Red Sox bullpen let things get awfully hairy.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Workman had Evan Longoria at the plate with two outs, the bases loaded, and the tying run at third.

He'd already walked one home, but with a 3-2 count, Workman opted for the curveball in the do-or-die moment. He got Longoria to swing and miss at a pitch that would have been ball four.

Why did he and Christian Vazquez go breaking ball?

"Vazqy put down a two," Workman replied. "It's probably my best pitch. In the biggest spot we're going to probably stick with the best pitch, so that's what we went with."

#### 5. Up-and-down day for Yaz

Battling an illness, Mike Yastrzemski wasn't in the starting lineup for the Giants, but he did jump at the chance to pinch hit in the eighth inning, lacing a single into left field and coming around to score.

From there things went downhill though, as he misplayed a ball in left, and with San Francisco rallying in the ninth, went down swinging in his second at-bat.

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

### **E-Rod gets 18th W, nearing 3 career milestones**

Ian Browne

The official elimination of the Red Sox from postseason contention could come as soon as Friday, but it didn't happen on Eduardo Rodriguez's watch, and that was only fitting.

The lefty has been the one exceptional piece of Boston's starting rotation all season, and that was again the case Thursday as he moved closer to three career milestones.

Backed by another masterful effort that led the Red Sox to a 5-4 victory over the Giants at Fenway Park, Rodriguez notched his 18th victory while increasing his innings total to 191 1/3 and getting to 199 strikeouts.

Rodriguez has two more starts to get to 20 wins, 200 innings and 200 strikeouts. If the 20 wins and 200 K's seem more glamorous, the 200-inning mark is the one Rodriguez will find the most meaningful. The 26-year-old, who had been slowed by injuries the last three seasons, has gone to the post every turn for the entire season.

"I mean, at the beginning of the season, I was really thinking to go 200 innings," Rodriguez said. "That was all my goal this year, go 200 innings and make 30-plus starts, and I made the 30-plus [starts] already so now I'm looking for the 200 innings. The 200 strikeouts, that's something you can't control."

However, a 20-win season is something that sticks out on a pitcher's resume, and the Red Sox are doing all they can to help Rodriguez get there.

Manager Alex Cora has maneuvered his rotation down the stretch so Rodriguez goes every five days, even when his team has a day off mixed in.

"He can hold the workload," said Cora. "If he doesn't win that one [today], we'd probably make an adjustment. He's still got a shot, so he'll be ready for his next one in Texas, and I think we'll use the bullpen, obviously if they're rested, in those outings."

Rodriguez's quest for 20 came precariously close to ending with bullpen malfunctions in the eighth and ninth that trimmed Boston's 5-1 lead down to a run.

In fact, the bases were loaded with two strikes and two outs when Brandon Workman relied on a 3-2 curveball in the dirt to get Evan Longoria swinging to end the game. It was save No. 15 for Workman, who took pleasure in burying that final pitch to keep Rodriguez in the mix for 20 victories.

"He's had a hell of a season," Workman said. "I think he's knocking on the door of 200 innings as well. So if he can be 20 wins, 200 innings, that's benchmarks in two different areas for starters. So that would be incredible."

Rodriguez actually has been incredible of late. In his last seven starts, he has a 1.00 ERA. In 15 starts dating back to July 1, Rodriguez is 10-2 with a 2.21 ERA. Those are the numbers of an elite starter.

Over six innings, Rodriguez held the Giants to two hits and an unearned run, walking two and striking out 10.

"The backdoor cutter with two strikes, the changeup down and away, then he freezes you with the two-seam inside against righties," said Red Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts. "It's like he has a plan and has been able to execute it in all his starts. Especially me being DH today, seeing it on the TV, so I had a different kind of view. It was amazing how much the ball was moving."

To Rodriguez, most of his success has been a matter of health.

"I mean, like I said, the last couple of years have been injuries all the time," Rodriguez said. "This year, I feel really good. Workouts, bullpen [sessions], everything. It's been part of being healthy."

And also being more confident.

"I would say that I throw the pitches with purpose all the time and execute and have a really good plan with [pitching coach] Dana [LeVangie] and [catcher Christian Vázquez]. Every time I go out there, just have a really good plan to see the lineup I'm going to face and throw the pitches with confidence," Rodriguez said. "That's the biggest change I've made this year."

Thanks to Rodriguez and an offense that struck for five runs in the first two innings against Madison Bumgarner, the Red Sox at least avoided the indignity of getting eliminated at home.

"You see why he's good and his record is what it is. He's got good stuff, a four-pitch mix," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said of Rodriguez. "It looks like the hitters have trouble just picking it up. We were late quite a bit today on the fastball. It looks like it played a little quicker than even what the numbers say."

With their elimination number at one, the Red Sox (80-72) start a four-game series against the Rays on Friday.

### **Chavis (oblique) could be shut down for season**

Ian Browne

A day after the Red Sox decided to shut David Price down for the season, Michael Chavis was in jeopardy of being in the same situation.

The original plan was that Chavis would return from the injured list this weekend at Tropicana Field against the Rays, but that hit a snag when he felt more discomfort in his right oblique.

"Chavis, he was a little bit sore yesterday," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "So I don't know. We'll talk about it in the upcoming days, but I don't think that's moving where we thought it would go. He was looking good early in the week and yesterday he felt soreness. If that's the case, we're probably going to shut him down."

