

The Boston Red Sox Friday, September 6, 2019

*** *The Boston Globe***

David Price is scratched from Friday's start against the Yankees

Julian McWilliams

The Red Sox have a crucial series this weekend against the Yankees. And now they'll have to get through it without David Price, who was scratched from Friday night's start after feeling tightness in his left wrist after a bullpen session on Wednesday.

The lefthander went on the injured list Aug. 5 because of a cyst in that wrist. He was activated prior to last Sunday's start against the Angels, throwing 45 pitches in two innings of a Red Sox win. However, Price felt tightness in his wrist again Wednesday, and so the Sox made the decision to skip his turn in the rotation, despite Price pleading to pitch.

"It's something that we have to deal with," manager Alex Cora said before Thursday night's loss to the Minnesota Twins. "At the same time for how bad we want to win and when we know David can go out there and probably compete for two innings throwing fastballs, it doesn't make sense to me. He's a big part of what we're doing this year and what we're trying to accomplish in the next few years. I'm not going to put David's health in jeopardy and be selfish."

Rafael Devers thrown out at home to end game for Red Sox

Price saw a specialist, and Cora noted that this wrist issue isn't as bad as the previous one. There's even a chance Price could make a start in next week's series against the Blue Jays in Toronto.

As for Friday against the Yankees, the Sox are in a bind. They will make it a bullpen game, as they will Saturday, before Rick Porcello starts on Sunday and Eduardo Rodriguez on Monday.

As for how Cora intends to manage the bullpen games?

"We have to get through five," he said. "If we get through five however we map it out, we know we have our guys for the last few innings and we're in good shape."

The Red Sox are just 4-11 against the Yankees this season, but are 3-1 against them at Fenway after taking three-of-four games in their most recent matchup.

The Yankees will start Domingo German in Friday night's matchup, followed by J.A. Happ, Masahiro Tanaka, and James Paxton to close out the series on Monday.

Chavis setback

Michael Chavis suffered a setback on Wednesday, reaggravating his strained right oblique, which puts him up against the clock and the rest of his season in jeopardy.

"It's going to be tough," Cora said of Chavis returning this season.

Chavis didn't regravate the oblique on a swing, but rather while stretching. And now, he can do everything but swing a bat. In fact, he was out throwing before Thursday's game.

“I hurt it in 2017,” Chavis said, “which is normal for a righthanded hitter because that’s the rotation side. So, the way that this happened was kind of random and weird. Honestly, I was warmed up and ready to go.”

Despite Chavis likely being done for the season, the Sox won’t activate prospect Bobby Dalbec, a corner infielder. He’s been in the clubhouse this week, but that’s mainly for the exposure of being around a big league club.

“It’s been awesome, especially working with [hitting coach] Tim Hyers and [assistant hitting coach] Andy Barkett, and [third base coach] Carlos Febles at first base,” Dalbec said. “Just to get extra reps in and kind of clean some things up and what they’d like me to do, and I feel really good.”

Chavis originally went on the injured list on Aug. 12 because of a sprain in the AC joint of his left shoulder. The oblique injury didn’t occur until his recent rehab stint with Triple A Pawtucket.

“It [stinks],” Chavis said. “Just being hurt in general [stinks] because you feel useless to the team. To have that setback right when everything was feeling good and I was ready to come back, it kind of sets you back [mentally] a little bit. There’s no point in dwelling on it at this point. It happened and I just have to work through it.”

Brewer prepared

With a pair of bullpen games this weekend, you can expect Colten Brewer’s name to be called against the Yankees. He worked a scoreless ninth for the Sox against the Twins Thursday. Brewer was one of the four pitchers called up as emergency reinforcements after Porcello struggled in his start against the Twins Tuesday night, allowing six runs in four innings.

Brewer had a 4.31 ERA in 48 innings for the Red Sox before being optioned for the second time this year on Aug. 4. After Thursday, his ERA is now down to 4.22 in 49 innings.

“Basically my job here is when they need me to get three outs,” Brewer said. “No matter how I do it, just keep the runs down, keep the walks down.”

However slim the Sox’ postseason chances may be, Brewer said he’s never been part of a club that was vying for a playoff spot come September, which excites him.

“It’s just the mind-set of being able to trust my ability to throw the fastball over the plate and curveball down,” Brewer said. “Not getting caught up in what my ERA is or how many strikeouts I’m getting. September is [here] and it’s about getting three outs any way possible.”

Groome progressing

Lefthander Jay Groome allowed one run over three innings for Single A Lowell in its New York-Penn League playoff game against Batavia.

Groome, a first-round pick in 2016, gave up two hits, walked one and struck out three in his longest outing since returning from Tommy John elbow surgery.

Righthander Yusniel Padron-Artiles followed Groome to the mound and struck out 14 of the 19 batters he faced, including 12 in a row to start.

Lowell won the game, 2-1, on a walkoff homer by Joe Davis.

Top of the list

In Wednesday night's win over the Twins, Mookie Betts became the first leadoff hitter to homer on each of the first two pitches he faced in a game since the Phillies' Jimmy Rollins in 2009, according to STATS. It was Betts's fifth career game with four-plus hits and five-plus RBIs, passing Jim Rice, David Ortiz, and Dustin Pedroia for the most in franchise history . . . The Giants announced that Pablo Sandoval underwent Tommy John surgery. Sandoval, who is in the final year of the five-year, \$90 million contract he signed with the Sox in 2015, will come off Boston's ' books at the end of this season.

Without David Price, bullpen is up for Red Sox against Yankees

Alex Speier

Somehow, it keeps getting worse.

A miserable year for the Red Sox rotation keeps assuming ever darker dimensions. The anticipated rotation of Chris Sale, Nate Eovaldi, Eduardo Rodriguez, Rick Porcello, and David Price made all of four turns this year before the need for Eovaldi to undergo surgery to remove bone chips in his elbow set in motion a series of health woes that continues to grow even in the season's final weeks.

Though Eovaldi — the Red Sox starter went five innings and allowed one run on one hit with four walks in Thursday's 2-1 loss to the Twins — has made it back into the starting five, Sale is out for the year. And on Thursday, manager Alex Cora disclosed that Price — the scheduled starter Friday against the Yankees — experienced tightness in his left wrist during a Wednesday bullpen session and won't be available in the forthcoming series against New York.

With their playoff hopes now down to a fraying thread, the Red Sox will thus enter the four-game series against the team with the best record in the majors entrusting their first two starts to "TBA, TBA." Both games will be bullpen affairs, with manager Alex Cora suggesting that recently signed righty Jhoulys Chacin would be a candidate to work as "the opener" in the first contest.

It's possible that Price will be back before long. Cora raised the possibility that the lefthander might be ready to pitch as soon as next week in Toronto — though he also allowed that there is a bigger picture to consider.

"As badly as we want to win, and we know David can probably go out there and compete for two innings throwing fastballs, it doesn't make sense to me," said Cora, who noted that Price wasn't able to throw his cutter or changeup freely due to tightness related to a cyst in his left wrist. "He's a big part of what we're doing this year and what we're trying to accomplish the next few years. I'm not going to put David's health in jeopardy just because we're going to be selfish and just push him for two innings."

The Red Sox view the cyst as a one-time issue. Still, it's not the only issue that has compromised Price's availability this year. He missed 14 games in mid-May with left elbow tendinitis, and the Red Sox carefully managed his innings after his return, explaining his average of fewer than five innings per outing in his 22 starts.

Sale, of course, isn't coming back. The lefthander is on the 60-day injured list after receiving a PRP injection to treat his left elbow — the second straight year in which he missed significant time late due to an injury.

The absence and struggles this year of Sale, Price, and Eovaldi have played a huge role in a disappointing Red Sox season. The rotation features a 4.98 ERA, and its inability to provide consistent innings has left a huge burden on the bullpen.

All that, of course, is well known. The story of a championship defense that has gone awry begins with the starters' struggles. Now, however, the question looms: Can the team expect better in 2020?