Chavis hasn't played for the Red Sox since Aug. 11. His first injury was a sprained AC joint in his left shoulder. While he was coming back from that ailment in a Minor League rehab assignment, he tweaked his oblique.

In 95 games this season, the rookie right-handed hitter is slashing .254/.322/.444 with 18 homers and 58 RBIs.

Developments are more encouraging with some other position players.

Mookie Betts, who hasn't played in a week due to inflammation in his left foot, should return for this weekend's four-game series against the Rays. Betts is likely to be Boston's designated hitter on the turf.

J.D. Martinez was out of Thursday's starting lineup for the third straight game with tightness in his left groin. He is day to day.

Bochy knows how tough it is to repeat

Giants manager Bruce Bochy, who led San Francisco to World Series championships in 2010, '12 and '14, can certainly understand why the Red Sox had such a tough time trying to repeat this season.

"It's hard, because you look at the other teams and the talent on those teams -- a lot of things have to go right for you to win a championship," said Bochy. "You've got to have guys have at least their normal years, if not better years. You have to have some surprises, maybe the ball has to bounce your way, or even calls.

"But to go all the way, it's really, really difficult. Now, to do that again, I mean, it's tough."

No MLB team has repeated since the Yankees in 2000, and that doesn't surprise Bochy.

"We've been through it," said Bochy. "When you're trying to get there and you're approaching postseason or in the postseason, you're running on adrenaline. It's hard to maintain that. It is. That's one of the toughest things in this game, but we all have a job and responsibility to do that. As much as you say it, it's still tough for these players, because we play so many games.

"To get yourself up to that level every day, it takes something really special. That's what you sometimes have to remind yourself as a team, as a player, and that's what we would try to do."

Red Sox honor Bochy

Speaking of Bochy, the Red Sox honored the soon-to-be-retired skipper in a pregame ceremony. They gave Bochy a grandstand seat with the number 2,000 on the back of it. That was in recognition of Bochy earning career victory No. 2,000 on Wednesday.

Red Sox front office executive Tony La Russa, who had 2,728 career wins and matched Bochy's three World Series championships as a manager, took part in the ceremony. So, too, did Cora.

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

### **After huge steps forward, Red Sox can't afford Eduardo Rodriguez to step back**

Rob Bradford

Eduardo Rodriguez deserves this recognition.

In a season that has had to be highlighted by individual accomplishments, the Red Sox' starter has had his fair share with his six-inning gem Thursday (run, two hits, 10 strikeouts) serving as the latest example. (For a recap of the Red Sox' win, [click here](#).)

To think about how far Rodriguez has come even in the past few months makes the ascension notable. You had the early-March spring training game in Port St. Lucie when Red Sox manager Alex Cora called out the lefty for his inability to go deep into games. Then there was that start on March 31 that led to a story with the first line, "Eduardo Rodriguez tested the Red Sox' patience once again."

Despite coming into spring training in the best shape of his life, and four full big league seasons under his belt, the 26-year-old seemed destined to another campaign of promise but not enough punctuation. It appears Rodriguez has finally found his exclamation point.

He is two wins away from 20 for the season and just 8 2/3 innings shy of 200. By making his 32nd start Rodriguez becomes the first Red Sox pitcher to make that many prior to turning 27 years old since Jon Lester managed the feat from 2008-10. On a team starving for an ace, he has officially lived that life in 2019.

"I mean, like I said, the last couple of years have been injuries all the time," Rodriguez reflected. "This year I feel really good. Workouts, bullpens, everything. It's been part of being healthy."

So now there can't be any turning back. This version of Rodriguez has become too important to the Red Sox.

This is a team that has a rotation full of uncertainty thanks to the injuries Chris Sale and David Price are heading into the offseason with, along with Nathan Eovaldi's struggles in the first of his four-year deal. The Red Sox roster was supposed to be built on a foundation of starters and now finds itself teetering on their new ace.

The 20-win, 200-inning milestones would be nice stories for the here and now. But the true importance of Rodriguez's existence resides in the future.

In a matter of months, Rodriguez has gone from the rotation's luxury to this team's ultimate necessity.

"I do believe the offseason had to do a lot with what's going on," Cora said. "It's the first time in a while it was, 'Just get ready for next year.' He didn't pitch that much towards the end, and that game in L.A. gave him confidence. He was outstanding that night. Going into spring training, he had some goals. He's been talking about them. He's physically at another level right now. It seems like he's getting stronger. The velocity is up, the changeup action is a lot better, he's adding a breaking ball, he has a cutter backdoor, front door sinker. There's a lot of weapons there. You can't run against him. He does an outstanding job holding runners. He's doing anything."

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

### **Triston Casas one potential gem in a rebuilding Red Sox farm system**

John Tomase

The next generation of Red Sox prospects isn't nearly as deep or talented as the one that preceded it, with perhaps one exception -- Triston Casas.

The imposing slugger was just named Red Sox minor league player of the year by Baseball America after slamming 20 homers with 81 RBIs in 120 games, all but two of them at Low-A Greenville.

A first-round pick in 2018, Casas was limited to just two games last year by a thumb injury. The 6-foot-4, 238-pounder was drafted out of American Heritage High School in Plantation, Fla. on his power potential, and on that front he certainly delivered in 2019.