After all, Price is now 34. Sale will turn 31 in the initial days of 2020. Eovaldi, who turns 30 in February, has eclipsed 125 innings just twice in a nine-year big league career. With roughly \$73 million committed to that trio (for luxury tax purposes) next year, it's not hard to imagine that the foremost cause of the Red Sox' struggles in 2019 may already be casting a shadow upon 2020.

Are the Red Sox concerned about the durability and effectiveness of their rotation for next year?

"I don't really worry about that," said president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski. "I just sort of weigh a lot of different factors."

Among them:

"I'm assuming that for the [medical] situation, Chris is going to be fine," Dombrowski said. "From that scenario, I don't really worry about it. And I think part of it is that when you look at it, you look at pitchers' pure stuff."

Dombrowski said that he thinks there were several positive indicators – including strikeout rate and WHIP – that suggest that Sale remains "one of the best pitchers in the league."

Though Price has produced the lowest three full-season innings totals of his career over the last three seasons (74⅔ in 2017, 176 in 2018, and 107⅓ this year), Dombrowski said that the cyst is viewed as an isolated event. He also noted that when healthy, the lefty topped out in the mid-90s this year, and that his elite command gives him some room for a natural age-based decline in the quality of his pitches.

"You look at [Zack] Greinke, who just got traded and everyone is talking about how great he is. Well, they're very similar, aside from lefty vs. righty," Dombrowski said. "I'm not worried about the durability, but I don't expect him to be the guy he was when he was 28. When we signed David Price . . . you feel that there's downside when he gets to years five, six, and seven. He's not going to throw as hard. But he knows how to pitch."

While the fact that Sale and Price have crossed to the "wrong" side of 30 would seem a red flag, Dombrowski feels that they belong to a very specific demographic for which that age does not inherently represent a red flag.

"I haven't found [the notion of significant risk of decline after age 30] to be true, especially if you look at elite pitchers. They're different. They're much different actually. And [Sale and Price] are both considered elite pitchers," said Dombrowski. "We've done a lot of work, a lot of homework, a lot of analysis on that . . . Elite pitchers can lose a little something and still be really, really good."

That is, of course, true — so long as they are on the mound. But for the Red Sox, who have already made an enormous commitment to three pitchers who have significant stretches of the year with injuries, it's hard to take health for granted. Certainly, it is possible that this year represents a health anomaly — perhaps not shocking, given the toll of last October. But if it does not, then the stagger through 2019 may bleed into next season — a possibility for which the Red Sox need to account in what promises to be a challenging offseason.

Rafael Devers thrown out at home to end game for Red Sox

Julian McWilliams

It was Sept. 5 last season when the Red Sox came back against the Braves in Atlanta from a six-run deficit. Trailing 7-1, the Sox scored six runs in the eighth to tie a game that didn't feature a good chunk of their starters.

Atlanta's Freddie Freeman broke the tie with a solo shot in the bottom of the eighth. But in the ninth, Brandon Phillips's two-run homer gave the Sox a 9-8 lead. Craig Kimbrel closed the door in the ninth for the Sox.

Thursday night's gut-wrenching 2-1 loss to the Minnesota Twins at Fenway park marked exactly what a difference a year makes. And at this point, it all seems to fit. Championship seasons rest on how well a team plays. Yet there has to be some good fortune sprinkled in there, too.

The bottom of the ninth inning told you all you needed to know about this Red Sox season.

With two outs in the ninth, J.D. Martinez at the plate against Twins reliever Taylor Rogers and Rafael Devers at first, Martinez hit what appeared to be a walkoff homer. However, it was a double off the wall. But the Sox still had two factors working in their favor. The Twins' Eddie Rosario plays at Fenway Park just one series per season. Playing a ball off that wall can be tricky. Furthermore, he was shaded toward left-center field, playing the gaps where Martinez likes to belt the ball.

The second piece was Devers. He was thinking home the entire time, knowing this would be the Red Sox's best chance to score.

But neither scenario ended up working out for the Sox. Rosario fielded the ball cleanly. His throw was even more impressive as he delivered a one-hopper to catcher Jason Castro. Devers, meanwhile, was out by 2 feet. The Sox are now 6½ games out of a wild-card spot.

"I'm like laughing at it," Cora said. "[Martinez] hits the ball and you thought it was out of the ballpark. Ball bounces off the wall and you think [Devers] is going to score and he's out."

Said Devers: "It's a tough loss, especially trying to make it into the postseason."

Good fortune didn't sprinkle its way into the Fenway night. Especially on the final play of the night.

"I had to wait and let the play develop," third base coach Carlos Febles. "Rosario was playing in the left-center gap. Ball hits off the wall. I know Raffy's coming hot. Now he has to make a decision: Throw it to the plate from there or hit the cutoff man. He came up and made a perfect throw to the plate."

The Sox entered Thursday hitting a league-best .275. Their OPS (.825) ranked fourth in the league. The Sox also led the league in hits with 1,361. But the Martinez double was just their fourth Thursday night. Did that factor into Febles's decision-making?

"Sometimes it's not based on how the team is swinging the bat," he said. "It's the chance you have to score. We're in a situation with two outs. I thought we had a great shot. Unfortunately he made a perfect throw to the plate. If the throw goes one step to the left or right, he would have scored. We should give Rosario credit. I haven't seen an outfielder make a throw to the plate being that close to the wall."

Did Febles think Martinez's shot was a walkoff homer?

"Yeah, off the bat," Febles said. "But it's a cold night. You never know. Off the bat I thought it had a shot but it hit off the wall."

Twins starter Martin Perez didn't make it easy on the Sox. Before the game, Cora switched Xander Bogaerts to the No. 2 spot in the batting order and put Devers in the three-hole. The manager also elected to start Gorkys Hernandez over Jackie Bradley Jr. Cora wanted as many right-handed bats in the lineup as possible — preferably back-to-back — to protect Devers against the lefthanded Perez, a pitcher whom Cora described as a tough southpaw. That didn't do much for the Sox.

A Mookie Betts homer in the fourth was the only run the Sox scored against Perez. Betts, who also doubled in the sixth, had the only two hits against Perez.

“We didn’t make adjustments offensively today,” Cora said. “But we had our chances.”

The Sox got what they could have hoped for in Nathan Eovaldi.

In August, the Sox ditched their original plan, which featured Eovaldi as one of the key cogs to the back part of the bullpen. The Sox needed starting pitching badly and Eovaldi — who had recently returned from the injured list — was the only pitcher who gave them a fighter’s chance.

His first three starts produced an 8.00 ERA in nine innings. Yet it was supposed to be the build up. Not necessarily the finished product.

That wasn’t the case for Eovaldi Thursday. He worked five innings and surrendered just a hit and run against the Twins. Although he did walk four — three straight in the fifth — his consistent strength was visible. In the first inning, his average fastball velocity was at 96.9 miles per hour, according to Baseball Savant. In the second, 97.4. By the third it reached 98.4. It remained in the 98-m.p.h. range in the fourth and took a dip to 96.4 by the fifth, when he walked the bases loaded. C.J. Cron then grounded into a double play, but a run scored to the game, 1-1. Eovaldi then got a grounder to escape the jam. The progression the Sox had hoped for was evident.

“I felt really good all the way up until that fifth inning,” said Eovaldi, who threw 70 pitches, 49 for strikes. “Tonight I was able to get some quick outs and have really quick innings.”

Marcus Walden took over for Eovaldi in the sixth and kept the score tied. However, in the seventh inning, Andrew Cashner came on and walked the bases loaded with two outs. Cora then went to Matt Barnes, who surrendered a single to pinch-hitter Willians Astudillo that gave the Twins a 2-1 lead.

After the game, Devers sat in the dugout, trying to grapple with what just happened. In the clubhouse he sat again, this time at his locker. If it were Sept. 5 of last year, he might have been safe. Or it might have been a walkoff Martinez homer. Yet new seasons breed new results.

This one might be summarized as a deep hole of struggles the Sox can’t get out of.

“I just don’t like to lose,” Devers said. “That’s pretty much it.”

Alex Speier of the Globe staff contributed.