Casas's 19 homers not only tied for third in the South Atlantic League (he added his 20th with High-A Salem), but the 19-year-old was the only teenager to crack the top 10. Such outstanding production at such a young age, against older, college-tested competition, bodes well for his future.

"I think it went really well," Casas said at Fenway Park on Thursday, where he was honored as the organization's minor league offensive player of the year. "I feel like I learned a lot in this first season and I'm looking forward to the next one."

Casas showed legitimate growth from the beginning of his full-season debut to the end. He opened the season by hitting just .180 (9 for 50) in his first 15 games before heating up in May. He finished at .256 with a .350 on base percentage and an .830 OPS. He credited the turnaround to tweaks.

"Not an overhaul or anything," he said. "As the information gets a little bit better and the hitting coaches are able to relay a little more to me, we tweaked a few things, but nothing too drastic. It was a lot of things. It was set up, positioning in the box, a little bit of swing path and changing my leg kick a little bit to try time up the pitching a little bit better.

"I feel like the adjustment I made from high school to where I am right now is pretty drastic, but so is the pitching. I feel like throughout the year I made a lot of adjustments. It's led me to where I am today. I'm pretty happy where I'm at, but I'd like to get into the offseason and try to perfect it."

And what might that mean? While Casas possesses advanced strike zone recognition, he also struck out 118 times and will need to increase his contact rate.

"Strikeouts are a part of the game," he said. "I had more strikeouts than hits this year, which is something I need to improve on, but it's something I'm not really concerned with. It's part of the game. I'll keep swinging and doing my game."

When the season started, Casas was only a year removed from his high school schedule, which -- even in baseball-intense Florida -- comes nowhere close to the demands of pro ball. But all things considered, he held up well.

"Man, definitely the quick turnarounds," he said. "Coming from high school, you play two or three times a week, maybe. It's pretty different from getting an off-day every two weeks. That's the biggest thing, understanding you get a lot of at-bats, quick turnarounds, an opportunity to fail. It's just a matter of coming out and putting yesterday behind you and putting your best foot forward the next day."

Drafted as a third baseman, Casas is built more like a first baseman already, and evaluators expect that's where he'll settle. The Red Sox seem to agree, which is why he played 94 games at first base and only eight at third.

The fact that he's already built like Red Sox All-Star J.D. Martinez makes it easy to envision him one day calling Fenway Park home. Thursday's visit reminded him of what the future might hold.



"This never gets old, coming to Fenway," he said. "After this year, it felt really good."

### **Eduardo Rodriguez quest for 20 wins might be only reason left to watch Red Sox**

John Tomase

The quest for 20 continues.

The Red Sox have nothing left to play for except pride and individual achievements, and they've crossed a few off the list recently with 50 doubles each for Xander Bogaerts and Rafael Devers, 30 homers for Devers, and 130 runs for Mookie Betts.

The biggest item on the to-do list, however, might be getting left-hander Eduardo Rodriguez to 20 wins, a plateau last reached by a Red Sox starter during Rick Porcello's Cy Young-winning 2016 season, when he went 22-4.

E-Rod improved to 18-6 on Thursday with six innings of one-run ball in a 5-4 win over the Giants, and the run was unearned. The victory didn't come without some palpitations, however, as the visitors loaded the bases with nobody out in the ninth and the Red Sox leading 5-3.

Closer Brandon Workman escaped the mess largely of his own making by walking in one but eventually striking out the side to keep Rodriguez on track for what would be one of the more improbable 20-win seasons in team annals.

"He's had a hell of a season," Workman said. "He's thrown the ball really well. I think he's knocking on the door of 200 innings as well. So if he can be 20 wins, 200 innings, that's benchmarks in two different areas for starters. So that would be incredible."

It hasn't been a fluke, especially not recently. Rodriguez struggled early in the season to command his fastball up in the zone, but once he recognized the damage he could do above the letters at 95 mph, especially when paired with a vicious changeup below the knees, he took off.

He struck out 10 on Thursday and walked only two, lowering his ERA to 3.53, which is good for seventh in the American League. He has two starts remaining to win two games and throw the final 8.2 innings he needs to reach 200 for the first time.

"He's been outstanding," said manager Alex Cora. "What else can we say? It's been going on for a while. Now you see the strikeouts way up there and the walks staying low. He's put in a great season."

Rodriguez is slated to start Tuesday in Texas and then at home against Baltimore in the season finale a week from Sunday. If he wins the first start, he'll be given every opportunity to claim the second, which would come against the team that signed him as an amateur free agent in 2010 before trading him to the Red Sox for reliever Andrew Miller in 2010.

Rodriguez is also virtually guaranteed to surpass the 200-strikeout threshold for the first time, because he sits at 199.

"I mean, I have two more starts and just go out there and try to do the best I can and give us a chance to win those games," Rodriguez said. "Just go out there and perform and try to be good again. At the beginning of the season, I was really thinking, go 200 innings. That was all my goal this year, go 200 innings, 30-plus starts and I made the 30-plus already so now I'm looking for the 200 innings. 200 strikeouts, that's something you can't control. You go out there and execute the pitches and if they swing and miss, they strike out, so if it happens, it happens."

Rodriguez returned to that phrase when it comes to 20 wins, but Cora said the rest of the team is intent on helping him get there.

"Twenty wins is something the guys are pushing for me right now and if it happens, it happens," Rodriguez said. "You know how baseball is. You can have a game of one run or no runs and still get a no-decision. It all depends on how the games are going to go."

### **Hall of Fame manager Tony La Russa remaining with Red Sox**

John Tomase

The Red Sox aren't fully cleaning house of Dave Dombrowski's top lieutenants -- Hall of Fame manager Tony La Russa has agreed to remain with the organization, per an industry source.

La Russa arrived as a special assistant to Dombrowski, but he ingratiated himself to the entire baseball operations department. A constant presence at Fenway Park and a frequent observer on the road, La Russa served not only as a sounding board for manager Alex Cora, but anyone in the organization who wanted to draw on his 56 years of big league experience.

A three-time World Series champion and four-time Manager of the Year, the 74-year-old La Russa made an effort to get to know even lower-tenured members of the front office, often over dinner. He didn't push his views so much as make himself available, earning respect throughout the organization for both his demeanor and his insight.

The news on La Russa comes one day after the Red Sox parted ways with Frank Wren, one of Dombrowski's top assistants, and a former general manager of the Braves.

The news that the Red Sox were in talks to keep La Russa was first reported by the MLB Network's Jon Heyman.

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

#### **With little else on the line, Red Sox band together to get 20 wins for Eduardo Rodriguez**

Sean McAdam

The final scores don't matter much now, and haven't, really, for some time. Since early September, it's been obvious that the Red Sox' postseason status moved from "decided longshot" to "eliminated in all but name."

As the Red Sox head out for their final road trip of the season, their tragic number is one — that is, one more loss, or one more win by the Tampa Bay Rays will officially seal their fate. As fate would have it, the first stop on the Red Sox' final trek is Tropicana Field. Their season will almost certainly end sometime in the next four days, perhaps as soon as Friday night.

So, with no chance to properly defend their title in October, the focus has shifted inside the clubhouse. Those with injuries are either being shut down for good (David Price, Michael Chavis) or having their potential return to the lineup managed with the utmost of caution (Mookie Betts, Heath Hembree, J.D. Martinez).

For those healthy enough to still play — because someone has to — it's about individual achievements. The race to lead the team in doubles and RBI is being waged between the two occupants of the left side of the infield, Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts.

But the goal in which seemingly everyone is invested in trying to get Eduardo Rodriguez a 20-win season.

Even before Rodriguez took the mound Thursday afternoon against the San Francisco Giants, Alex Cora and Dana LeVangie reconfigured the rotation to provide Rodriguez with three more starts instead of two. The Sox took advantage of last Monday's off day to have Rodriguez pitch on regular rest Thursday. Next up are starts in Texas next Tuesday and another a week from Sunday, in Game No. 162.

Should Rodriguez run the table in all three, he'll finish with 20 victories.

Thursday represented a good first step toward that goal. Nicked for an unearned run in the first inning, Rodriguez pitched through the sixth and didn't allow another run. Meanwhile, his teammates, who have provided him with excellent run support for most of the season, put up five in the first two innings.

Still, that left nine outs for the bullpen to nail down to preserve the win. It got hairy in the ninth when Brandon Workman, called on to protect a two-run cushion, loaded the bases, walked in one run with a walk and went to 3-and-2 on Evan Longoria.

But Workman got Longoria to swing through a curveball on a full count, leaving three Giants stranded and positioning Rodriguez to still get credit for the victory. Yes, closing out a win and staving off elimination was nice, but Workman acknowledged he was also thinking of making sure Rodriguez got the win.

"Definitely," he said. "He's had a hell of a season. He's thrown the ball really well. He's knocking on the door of 200 innings (191.1), so if he can do 20 wins and go 200 innings, that would be incredible."

"There's been a lot of talk about that," confirmed Cora. "We set the rotation for him to go as many times as possible with regular rest. We still have a shot."

While the Red Sox cratered in the wild card race, Rodriguez has been getting better. Over his last seven starts, he sports an ERA of exactly 1.00. And in 15 outings since the start of July, Rodriguez is 10-2 with a 2.21 ERA. His team, meanwhile, is 12-3 in his last 15 starts, and his fastball has shown remarkable explosiveness, especially this late in the season.

Rodriguez himself seems a bit uncomfortable of all the attention placed on getting him his 20th win.

"I have two more starts and I'll just go out there and try to do the best I can," said Rodriguez, "and give a chance to win those games. Just try to perform and be good again."

In some ways, Rodriguez is more proud of the likelihood that he will reach the 200 inning plateau, since that was his stated personal goal at the start of the season.

"Twenty wins is something the guys are pushing for me right now," he said. "If it happens, it happens."

Rodriguez knows that he can't control outcomes. For instance, in his previous two starts, he came with a loss and a no-decision despite allowing just one earned run each time. And the emphasis on starter wins has been greatly reduced.

Still, it's a nice round number and something pitchers — privately perhaps — still welcome.

And, let's face it: it's not like there's much else of any significance attached to the final 10 days.