*** *The Boston Herald***

Red Sox drop series with devastating 2-1 loss to Twins

Steve Hewitt

The Red Sox are running out of time quickly, and they’re not catching any breaks.

With their postseason hopes already slim, they’re in desperate need of help and good fortune. And after another step back, they’re dangerously close to falling out of contention by the end of the weekend.

Everything seemed to pile up against the Red Sox on Thursday. David Price’s injury setback put them in an even more difficult spot, and on the West coast, the Athletics stormed back late to beat the Angels, stripping the Red Sox a chance to gain valuable ground in the AL wild card chase.

Hours later, it didn’t even matter, as the Red Sox’ 2-1 loss to the Twins ended in devastating fashion. J.D. Martinez almost left the park with a walk off homer, but instead Eddie Rosario made a perfect throw home to cut down Rafael Devers and the game-tying run at the plate as the Sox lost two out of three.

With just 22 games to go in the regular season, the Red Sox fell to 6½ games back of the second wild card spot with the loss, and with a four-game series against the first-place Yankees beginning Friday night at Fenway, the odds of them reaching October are becoming slimmer by the day.

“It’s a tough loss but especially trying to make it into the postseason,” Devers said. “We know the type of team we have and we know that we have to win every single game so that’s the way we’re approaching it. Tomorrow is another day and we’re trying to win that game.”

Moments after Devers hustled down the line to beat out what would have been a game-ending double play, Martinez came to the plate. With Devers on first, he was down to his last strike when he lifted a slider high off the wall. When it didn’t go out, Devers looked to score.

Devers was going off contact as he went full speed around the bases, and third-base coach Carlos Febles sent him. But the Red Sox were the victims of a perfect storm. Rosario got a favorable hop off the wall, and even fielding it deep in left, he fired a perfect throw off one bounce to home, where Devers was easily tagged out to end it.

The Red Sox had generated just four hits to that point, but Febles said that didn’t factor into his decision to send. In that situation, he’ll take his chances that Rosario doesn’t make that play.

“I thought we had a great shot,” Febles said. “Unfortunately he made a perfect throw to the plate. If the throw goes one step to the left or right, he would have scored. We should give Rosario credit. I haven’t seen an outfielder make a throw to the plate being that close to the wall.”

In the dugout, the reaction was similar. Alex Cora could only throw up his hands and tip his cap.

“I’m like laughing at it,” Cora said. “He hits the ball, you think it’s out of the ballpark. The ball bounces off the wall, you think he’s going to score, and he’s out.”

The Red Sox (75-65) gave up just two hits to the Twins (87-53), but command issues all night came back to bite them. They issued nine walks, including three that came in the seventh via Andrew Cashner to load the bases.

Cora took him out and inserted Matt Barnes, but the Twins countered by pinch-hitting Willians Astudillo for Jonathan Schoop. It worked as Astudillo hit a 2-2 fastball the other way for the go-ahead run.

Cashner took the blame for putting the Sox in that spot.

“It’s just one of those things that can’t happen with what we’re trying to do right now,” Cashner said.

Nathan Eovaldi took another step forward with five strong innings, about the only encouraging thing from another lost Red Sox night. They can’t afford any more like it.

“Every loss is tough for the club,” Febles said. “It doesn’t matter how you lose the game. Unfortunately we lost a game that way. That’s how the game goes sometimes. All we can do is get ready for tomorrow.”

David Price won’t start for Red Sox Friday vs. Yankees

Steve Hewitt

Alex Cora is about to have to get even more creative with the way he utilizes his pitching staff.

The Red Sox manager revealed Thursday that David Price had a setback with his injured wrist during his bullpen on Wednesday, and will not make his scheduled start Friday when the Yankees come to town for a

four-game series. Cora said Price, who returned last week after being on the injured list with a wrist cyst, experienced tightness in the wrist, and didn't want to take any chances.

Cora said he was hopeful the tightness wasn't as bad as when he first had it last month.

"Obviously we're not going to throw him out there just to make a start," Cora said Thursday before the series finale against the Twins. "The changeup was OK. The cutter was OK yesterday, so he pushed hard to pitch and I'm like, no, we're not going to do this to you so we'll go with the bullpen."

"It's not like it got worse," Cora said of Price's cyst. "It's just, he feels tight. And honestly, I'm not going to throw David without a changeup or a cutter out there. He can throw fastballs in, fastballs away, but he's not going to compete like that. I don't want him to compete like that. We'll wait. Whenever he's ready, we'll try it again, and he'll go back out."

Cora wasn't sure yet who would start Friday instead. He said Jhoulys Chacin, who the Red Sox acquired over the weekend, could open if he wasn't used Thursday. Whoever he chooses, Cora will be going with a bullpen game on both Friday and Saturday against the Yankees. Rick Porcello and Eduardo Rodriguez will start Sunday and Monday.

Price returned from the IL to start on Sunday against the Angels and pitched two innings. Cora liked what he saw, but given the circumstances, it wasn't worth the risk to put him out there.

"It's something that we have to deal with," Cora said. "But at the same time, for how bad we want to win – and when we know David can probably go out there and compete for two innings throwing fastballs – it doesn't make sense to me. He's a big part of what we're doing this year and what we're trying to accomplish the next few years, so I'm not going to put David's health jeopardized just to be selfish and push him for two innings."

CHAVIS SHUT DOWN

Michael Chavis also had a setback during his rehab and will be shut down indefinitely. The rookie, who was expected to return this weekend after dealing with left shoulder soreness, hurt his right oblique as he was taking swings on Wednesday.

"We have to stop his baseball activities," Cora said. "I don't know where it's going to take us. We're running out of time. Obviously there's no at-bats in other places."

Cora wasn't optimistic about the first baseman's chances of returning this season.

"It's going to be tough," Cora said. "It's going to be tough. He took groundballs yesterday, he swung the bat, and he was like, 'Whoa.' He felt it again. We had to step back."

Cora mentioned Chavis' imminent return earlier this week as a reason why the Red Sox weren't calling up Bobby Dalbec, who has been working out with the team this week, but after Chavis' setback, it still doesn't seem likely they'll add Dalbec to the active roster.

"It's something where we're comfortable where we're at with the roster," Cora said. "Obviously (Dalbec) makes some impact from the right side, but we haven't had the conversation."

DALBEC COMFORTABLE AT FIRST

Among other things, Dalbec's time in Boston this week has been spent trying to improve defensively at first base. Dalbec, who has played mostly at third on his way up, said he will play at first for Team USA in November's Premier12 tournament, and his confidence playing there is getting better.

“It’s way higher than it was,” Dalbec said. “I played there my freshman year of college and haven’t been there really since up until this year and last year. I’m feeling really good over there.”

Dalbec said the experience of working with the Red Sox this week has been an honor.

“I’m just taking it for what it is,” Dalbec said. “Get more experience, learn what it’s like to be here every day and prepare how they prepare and just work on things to get better.” ...

Cora placed Rafael Devers in the No. 3 hole Thursday as the Red Sox faced Twins lefty Martin Perez. Xander Bogaerts moved to the No. 2 spot to bunch him and Mookie Betts, both righties, together against Perez. ... Chris Sale, who is out for the season with elbow inflammation, flew up to Boston to be with the team earlier this week. He hasn’t had any additional tests on his elbow, but Cora said he’s been exercising. “I think he said that one of his goals is to get a six-pack,” Cora said, laughing. “So that’s where we’re at with him.”

*** *The Providence Journal***

Thursday’s loss cut deep for Rafael Devers, Red Sox

Bill Koch

Rafael Devers sat silently in the Red Sox dugout. Christian Vazquez soon joined him.

Boston’s third baseman and catcher looked out at the Fenway Park diamond, the stands emptying rapidly. The remainder of the 32,632 fans in attendance on a cool Thursday night were eerily quiet.

The Red Sox had just been sucker punched by the Twins in the bottom of the ninth inning. It was the kind of deep, penetrating body blow that takes the breath from your lungs. Eddie Rosario delivered it from left field with his strong right arm.

Rosario’s throw to the plate was on line and on time. Devers dashed around third base and attempted a head-first slide, but he was out by a good seven feet. J.D. Martinez’s double went for naught as Minnesota escaped with a 2-1 victory.