### **BSJ Game Report: Red Sox 5, Giants 4 – 3 Things We Learned**

Sean McAdam

The Red Sox closed out their homestand with a 5-4 win over the San Francisco Giants, averting a sweep. Here are three things we learned:

1. Bogaerts, Devers battle for team supremacy.

The Red Sox scored five runs in the win and all were knocked in either by third baseman Rafael Devers or shortstop Xander Bogaerts. In the first inning, Devers knocked in one run with a single and, one batter later, Bogaerts did the same. In the second inning, Devers singled home the third Boston run before Bogaerts came through with a two-run single. Here's how the two matchup with 10 games remaining: Devers has 110 RBI, Bogaerts has 109. They each have 50 doubles. Bogaerts has 31 homers, Devers has 30. Devers has a .555 slugging percentage while Bogaerts is at .549. There's very little difference — statistically speaking — between them. No, Bogaerts said, they're not conspiring to finish with the exactly same numbers. "But it does seem like that," said Bogaerts with a chuckle. "It seems like when I get one of something, he gets one of the other. Then, the next day, we kind of switch it up and it kind of evens out. We don't have much chatter about that. I think the doubles (and the race to get to 50) was one of the things we kind of talked about. But it's been so far, and especially with me being the chaser, it's been a little fun."

## 2. Workman growing into role.

It was hairy for a time when Brandon Workman filled the bases with a two-run lead, then walked his second batter of the inning to force in a run, shaving the lead to a single run. But ultimately, on a full count, Workman got Evan Longoria swinging on a 3-and-2 curveball, preserving the win and leaving the bases full of Giants. Workman noticed that the Giants were sitting on his breaking pitch, so he used his fastball to get ahead in some counts. For Workman, it was his 15th save opportunity, and while he's blown six saves, he's had just two since July 4. "That's what he's been doing all season — avoiding the damage," said Alex Cora. "It was a tough (inning) today because we didn't make a play (error by Chris Owings to put the leadoff man) and then he walked a couple. But he made some good pitches with the fastball and he has one of the best breaking balls in the big leagues."

## 3. Wren out as restructuring continues.

Without any sort of formal announcement, the Red Sox have dismissed Frank Wren, senior vice president of player personnel. Wren was a loyalist of Dave Dombrowski, having worked with him before in earlier stops in Montreal and Miami. He's also served as GM of the Baltimore Orioles and Atlanta Braves. Dombrowski hired Wren not long after being appointed president of baseball operations and, along with Tony La Russa, was one of Dombrowski's closest and most trusted advisors. In fact, there's been speculation that part of what spelled the end for Dombrowski, fired almost three weeks ago, is that he excluded others in the Baseball Operations department while forming a close circle with Wren and La Russa. Wren had another two years remaining on his contract. La Russa's future is unknown, but he continues to be around the club and still watches games from the executive box where he once sat with Dombrowski. Wren is the second known person to be let go this week. Jon Heyman was the first to report Wren's firing. Earlier this week, the Sox informed special assistant Eddie Bane that he would return for 2020. Bain, however, was hired by Ben Cherington, Dombrowski's predecessor.

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

### **Eduardo Rodriguez's sparkling season a reminder of what Red Sox have lacked**

Jen McCaffrey

As Eduardo Rodriguez dazzled from the mound once again, his performance served as a stark reminder of what could have been for the Red Sox this season.

Rodriguez inched closer to 20 wins, 200 strikeouts and 200 innings pitched, a trio of statistics he's never come close to in his career. But he did watch his more accomplished teammates, pitchers like Chris Sale and David Price, reach them year after year.

Now, he's the only Sox starter even remotely close to those numbers. Rodriguez picked up his 18th win of the year on Thursday and now sits at 191 1/3 innings and 199 strikeouts with room for two more starts on the calendar.

"Two hundred innings, I think every starter wants to do (that)," manager Alex Cora said prior to Thursday's 5-4 win. "It means your offseason program, everything you work on in spring training and what you did throughout the season, it worked. Thirty starts, 200 innings, all those numbers."

Just a day earlier, Cora revealed David Price would be shut down for the season, likely needing offseason wrist surgery to remove a cyst that didn't break up following a platelet-rich plasma shot. Chris Sale hasn't pitched since Aug. 13 with left elbow inflammation, and Rick Porcello has had a frustratingly awful year. Nathan Eovaldi has had a similar season to Price and Sale, but in reverse order — injury stunting his first half and ineffectiveness the story of his second half.

"In Chris' situation there are a lot of positives going on in his rehab as far as testing and all that," Cora said. "The throwing program will start whenever the throwing program starts, but we do feel that he has made strides that's been going through in Fort Myers. We do feel the situation with David is something minor. There's always question marks and let's see how it goes. But at the same time, there's a lot of positives. We feel there are not too many red flags in the situations that will be like, we're not going to count on these guys next year."

If Rodriguez's offseason and spring training worked as Cora said, why didn't that of the rest of the rotation? The easy answer is that Rodriguez didn't pitch nearly as much down the stretch last year as his teammates, but it's always a little more complicated than that.

Between September and October last season, Rodriguez pitched 25 innings with just 10 innings in the playoffs. Sale pitched 27 innings between the two months, but did make three October starts. Porcello (38 IP), Eovaldi (42 1/3 IP) and Price (49 2/3 IP) didn't have much downtime in September and added a heavy workload in October, too. Nevertheless, the Dodgers' starters had a similar workload and fared significantly better this season with the exception of Rich Hill's injury-shortened year.

As the Red Sox wrap up a disappointing season, the rotation uncertainties for 2020 loom large and the paperwork for their offseason maintenance plan is undoubtedly already underway.

Porcello will be hitting free agency, but Price, Sale and Eovaldi will all be recovering from some type of injury that forced them to miss significant time this year. All three are under contract for several more seasons and likely aren't going anywhere.

Cora insists he's not concerned about his pitchers' health heading into next season, but what else can he say.

All that's left of 2019 is to watch Rodriguez chase a trio of stats that should have been within striking distance for every member of the starting staff.

### **Mike Yastrzemski's unforgettable series is over, so what's next for his Giants career?**

Andrew Baggarly

Mike Yastrzemski didn't start Thursday afternoon's series finale at Fenway Park. Giants manager Bruce Bochy wanted the rookie outfielder to observe a few hours in the daylight here and sponge up the atmosphere.

But there was occasion for one more ovation. This one might have been the clearest and loudest of them all.

The Red Sox were leading by four runs when Yastrzemski pinch-hit in the eighth inning. So the faithful could afford to be even more generous with their respectful applause for the grandson of Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski.

Whap. First-pitch single.

As moving and meaningful as Mike Yastrzemski's week has been, for all the priceless family photographs that were captured in front of a green screen that required no superimposition, as much as the sight of a 29-year-old rookie catching a ceremonial first pitch from his legendary grandfather stirred a sense of legacy and family and renewal and so many other stiff-lipped, mostly unspoken universalities that could have leapt off the pages of an Updike novel, there was practical importance to this series against the Boston Red Sox as well.

When you are a 29-year-old rookie, there is practical importance to every series.

You are constantly proving yourself. As far as Bochy is concerned, Yastrzemski has proven enough.

"You can't say for a September call-up, for example, that you get a true, true read," Bochy said. "But you look at what Yastrzemski has done. He's done a great job of establishing himself as not just a major-league regular, but a solid player."

Yastrzemski hit nine home runs in August. He also has gone through cold stretches. He was nearly sent down with a .227 average in July. But the sample size is large enough now: 377 plate appearances, an .840 OPS, the first 20-homer season by a Giants rookie since Dave Kingman in 1973, a left-handed bat that fits beyond a platoon (.333 average vs. left-handed pitchers) and even works in the San Francisco breeze (a modest but passable .756 OPS at Oracle Park).

Yastrzemski has 41 extra-base hits, and if you scan the 10 other names of Giants rookies to reach that number in the six-decade San Francisco era, you won't find many pan flashes: Matt Duffy, Buster Posey, Will Clark, Chili Davis, Gary Matthews, Garry Maddox, Dave Kingman, Jim Ray Hart, Willie Kirkland, Orlando Cepeda.

Yet after all that, a scout would strain to write up Yastrzemski as anything beyond an everyday player on a second-division team, or a useful bench piece on a contender. That's understandable. When you are a 29-year-old rookie, you can open eyes in 377 plate appearances. You have to succeed for a bit longer to open minds.

The Giants are still sorting through their inventory to figure out what they have. Club president Farhan Zaidi has plucked and tugged at the waiver wire and the fringes of other 40-man rosters all spring and summer, bringing pieces of found material back to the nest: Yastrzemski, Mike Gerber, Jaylin Davis, Joey Rickard, Alex Dickerson, Joe McCarthy. (Don't forget Kevin Pillar, Chris Shaw and Austin Slater, too.) And those are just the outfielders on the 40-man roster.

Over the three-game series at Fenway Park, Bochy started eight different players in the outfield or at designated hitter.

So after all that nest building and all that arbitrage ... what now?

It's about to get crowded again. The Giants will only drop five impending free agents from their 40-man roster after the season: Madison Bumgarner, Will Smith, Stephen Vogt, Fernando Abad and (assuming he declines a player option) Tony Watson.

It would be a stunner if Vogt did not re-sign. The Bumgarner situation is expected to take time to play out.

In the short term, though, the Giants will have minimal flexibility on the 40-man roster because they must instantly fill three of those five vacancies by adding back three players from the 60-day injured list: Reyes Moronta, Trevor Gott and Steven Duggar. (Zach Green, if added back, would make a fourth.)

There are certain to be other subtractions, since the Giants also have roughly a dozen minor-leaguers who will earn more than a moment's consideration to be added to the 40-man roster in November and thus protected from the Rule 5 draft. A non-exhaustive list includes Jalen Miller, Garrett Williams, Caleb Baragar, Gregory Santos and Franklin Labour.

Whether it's from their largesse of outfielders or their glut of recently found relief pitchers (a group that includes Burch Smith, Kyle Barraclough, Wandy Peralta and Ricardo Pinto), expect a good deal of the 40-man roster to turn over again before pitchers and catchers report to Scottsdale in February.

What was the point of this entire exercise, then? What is to be gained by cycling through a National League-record 64 players when so much of this nest will scatter to the wind?

Yastrzemski, for starters. He is a keeper. So is Dickerson, if he can stay healthy. Jandel Gustave appears to be a late-inning asset in the bullpen and Donovan Solano is a .337 hitter who can play in the middle infield. The Giants are better for having found those flecks of gold, even if they had to spend all summer splashing mud and working the sluice box.

Even if all they gained was Yastrzemski, this is what they have: a potential everyday player who will make close to the minimum salary for the next three seasons and can be optioned freely to the minor leagues at any time through 2021.

During these three days in Boston, all through the media requests and family time and the waves of emotion as his personal and professional identities intersected here, Yastrzemski still had a routine to follow. He still had to get ready to play. He had to remain focused on the small matter of producing and proving himself. And he went 4 for 13 in the series with five runs, a double, a homer, two RBIs and two walks.