Xander Bogaerts dropped a one-out single into left and Devers beat out a fielder’s choice grounder to second, avoiding what could have been a game-ending 4-6-3 double play. Devers was on the move again when Martinez – down to his final strike in a 2-and-2 count – drove a slider from Taylor Rogers about halfway up the Green Monster.

“I know how important that run is, and it’s something that we’ve practiced before,” Devers said through translator Bryan Almonte. “I went on contact and I felt like I had a good chance of scoring.”

Devers gathered steam as he rounded second and never broke stride, waved home without hesitation by third base coach Carlos Febles. Martinez had just collected only the fourth hit of the night for Boston, and Vazquez was 0-for-3 as he stood on deck. The decision to send Devers was an immediate one.

“Rosario was playing in the left-center gap,” Febles said. “The ball hits off the wall. I know Raffy is coming hard. Now (Rosario) has to make a decision to throw it to the plate from there or hit the cutoff man. He came up and made a perfect throw to the plate.”

The relay man and the catcher were essentially the same person. First baseman C.J. Cron was across the diamond to take the throw, but he was only about 50 feet in front of home plate. Jason Castro called for the ball to be allowed through, and Cron ducked out of the way in plenty of time.

“He hits the ball, you think it’s out of the ballpark,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “The ball bounces off the wall and you think he’s going to score, and he’s out.”

Devers stood slowly and walked toward the clubhouse with Vazquez, watching the replay on the center field video board perched above the bleachers. The grim result was on display for all to see, and there was more bad news along the bottom of the wall in left. Tampa Bay and Oakland both won on Thursday, further punishing the Red Sox in what has become an increasingly unlikely bid to secure an American League wild card berth.

“I was just trying to soak in what just happened,” Devers said. “Obviously I was really upset about the at-bat that I had and not being able to score when J.D. hit that ball.

“That’s something that also stuck with me. I just don’t like to lose.”

Twins 2, Red Sox 1: Walks, Willians Astudillo help Minnesota slip past Boston

Bill Koch

How the Red Sox suffered their Thursday loss to the Twins was quite literally indefensible.

Walks can’t be combated by fielders stranded behind their pitcher, and those free passes cost Boston dearly on a cool night at Fenway Park. The air carried with it a hint of fall, and the Red Sox took another step toward missing out on those glorious October occasions entirely.

The final punch to the gut was administered in the bottom of the ninth inning. Rafael Devers was thrown out at the plate on a J.D. Martinez double off the Green Monster, sealing a 2-1 Minnesota win.

Devers reached on a fielder’s choice and was on the move when Martinez sent a drive off the wall. Eddie Rosario played the carom nicely and made a strong one-hop throw toward home. Devers was cut down by about 7 feet, with Jason Castro applying a simple tag.

“[Rosario] made a great play — great throw to the plate,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “That was a great send [by third base coach Carlos Febles]. It was a do-or-die play at the plate, the kid made a great play and they ended up winning the game.”

Willians Astudillo provided the key swing for the Twins. His pinch-hit RBI single in the top of the seventh inning was the difference, snapping a 1-1 tie. Boston walked the bases loaded twice and allowed single runs each time.

“It’s just one of those things that can’t happen with what we’re trying to do right now,” said Andrew Cashner, who was charged with the loss in relief.

Cashner retired the leadoff man in the seventh and put three of the next four hitters on base. Matt Barnes was summoned from the bullpen and Astudillo caught up with a shoulder-high fastball, slapping it through the right side to plate the deciding run. It was the second of just two hits on the night for the visitors.

“We were trying to get three outs and it didn’t happen,” Cora said. “Barnes made a good pitch and Astudillo got on top of it and made contact with two strikes and got a base hit.”

Cashner had walked only four men since his Aug. 13 move to the bullpen, a span of 11 innings. The last seven of those were scoreless, including a 1-2-3 frame on just nine pitches Tuesday night. Rosario flew to center leading off the seventh before Cashner suddenly lost his command.

Nathan Eovaldi’s best start since April resulted in a no-decision. The right-hander covered five innings and allowed just one hit, leaving in a 1-1 game. Eovaldi has improved by one inning each time out since his

Aug. 18 start against the Orioles, and his 76 pitches were a touch under the 81 he threw Friday against the Angels.

“I felt really good all the way up until that fifth inning,” Eovaldi said. “I don’t know if it was mechanical or maybe nibbling a little bit. It just kind of felt like I was all around the zone and couldn’t get strikes on any of them.”

A brief bout of wildness was the only thing standing between Eovaldi and a clean line. He walked the bases loaded with nobody out in the fifth, including losing Mitch Garver after jumping ahead 0-2. C.J. Cron grounded into a 6-4-3 double play to plate a lone run and Jonathan Schoop lined to right, allowing Eovaldi to escape rather cheaply.

Martin Perez knifed through the Red Sox order early, retiring the first nine men he faced on a mere 30 pitches. Perez threw just four balls until falling behind Betts, 2-0, to lead off the fourth, and his two-seam fastball away caught too much of the plate. It was the fifth home run in six days for Betts, a stinging liner that rang off the Pesky Pole.

The left-hander was in control otherwise, requiring just 70 pitches to work through six innings. Perez allowed just one more hit — a two-out double to left by Betts in the sixth. Boston eventually moved two men into scoring position before Perez retired Devers on a soft tapper to first, ending the inning.

“We didn’t hit the ball in the air,” Cora said. “Perez had like 50 pitches in four innings, five innings. We didn’t make adjustments offensively today. But we had our chances — we did.”

Red Sox shut down rookie infielder Michael Chavis (right oblique) after rehab setback

Bill Koch

Michael Chavis might have played the last game of his rookie season with the Red Sox.

The infielder suffered a setback Wednesday in his attempt to return from left shoulder and right oblique injuries. Chavis experienced soreness in his right side during a pregame workout at Fenway Park, his first real action since the weekend. There is no timetable for his return.

“We had to stop his baseball activities,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “I don’t know where it’s going to take us. We’re running out of time. Obviously there are no at-bats in other places.”

Chavis played his last game with Boston on Aug. 11, a 5-4 loss against the Angels. He was placed on the 10-day injured list due to a sprained AC joint. Chavis cracked nine of his 18 home runs through his first 26 games and sits at a .254/.322/.444 slash line through 95.

“He took ground balls yesterday, he swung the bat and he felt it again,” Cora said. “We had to step back.”

Chavis started a rehab assignment with Triple-A Pawtucket on Aug. 23. He appeared in nine games with the PawSox, including both ends of a doubleheader last Thursday. Chavis collected three home runs and two doubles in 30 at-bats, serving as a second baseman and designated hitter.

Sam Travis and Christian Vazquez figure to split most of the at-bats at first base as right-handed options. Brock Holt and Marco Hernandez will cover second base. Holt was back in the starting lineup for Thursday’s series finale against the Twins.

Red Sox scratch David Price (left wrist) from Friday start against Yankees

Bill Koch

David Price has been scratched from his Friday start against the Yankees.

The Red Sox left-hander experienced tightness in his wrist following his regular bullpen session on Wednesday. Price is fresh off the injured list and threw 45 pitches in a 4-3 win over the Angels on Sunday. His last outing at Fenway Park came on July 30 against the Rays.

“He saw a specialist yesterday and he’s not going to start tomorrow,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “It’s not as bad as the first one, but we’re not going to throw him out there just to make a start.”

Price carried a 3.16 earned-run average through his July 14 start against the Dodgers. His next four turns were all Boston defeats, as Price allowed 30 hits and 20 earned runs in just 17 innings. The last of that miserable quartet came against New York, a 7-4 defeat on Aug. 4 in which Price lasted just 2 2/3 innings.

“I’m not going to throw David out there without the changeup and the cutter,” Cora said. “He can throw fastballs in, fastballs away, but he’s not going to compete like that. I don’t want him to compete like that.”

Price was placed on the 10-day injured list immediately following that start and had a cortisone shot to treat a cyst in his wrist. It was his second stint out of action this season – he also missed more than two weeks in May with left elbow tendinitis.