He said the most important souvenirs he took away from this series at Fenway Park were the pictures with his grandfather on the field. "Something I'll cherish forever," he said. "Just one of those once-in-a-lifetime moments."

There was one other important takeaway, though.

"As great an environment as it was, there was some stress and some stuff I wasn't used to that I learned how to deal with," he said. "I learned it's possible to get through those things and those high, intense situations. That gives me more confidence as we move to Atlanta (for the next series starting Friday)."

Yastrzemski remained in the game after his pinch single in the eighth inning Thursday and the rest of it was ... well, forgettable. He committed an error on a missed catch in front of the Green Monster, and then he struck out with the bases loaded and the Giants down two runs in the ninth. Following a bases-loaded walk to Kevin Pillar, Red Sox reliever Brandon Workman struck out Evan Longoria on a nasty 3-2 breaking ball to close out the Red Sox's 5-4 victory.

Bumgarner allowed five runs on nine hits that were so soft that Bochy didn't hesitate to drag out his first "buzzer's luck" in some time during his postgame comments. Slater couldn't make a catch in right field. Pillar lost a ball in the sun in center. There were broken-bat hits galore as Bumgarner's record fell to 9-9 following what might have been his third-to-last start in a Giants uniform.

Afterward, there was one more reminder that Yastrzemski was still a rookie among so many others. He returned to his locker to find his clothes pilfered and a plastic-wrapped costume waiting for him. It was rookie dress-up day, and if you had "Reno 911!"-themed ultra-tight police attire as the choice in your office pool, then congratulations. Debra has your winnings. She'll be in her cubicle after lunch.

Bochy hobbled through the clubhouse in his socks, smiling at the scene – a larger police presence than at a political convention. Some of those rookies in tight polyester shorts will be back next season. Some will not.

At least one of them found a home in the Bay Area, while also returning to roost in the Bay State.

## **\* *The New York Post***

### **The Red Sox are really cleaning house now**

Mollie Walker

The firing of Dave Dombrowski was only the first, as the Red Sox attempt to remodel their organization following a disappointing season in 2019.

Ten months removed from winning a World Series, the Red Sox fired their president of baseball operations two weeks ago. Then on Thursday, Boston fired front office executive Frank Wren and scout Eddie Bane, per MLB Network.

The report claims that there are likely more changes to come, particularly to the amateur scouting department.

Boston is on the verge of missing the playoffs for the first time since 2015.

The Red Sox have some significant decisions to make this offseason. The pitching staff was mostly to blame for the regression from last season's 108-win team, but there are also questions about the future of two of their best hitters.

Mookie Betts is set to become a free agent after the 2020 season and the possibility of a trade has been rumored. J.D. Martinez has an opt-out clause in his contract after this season.

## **\* *The San Francisco Chronicle***

### **Giants rally but fall to Red Sox after another tough Bumgarner road start**

Henry Schulman

Being part of Boston royalty does not excuse a visiting player from rookie dress-up day. Like all the other newbies in the Giants clubhouse, Mike Yastrzemski had to travel to Atlanta wearing a gold, sateen "Reno 911" cop outfit.

Apparently the police in the biggest little city in the world wear tight shorts and carry plastic batons on their plastic belts.

Nor did Yastrzemski's status indemnify him from failing in the ninth inning of Thursday's 5-4 loss to the Red Sox.

With the bases loaded, one out and the Giants down two runs, Yastrzemski struck out against Brandon Workman with a chance to beat the Red Sox and officially knock the defending World Series champs out of the 2019 playoff race.

Wouldn't that have been something?



Instead, Boston held on to live another day and prevent a Giants sweep at Fenway Park. Workman walked Kevin Pillar with two outs to force home a run, but fanned Evan Longoria on a gutsy but perfect 3-2 curveball for his third strikeout of the inning to complete the Brian Wilson save.

Yastrzemski otherwise had a terrific homecoming week that included a home run and lots of love from fans of both teams. He also got an education that might help him next year, when he will be exempt from whatever costumes the 2020 rookie class is required to wear.

“As great an environment as it was, I saw situations I wasn’t used to,” Yastrzemski said. “I learned it’s possible to get through those things, the high-intensity situations. It gives me a little more confidence going to Atlanta.”

The Giants will complete a winning road schedule with their three-game series against the Braves, who could celebrate a National League East title by winning Friday night.

Tyler Beede will try to prevent that after being the one Boston-area guy who did not get to play at Fenway. Thursday would have been his normal day, but he was pushed back to keep Madison Bumgarner on turn to pitch Bruce Bochy’s final game.

Bumgarner could not have been unluckier as he reached 200 innings for the seventh time, and the first time since the Year of the Dirt Bike and the Year of the Broken Hand.

Bumgarner was bled, bloomed and broken-batted for five runs over the first two innings on seven hits, only one of which was hit over 90 mph. That was Andrew Benintendi’s first-inning double, which Pillar could have caught. The defense overall was not Bumgarner’s friend.

“I’d like to be upset about the game, but I feel pretty good about the way I threw,” he said.

Nevertheless, Bumgarner completed an awful season on the road with a 5.29 ERA, allowing 50 earned runs in 85 innings. At home, where he has two more games, his ERA is 2.80.

Bumgarner won three road games in 2019, all within the NL West, at San Diego, Arizona and Colorado.

At a time when the real royalty in baseball is numbers, Bumgarner’s road stats will give some potential suitors pause in free agency this winter. In a way, that could help the Giants by limiting his opportunities elsewhere. It sounds harsh, but that’s reality.

“It’s crazy that it worked out that way, but I don’t believe there’s any reason for it,” Bumgarner said. “For whatever reason, that’s the way it worked out.”

Bumgarner kept the Giants from being blown out, which allowed them to launch a comeback with two outs and nobody on in the eighth inning of a 5-1 game.

Yastrzemski pinch-hit and got one more standing ovation, and one more hit, ahead of Pillar’s two-run double in that inning.

The Giants loaded the bases with nobody out in the ninth on an error, a Cristhian Adames single and a Chris Shaw walk. Workman then struck out Brandon Crawford and Yastrzemski before walking Pillar for the Giants’ fourth run, then striking out Longoria.

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

**Rodriguez, Red Sox beat Giants 5-4 to avoid sweep**

A year after their record-setting, World Series championship season, the Boston Red Sox are looking for meaning wherever they can find it.

Long ago finished in the AL East race and on the verge of wild-card elimination as well, the defending champs managed to keep alive Eduardo Rodriguez's chances of a 20-win season, barely saving his 18th victory while beating the San Francisco Giants 5-4 on Thursday.

"There was a lot of talk about that," said manager Alex Cora, who led the team to 108 wins and the title in his first season on the bench. "We set the rotation for him to get as many wins as possible. If we didn't win this one, we probably make an adjustment but he's still got a shot."

After entering the season as the No. 5 starter behind ace Chris Sale, Cy Young winners David Price and Rick Porcello and World Series hero Nathan Eovaldi, Rodriguez (18-6) has established himself as Boston's best pitcher in an otherwise forgettable season.

He struck out 10 over six innings of two-hit ball, walking two and allowing one unearned run to reach 191 1/3 innings pitched and 199 strikeouts for the season -- both career highs, by far. He is scheduled to start again on Tuesday against Texas and then again against the Orioles on the final day of the season.

"He's been a model of consistency," said Brandon Workman, who pitched into and out of a bases-loaded jam in the ninth for his 15th save. "He's close to 20 wins and he's close to 200 innings pitched. That's two good benchmarks for him to reach."

Xander Bogaerts had a pair of RBI singles to drive in three runs, and Rafael Devers had two RBI for Boston, which would be eliminated from the wild-card race with one more loss or Tampa Bay win.

Mike Yastrzemski, the grandson of Red Sox Hall of Famer Carl Yastrzemski, was supposed to get the day off "to take it all in," but manager Bruce Bochy sent him up as a pinch-hitter in the eighth. He singled and scored as the Giants cut a four-run deficit to 5-3.

He came up again in the ninth after Workman loaded the bases with nobody out, then struck out Brandon Crawford.

"I was hoping," Bochy said. "That would have been pretty nice if Yaz hit a gapper or something to win the game for us."

Yastrzemski struck out and then, after Kevin Pillar walked to make it a one-run game, Workman fanned Evan Longoria.

"It was really fun to have the best seat in the house for the game," Yastrzemski said. "As great of an environment as it was, there was some stress and some stuff that I wasn't used to. I learned how to deal with it. ... So that just kind of gives me a little more confidence."

Madison Bumgarner (9-9) lost in his first career start at Fenway Park, giving up five runs on nine hits and two walks in five innings while striking out seven. He allowed the first four Boston batters to reach safely and fell behind 2-1 after one inning, and 5-1 after two.

That was the last of the scoring until Pillar hit a two-run double off Marcus Walden in the eighth to make it 5-3. Matt Barnes came in and walked Longoria, then gave up Buster Posey's high chopper that handcuffed Devers at third to load the bases.

But Barnes struck out Stephen Vogt to end the inning.

YAZ

The younger Yastrzemski said the mementoes he will value most from the week are a pair of poster-sized photos of him and his grandfather walking in front of the Green Monster on Tuesday, and catching the ceremonial first pitch from the former Red Sox captain on Wednesday night.

"I think those will be something that I cherish forever," said Mike Yastrzemski, who homered in Tuesday night's game. "Just one of those once-in-a-lifetime moments."

#### E-ROD

Rodriguez is 9-0 in interleague starts in the past three seasons, including Game 4 of the 2018 World Series, and the Red Sox have a 15-0 record in those games.

Rodriguez has gone four straight starts with at least six innings and no more than one run. He has made it at least five innings in 26 straight starts since the beginning of May. Boston is 24-8 in his starts this year, tying Gerrit Cole for the most wins behind any starting pitcher in the majors.

#### NOTED

The game was played with three umpires because Sean Barber, who was scheduled to work the plate, was a late scratch. No reason was given. ... Bumgarner reached the 200-inning mark for the seventh time in his career.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Red Sox: Reigning AL MVP Mookie Betts has been out a week for toe inflammation but could play at Tampa Bay this weekend, manager Alex Cora said. If he does, it would be at DH. ... J.D. Martinez missed his second straight game after leaving Tuesday night with groin soreness. He could also return for the Rays series.... LHP David Price will see a hand specialist.

#### UP NEXT

Giants: Start a three-game series at Atlanta on Friday night. RHP Tyler Beede (5-9) will start the opener against Atlanta's Mike Foltynewicz (7-5).

Red Sox: Open a four-game series at Tampa Bay on Friday night. Rick Porcello (13-12) will face Charlie Morton (15-6).