Boston’s hope is Price will miss just one turn through the rotation and possibly take the ball during a three-game series at Toronto next week. Price is 14-1 with a 3.16 ERA in 19 career starts at Rogers Centre.

“I’m not going to put a timetable,” Cora said. “As soon as he feels well he’ll throw a bullpen and we’ll go from there.”

The Red Sox will stage back-to-back bullpen days to open the four-game series with the Yankees, an unusual bit of scheduling that wraps into Monday night. Rick Porcello will start on Sunday and Eduardo Rodriguez will bid for his 18th victory of the season on Monday. Jhoulys Chacin – signed as a free agent after the Brewers released him in August – could serve as the opener on Friday.

“We’ve got to get through five,” Cora said. “If we get through five – however we map it out – then we know we have our guys for the last few innings and we’re in good shape.”

Bobby Dalbec continuing his Red Sox apprenticeship through the weekend

Bill Koch

Bobby Dalbec planned to watch the first pitch of Thursday’s Red Sox-Twins game from his nearby hotel room.

One of Boston’s top prospects isn’t officially on the 40-man roster. Dalbec goes through daily pregame workouts, showers in the clubhouse and makes the short trip to his temporary home. He’s not allowed in the dugout while any game is in progress.

Consider this a sort of apprenticeship for the corner infielder. Dalbec enjoyed a second straight impressive season in the minor leagues and could soon be ready for prime time. This dry run at Fenway Park ends Monday night, as Dalbec will depart for his offseason home following the end of a four-game series with the Yankees.

“I don’t think it’s been done very much,” Dalbec said. “It’s a real good experience to be able to come up here and just kind of learn.”

Dalbec is attempting to stay sharp for November’s WBSC Premier12 Tournament in Mexico. He’ll suit up for Team USA against the Netherlands, Mexico and the Dominican Republic in pool play. The event serves as a qualifier for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

“It’s an honor to be picked for Team USA and to play for your country,” Dalbec said. “I did it in 2015 with (the USA Baseball Collegiate National Team) and it was a really good experience.”

Dalbec was at the University of Arizona at the time. He was a fourth-round selection in the 2016 draft and opted to leave the Wildcats after his junior season. Dalbec signed with the Red Sox for nearly \$150,000 over his slot value and is making steady progress through the system.

Winning the Carolina League Most Valuable Player at Class A Salem in 2018 and cracking 27 home runs across two levels this season wasn’t enough to earn Dalbec a big league debut. A setback for Michael Chavis (right oblique) on Wednesday won’t get Dalbec into uniform. There are other right-handed bats ahead of his at first base, and Rafael Devers is entrenched at third base.

“We’re comfortable where we’re at with the roster,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “Obviously he makes an impact from the right-hand side, but we haven’t had the conversation.”

Dalbec won’t admit to any discouragement. Instead, he’s working on his infield defense with Carlos Febles and attempting to improve his powerful swing with hitting coaches Tim Hyers and Andy Barkett. Watching what could be his future teammates prepare on a daily basis is experience Dalbec couldn’t find at Double-A Portland or Triple-A Pawtucket this season.

“I’m just taking it for what it is,” Dalbec said. “Get more experience, learn what it’s like to be here every day, prepare how they prepare and just work on things and get better.”

*** *MassLive.com***

Ortiz visited by Yankees sluggers Encarnacion, Sanchez as he continues shooting recovery

Christopher Smith

Yankees sluggers Edwin Encarnacion and Gary Sanchez spent their off day in Boston visiting recovering Red Sox legend David Ortiz, according to Instagram posts from the players.

Ortiz, who was shot in the lower abdomen during an attack in the Dominican Republic on June 9, posted a picture with Encarnacion, his longtime friend. The caption read: “My boy came to check up on his boy !!!”

Sanchez, who like both Ortiz and Encarnacion is Dominican, posted a picture with the caption, “Honored, Mr. Ortiz. Wishing you a long life so you can continue to help and inspire future generations. #HeIsBigPapi”.

Ortiz and Encarnacion never played together but have been close for years. In 2016, Major League Baseball looked into comments Ortiz made about the Red Sox signing Encarnacion when he hit free agency later that year.

Ortiz was released from the hospital on July 26 after undergoing three surgeries to repair damage from the attack. In late August, he posted the first public photo of himself since the shooting, sharing a photo while dropping off his daughter, Alex, at college in Boston.

It’s unclear when Ortiz plans to make his first public appearance. He is continuing his recovery at his home.

Boston Red Sox react to Rafael Devers being thrown out at home to end game: ‘Give credit to Eddie Rosario,’ Alex Cora says

Chris Cotillo

As the Red Sox came to terms with one of the toughest losses of the season late Thursday night, there was no blame to go around for Rafael Devers being gunned down at home plate for the final out. Instead, manager Alex Cora and his players were in awe of the spectacular throw from Twins left fielder Eddie Rosario.

With Devers on first, J.D. Martinez hit a hard line drive that bounced off the Green Monster and caromed back to Rosario, who was shaded toward left-center. Rosario played the bounce perfectly, fired to home plate and beat Devers by a few steps to seal a 2-1 Minnesota win.

In the eyes of Cora, the play wasn't the fault of third-base coach Carlos Febles. The Sox had simply been beat by a superhuman play.

"Give credit to Eddie Rosario," Cora said. "He was playing left-center. (Martinez) hits the ball, he hustled to the ball, he got to the ball and made a great play. He made a great play. That was a great send. It's a do-or-die play at the plate, the kid made a great play and they ended up winning the game."

Devers, who sat in the Sox dugout for a few minutes after the game contemplating what had just happened, went full-speed around third base and thought he had a good chance to score. He was surprised that the ball beat him to catcher Jason Castro.

"I just tried to be aggressive on that play," Devers said (through interpreter Bryan Almonte). "Obviously, I was running hard and I know Eddie has a good arm. I was just following (the coaches). Carlos had me going, so I put my head down and went full speed."

The Sox, who fell by one run in both games they lost to the Twins in the series, fell to 6 ½ games back in the American League wild-card race as the Rays and Athletics both won. For Cora, the moment was almost like a microcosm for a season that has defied belief.

"I'm like laughing at it," the manager said. "He hits the ball, you think it's out of the ballpark. It hits the wall, you think he's going to score and he's out. It's one of those... we had chances."

For a Red Sox team that has gained little traction in the playoff race despite going 12-6 in its last 18 games, every loss is frustrating. Of those six losses, three have come by one run and five have come by three or fewer.

The latest one happened in the matter of seconds, turning from potentially becoming one of the most dramatic wins of the season to one of the toughest losses to swallow. Devers needed a few extra minutes to swallow it.

"I was just trying to soak in what just happened," Devers said. "I was really upset about the at-bat I had and then not being able to score when J.D. hit that ball. That's something that also stuck with me. I really don't like to lose."

Jhoulys Chacin to start for Boston Red Sox on Friday; ex-Brewer was signed over weekend

Chris Cotillo

Right-hander Jhoulys Chacin will start for the Red Sox on Friday against the Yankees, manager Alex Cora said after Thursday's game.

Chacin will pitch in place of lefty David Price, who was scratched from the outing after experiencing tightness in his wrist during a bullpen Wednesday. Chacin isn't expected to go deep in the game for the Sox, who anticipate a bullpen game.

Chacin, 31, was signed Saturday after being released by the Brewers on Aug. 26. Despite being Milwaukee's Opening Day starter, the righty struggled to a 3-10 record and 5.79 ERA in 19 starts before

going on the injured list with an oblique issue July 24. He did not return from the IL before being released, meaning he hasn't pitched in over a month.

Chacin could give the Sox an inning or two in his debut with the club. He owns a career 4.00 ERA in 11 seasons with the Rockies, Diamondbacks, Braves, Angels, Padres and Brewers.

Rafael Devers thrown out to end Boston Red Sox game; third-base coach Carlos Febles explains decision to send him

Chris Cotillo

As Rafael Devers came hustling toward third base on J.D. Martinez's double in the ninth inning Thursday, Red Sox third base coach Carlos Febles thought Boston had a great chance to score and tie the game. Unfortunately for the Sox, Twins left-fielder Eddie Rosario fired a perfect throw to home plate, gunning down Devers for the final out of the game and sealing a 2-1 result.

Sox manager Alex Cora called Febles' decision "a great send." Febles didn't regret the decision.

"We were in a situation with two outs and I thought we had a great shot," Febles said. "Unfortunately, he made a perfect throw to the plate. If that throw went one step to the left or right, he would've scored. You should give Rosario credit. I haven't seen an outfielder making a throw to the plate being that close to the wall."

With two outs and the Sox trailing by a run, Martinez hit a line drive off the Green Monster that at first appeared to have a chance to get out for a walk-off home run. It didn't, allowing Rosario to perfectly play the carom and throw Devers out by a few feet.

Febles said his decision wasn't impacted by the fact the Sox' offense had struggled, tallying just four hits in the game. He simply thought Devers would likely beat the throw.

"I had to wait to let the play develop," he said. "Rosario was playing in the left-center gap. Ball hit off the wall, I knew Raffy was coming hot. Now he has to make a decision to throw it to the plate from there or hit the cutoff man. He came up and made a perfect throw to the plate."

That throw cost the Sox greatly, dropping them to 75-65 on the season and costing them a chance to pick up a game on the Indians, who lost. Boston is now 6 ½ games out of the wild-card race with 22 games to play.

"Every loss is tough for the club. It doesn't matter how you lose the game," Febles said. "Unfortunately, we lost the game that way. That's how the games go sometimes. All we can do is get ready for tomorrow."

Rafael Devers thrown out at home plate to end game as Boston Red Sox lose, 2-1, to Twins

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox suffered one of their toughest losses of the season Thursday night, suffering a gut-punch in the form of a 2-1 defeat to the Twins.

Attempting to score from first on a J.D. Martinez double and tie the game, Rafael Devers was gunned down at home plate by left-fielder Eddie Rosario for the final out. Rosario played the ball off the Green Monster perfectly before easily beating Devers with the throw to seal Minnesota's win.

After Xander Bogaerts singled with one out in the ninth, Devers grounded into a fielder's choice against lefty Taylor Rogers for the second out of the inning. Martinez's ball, which looked at first to have a chance at being a walk-off home run, bounced back to Rosario before he made the game-saving throw.

Before the ninth, Mookie Betts had provided the only offense for the Red Sox with a solo homer off Pesky's Pole in the third and a two-out double in the sixth. Before Bogaerts' single, Sox batters other than Betts were 0-for-24 at the plate.

Starters Martin Perez and Nathan Eovaldi dueled for the first five innings, mowing down each lineup with relative ease. Eovaldi, who recorded his longest start since April 17, allowed just one hit in five innings but walked the first three batters he faced in the third and allowed a run on a Jake Cave double play that tied the game, 1-1.

Though the teams combined for just six hits, walks were an issue for Sox pitchers. After Andrew Cashner had walked the bases loaded in the seventh, pinch-hitter Willians Astudillo had the game-winning knock for Minnesota, slapping a bases-loaded single off Matt Barnes to put the Twins up for good.

The Sox dropped two of three to the Twins, falling to 75-65 on the season. They'll welcome the Yankees into town for a four-game series beginning Friday night.

Yankees up next

The Sox and Yankees will face off for the final time this year at Fenway over the weekend. Here are the pitching probables:

Friday, 7:10 p.m. - TBD vs. RHP Domingo German

Saturday, 4:05 p.m. - TBD vs. LHP J.A. Happ

Sunday, 8:05 p.m. - RHP Rick Porcello vs. RHP Masahiro Tanaka

Monday, 7:10 p.m. - LHP Eduardo Rodriguez vs. LHP James Paxton

Michael Chavis, Boston Red Sox rookie, might be done for season after suffering oblique injury

Chris Cotillo

Michael Chavis' season is in jeopardy after the Red Sox infielder suffered an oblique injury Wednesday while trying to work his way back from the injured list.

Chavis, who has been out since Aug. 12 after spraining the AC joint in his left shoulder making a diving catch a few days earlier, hurt his oblique while taking ground balls and swinging at Fenway Park on Wednesday. Manager Alex Cora said it's possible Chavis doesn't return this season.

"We have to stop his baseball activities," Cora said. "I don't know where it's going to take us. Obviously, we're running out of time. There's no more at-bats (rehab stints) in other places."

Chavis appeared in nine rehab games for Pawtucket before feeling soreness on his side Saturday and being scratched from the second game of a doubleheader. He returned to Boston to continue rehabbing with the Sox, who hoped to activate him by the weekend.

Instead, Chavis will remain on the 10-day injured list. If his season is over, he'll finish his rookie campaign with a .254/.322/.444 line and 18 homers in 95 games.

Cora said the Sox haven't considered activating top prospect Bobby Dalbec to fill in for Chavis. Boston currently has Sam Travis and Chris Owings as right-handed options at first and second base.

"We're comfortable with where we're at with the roster," Cora said. "Obviously, (Dalbec) makes an impact from the right-handed side. But we haven't had the conversation."

David Price injury: Boston Red Sox lefty has wrist tightness, scratched from Friday start vs. Yankees

Chris Cotillo

Red Sox left-hander David Price won't start Friday's game against the Yankees after feeling tightness in his left wrist while throwing a bullpen Wednesday.

Price spent the final 3 ½ weeks of August on the injured list after a TFCC (triangular fibrocartilage complex) cyst was discovered on his left wrist. He returned Sunday in Anaheim and pitched two innings before suffering the setback Wednesday.

Price saw a specialist in Boston after the bullpen. Manager Alex Cora said there's no timetable for Price's return but said the lefty might be able to start in Toronto next week.

"It's not as bad as the first one, but obviously, we're not going to throw him out there just to make a start," Cora said. "The changeup was okay, the cutter was okay yesterday. He pushed hard to pitch, but I was like, 'No, we're not going to do this to you.' We'll go with the bullpen."

The Sox will have a bullpen game in Price's spot Friday, with new righty Jhoulys Chacin likely to be the opener. They'll also have a bullpen day Saturday before Rick Porcello pitches Sunday and Eduardo Rodriguez goes Monday against the Yankees.

Price likely would have been able to pitch two innings throwing just fastballs Friday night. It wasn't a risk the team was willing to take.

"For how bad we want to win and we know David can probably go out there and compete for two innings throwing fastballs, it doesn't make sense to me," Cora said. "He's a big part of what we're doing this year and what we're trying to do the next few years. I'm not going to put David's health jeopardized because we're going to be selfish and push him for two innings."

Once Price feels better, he'll throw a bullpen and the Sox will take things from there.

"We'll wait for whenever he's ready," Cora said. "We'll try it again and he'll go back out."

*** *RedSox.com***

Devers' furious sprint falls short at the plate

Ian Browne

Down to their last strike, J.D. Martinez gave the Red Sox a flicker of hope when he sent one soaring toward the Green Monster in the bottom of the ninth inning on Thursday night at Fenway Park.

Initially, it looked like it might have had enough to get over the wall for what would have been a thrilling two-run, walk-off homer.

When it clanged off the wall, the Red Sox went for the alternative of tying the game. Third-base coach Carlos Febles furiously waved Rafael Devers home.

But as has been the case too many times this season for the defending World Series champions, Plan A and Plan B both went off-track in a gut-wrenching, 2-1 loss to the Twins.

Minnesota left fielder Eddie Rosario fired a one-hop strike, and catcher Jason Castro slapped the tag on Devers before he could get his hand on the plate and the game was over, just like that.

For several minutes, Devers and teammate Christian Vazquez sat silently in the dugout processing the stunningly abrupt nature of what just occurred.

“I was just trying to soak in what just happened, obviously,” Devers said. “I was really upset about the at-bat I had and obviously not being able to score when J.D. hit that ball. That’s something that stuck with me, so I just don’t like to lose, so that’s pretty much it.”

Xander Bogaerts had created the first sign of hope in the bottom of the ninth inning when he laced a one-out single to left. The dangerous Devers stepped up next against the Twins’ closer, lefty Taylor Rogers, but he could only muster a grounder to second. Give Devers credit for this, though: He motored down the line and avoided a game-ending double play, putting the game in Martinez’s hands.

Then, after the crack of the bat by Martinez, Devers went on a full sprint again -- this time first to home -- and Febles never hesitated. Unfortunately for Boston, neither did Rosario.

“I had to wait and let the play develop. Rosario was playing in the left-center gap,” Febles said. “Ball hits off the wall. I know Raffy’s coming hot. Now, he has to make a decision: Throw it to the plate from there or hit the cutoff man. He came up and made a perfect throw to the plate.”

The Twins -- who are in the drivers’ seat to win the American League Central -- were the ones who joyously walked off at Fenway after a perfectly executed play that was extra sweet in the heart of a pennant race.

“Yeah, I think it was a perfect way to end the game,” Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said. “It was a phenomenal throw. Obviously strong, accurate. As big of a moment as we’ve had all year long in any game.”

If it was perfect for the Twins, it was perfectly frustrating for the Red Sox.

“Actually, I’m like, laughing at it,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “He hits the ball, you think it’s out of the ballpark. The ball bounces off the wall, you think he’s going to score, and he’s out.”

And so it goes for the defending World Series champs, who are in a hole that might be too sizable to climb out of in the fight for the postseason.

With 22 games left, the Sox trail the A’s by 6 1/2 games for the second Wild Card spot. They’d also need to climb over the Indians, who lead them by 5 1/2 games. The Rays are in possession of the first Wild Card spot by a half-game and seven over the Red Sox (six in the loss column).

Facing a sizable deficit to all three of those teams, the Sox would have to vault over two of them to play in the Wild Card game.

“Every loss is tough for the club,” Febles said. “It doesn’t matter how you lose the game. Unfortunately we lost a game that way. That’s how the game goes sometimes. All we can do is get ready for tomorrow.”

Price (wrist) to miss Friday start vs. Yanks

Ian Browne

Red Sox manager Alex Cora presented two pieces of bad news during his pregame briefing with reporters on Thursday.

Lefty David Price, who was due to make his second start back from the injured list on Friday night against the Yankees, has instead been scratched due to recurring discomfort in his left wrist. It’s possible he could pitch on the road next week in Toronto or Philadelphia.

In addition, infielder Michael Chavis won't return from the IL this weekend as had been originally planned due to a setback with his right oblique. There's a chance Chavis won't play again this season.

The right-handed-hitting rookie has been sidelined since Aug. 11 -- first due to a sprained AC joint in his left shoulder and then the injury to his left side which cropped up in his Minor League rehab assignment.

"We have to stop his baseball activities," Cora said. "I don't know where it's going to take us. We're running out of time. Obviously there's no at-bats in other places."

The continued absence of Chavis means that Cora will continue to play Sam Travis at first base against lefties. At second, Cora has little choice but to start a left-handed hitter -- either Brock Holt or Marco Hernandez.

With Price out of the mix at least through the weekend, Cora will go with bullpen games on both Friday and Saturday against the Yankees. Rick Porcello will start on Sunday night and emerging ace Eduardo Rodriguez will pitch the finale of the rivalry series on Monday.

Cora had already been going with bullpen games in the spot vacated by the injured Chris Sale (out for the season) and he'll likely do the same in Price's slot until the veteran lefty returns.

"David, after the bullpen yesterday, he felt a little bit tight with his wrist," Cora said. "He saw the specialist yesterday. It's not as bad as the first one, but obviously we're not going to throw him out there just to make a start. The changeup was OK. The cutter was OK yesterday so he pushed hard to pitch, and I'm like, 'No, we're not going to do this to you,' so we'll go with the bullpen."

Price was first sidelined with a cyst on his left wrist nearly a month ago. He made a short return last weekend against the Angels, throwing two innings. The plan was for Price to continue building up his pitch count.

But those plans have, at the very least, been stalled. The cyst is still there, and there's a chance Price will have it surgically removed after the season.

When Price has discomfort in his wrist, it impacts his pitch mix considerably.

"It's not like it got worse," Cora said. "It's just, he feels tight. And honestly, I'm not going to throw David without a changeup or a cutter out there. He can throw fastballs in, fastballs away, but he's not going to compete like that. I don't want him to compete like that. We'll wait. Whenever he's ready, we'll try it again, and he'll go back out."

If nothing else, the Sox are well-stocked for bullpen games. After making four more callups on Wednesday, Boston has a whopping 21 pitchers on the roster.

*** *WEEI.com***

This was a really, really bad day for the Red Sox

Rob Bradford

Want the good news?

Nathan Eovaldi gave up just one run over five innings. And Mookie Betts kept looking like 2018 Mookie Betts, claiming another homer to go along with a double.

Then there was everything else.

Before the game, it was the news that David Price has had a setback with his left wrist injury and would not be able to make his scheduled start over the weekend. (Jhoulys Chacin will get the start Saturday.) The word on Michael Chavis also was discouraging, with the infielder needing to shut down baseball activities after experiencing soreness in his right oblique.

Then just before first pitch, it was learned that one of the teams the Red Sox were chasing, Oakland, had fought back from a five-run deficit to put up nine runs in their last two innings for another win.

And finally, about six hours after those bits of news were delivered, came the ultimate dagger: The Red Sox lost.

Not only did the Sox drop a 2-1 decision to the Twins -- now sitting 6 1/2 games out of the Wild Card chase with 22 games to play -- but they punctuated the defeat in the kind of painful fashion befitting this entire season. (For a complete recap, [click here](#).)

With two outs and Rafael Devers at first base, J.D. Martinez did what would have seemed commonplace a year ago -- he tore into a slider from Twins closer Taylor Rogers, peppering the left-field wall. But this is 2019 so obviously, promise quickly turned into a problem.

Minnesota left fielder Eddie Rosario adeptly gathered in the ricochet, reared back and fired a one-hop strike to catcher Jason Castro. The execution was near-perfect and resulted in Devers coming up well short of managing anything but the game-ending out.

"Actually, I'm like laughing at it," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora, relaying his disbelief. "He hits the ball, you think it's out of the ballpark. The ball bounces off the wall, you think he's going to score, and he's out. It's one of those we had chances. We hit into, what? Fifteen ground balls or something like that. We didn't hit the ball in the air. (Twins starter Martin) Perez had like 50 pitches in four innings, five innings. We didn't make adjustments offensively today but we had our chances. We did. And whatever, not too many but just happened that Rosario made a good throw there. When he hit it we thought it was out, when it bounced off the wall we score and all of a sudden he throws a strike to the plate."

"I had to wait and let the play develop," said Red Sox third base coach Carlos Febles. "Rosario was playing in the left-center gap. Ball hits off the wall. I know Raffy's coming hot. Now he has to make a decision: Throw it to the plate from there or hit the cutoff man. He came up and made a perfect throw to the plate."

"I'm not surprised at all," Devers said of the decisive throw. "I know what kind of arm he has. I went off of contact. As soon as J.D. hit the ball, I just went full speed and just put my head down and followed the sign and kept going."

The Red Sox brought this one on themselves thanks in part to nine walks, three of which came from reliever Andrew Cashner who loaded the bases in the seventh inning after managing to throw just nine of his 25 pitches for strikes. That paved the way for the decisive hit, an opposite-field RBI single by Williams Astudillo off Matt Barnes.

"I just wasn't throwing strikes," Cashner said. "I didn't have a really good feel. Just felt a little stiff out there, but bounce back and have a chance again there tomorrow."

The problem is that there really aren't that many tomorrows left. In fact, this might have been the last one.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

Swing, send, relay, out -- how one game-ending play captured the Red Sox' 2019 season

John Tomase

Off the bat, it looked like a home run.

Off the wall, it looked like a tie game.

Off the relay, it looked like . . . oh, crap.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the story of the 2019 Boston Red Sox.

On Thursday night against the Twins, they battled to the final out. Even as this season has not gone remotely the way they envisioned when they arrived as defending champions, the one thing you can't accuse them of is quitting.

And so it came as no great surprise when they put the tying run on base with one out in the ninth inning, trailing 2-1. It likewise wasn't shocking when budding superstar Rafael Devers busted it down the line to avoid a game-ending double play. And considering how J.D. Martinez has been swinging it for the last month, it made sense when he launched one to left field that looked like it had a chance.

The ball struck high off the wall, where Twins left fielder Eddie Rosario chased it down with his back to the plate, spun, and fired a strike towards home.

Third base coach Carlos Febles waited as long as he could before giving Devers one short, hard wave to the plate. Devers rounded third just as Rosario let it fly. It looked like first baseman C.J. Cron might cut the throw, but catcher Mitch Garver waved it through and it was a strike, easily beating Devers, and effectively knocking out the Red Sox.

What are you gonna do?

"Actually, I'm like laughing at it," manager Alex Cora said. "He hits the ball, you think it's out of the ballpark. The ball bounces off the wall, you think he's going to score. And he's out."

As is the case with the season as a whole, the Red Sox fittingly left themselves no margin for error on Thursday. There's little question third base coach Carlos Febles made the right call to send Devers on a night when the Red Sox had managed just four hits, in a season when clutch ones have been hard to come by.

He took a shot and it pretty much goes without saying that a year ago, the throw would've hit a pebble and Christian Vazquez would've walked it off with a single up the middle one batter later. But not this year, and not this team.

"I had to wait and let the play develop," Febles said. "Rosario was playing in the left-center gap. Ball hits off the wall. I know Raffy's coming hot. Now he has to make a decision -- throw it to the plate from there or hit the cutoff man. He came up and made a perfect throw to the plate."

For his part, Devers spent a few moments after the game sitting forlornly in the dugout.

"I was just trying to soak in what just happened, obviously, like I was really upset about the at-bat I had and obviously not being able to score when J.D. hit that ball," Devers said. "That's something that stuck with me. I just don't like to lose, so that's pretty much it."

Yeah, that's pretty much it, all right. The team that just hasn't quite had it all year came up agonizingly short on Thursday and now four games against the Yankees loom this weekend. There may not be much left to play for come Monday.

"Every loss is tough for the club," Febles said. "It doesn't matter how you lose the game. Unfortunately, we lost a game that way. That's how the game goes sometimes. All we can do is get ready for tomorrow."

David Price scratched, raising more questions about Red Sox rotation in 2020

John Tomase

The Red Sox scratched David Price from Friday's start against the Yankees after a recurrence of the wrist tightness that had sidelined him for virtually all of August.

Manager Alex Cora said Price once again feels tenderness around a cyst in his left wrist. The injury landed him on the IL from Aug. 4 — when he allowed seven runs vs. the Yankees — until a two-inning start in Anaheim on Sunday in which Price did not look like himself.

"David after the bullpen yesterday, he felt a little bit tight with his wrist," Cora said. "He saw a specialist yesterday, and he's not going to start tomorrow. It's not as bad as the first one, but obviously we're not going to throw him out there just to make a start. The changeup was OK, the cutter was OK yesterday. He pushed hard to pitch, but I was like we're not going to do this to you. We'll go with the bullpen."

The Red Sox had hoped to stretch Price out for the final three weeks of the season in a desperate attempt to make the playoffs, but even as Cora refused to close the door on Price returning this month — "As soon as he feels well, he'll throw a bullpen and we'll go from there," Cora said — we're now left in a position of wondering what kind of impact the injury could have on 2020.

Sox hope Sale is Verlander, but what if he's Lincecum?

With ace Chris Sale already facing a follow-up exam with Dr. James Andrews at the end of the month to see how his left elbow has responded to rest, the Red Sox suddenly find themselves with major questions about the top three members of their rotation.

That's because right-hander Nathan Eovaldi has been limited to a bullpen/opener role since returning from April arm surgery. Now add Price to the list.

With Price unable to go on Friday, the Red Sox will feature bullpen starts on Friday and Saturday vs. the Yankees before Rick Porcello and Eduardo Rodriguez take the final two games of the series on Sunday and Monday.

Price isn't the only player dealing with injuries. Infielder Michael Chavis reinjured his oblique and is probably done for the season.

Red Sox LHP Eduardo Rodriguez is finally figuring it out, and 20 wins are within reach

John Tomase

Three more wins and Eduardo Rodriguez finishes the season with . . . 20?!?

The Red Sox couldn't have asked for a better best-case-scenario out of their fifth starter. They've long pushed him to maintain his consistency from start to start and to pitch deeper into games. In 2019, at age 26, he is finally figuring it all out, which means a legitimate milestone is within reach.

On Wednesday, E-Rod shut out the thundering Twins offense for seven innings in a 6-2 victory that gives him 17 wins on the season. Reaching the 20 threshold won't be easy. If he stays on his regular turn, he'll make four starts the rest of the way: at home vs. the Yankees this weekend, at Philadelphia, at Tampa, and at Texas.

"For me, it's not important for right now to win 20 games," Rodriguez said. "For me, it's more important to give the team a chance to make the postseason. That's our goal as a team. Make it to the postseason. If 20 wins come or not, I'm just going to be happy if we make it to the playoffs."

Say hello to a 21-man (!!) Sox pitching staff

With that goal entirely out of the team's hands — the only contender left the Red Sox play is Tampa — Rodriguez may have to settle for individual glory, but at least he is earning it.

He leads the American League in starts (29) and he has an outside shot of reaching 200 innings and 200 strikeouts, each for the first time in his career, if he can average seven innings and eight K's over his final four appearances.

He's 17-5 with a career-best 3.81 ERA, and he has really come on of late, with an 11-1 record in his last 16 starts. He has thrown at least seven shutout innings in three of his last four turns.

In a season that has seen starters Chris Sale, David Price, Rick Porcello, and Nathan Eovaldi limited by either injury, ineffectiveness, or both, Rodriguez has been the one bright spot in an otherwise dismal rotation.

"Like I've been saying all along, he didn't have to be David or Chris or Rick or Nate," said manager Alex Cora. "Eduardo Rodriguez is a good pitcher and he has good stuff and we saw that last year."

How big Dombrowski/Farrell argument led to changes

If Rodriguez can win 20, he'll join a select group in recent Red Sox history. Since 1978, when a young Dennis Eckersley turned the trick, only six other starters have reached the milestone: Porcello, Josh Beckett, Curt Schilling, Derek Lowe, Pedro Martinez (twice), and Roger Clemens (three times). Porcello is the only pitcher on that list never to make an All-Star team, but he won the Cy Young award in 2016.

That suggests even better things lay ahead for E-Rod, who doesn't even turn 27 until April.

"Potential is great," Cora said. "We know that. It's like, that's great, but there are a lot of people that just stay with that and they don't take the next step and he took the challenge, made some adjustments and now he's doing what he's doing."

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Anatomy of a crushing one-run loss for the Red Sox

Sean McAdam

For eight innings, the Red Sox had barely stirred at the plate. Until the ninth, in fact, the box score read like this: Mookie Betts 2-for-3; Everybody else in the Red Sox lineup: 0-for-22.

The wonder was that the Red Sox were still very much in the game, trailing the Minnesota Twins 2-1 in the bottom of the ninth. The Twins had just two hits, but took advantage of some wildness on the part of first, Nathan Eovaldi and later, Andrew Cashner, to push across two runs.

But the Sox had the top of their lineup due up, offering some hope. After Betts was retired on a soft liner to first, Xander Bogaerts flicked a slider from Sergio Romo into left field and the Sox had the potential tying run at the plate.

Twins manager Rocco Baldelli went to lefty reliever Taylor Rogers, who got Devers to hit into a fielder's choice, with Bogaerts forced out at second.

That sent J.D. Martinez to the plate, who began the night with a .407 average and a 1.392 OPS against lefties. Sure enough Martinez drove a pitch to left. For a minute it seemed like Martinez had gotten enough of the ball to hit over the Wall, but instead it banged high off the wall.

That was perhaps the first sign that this was not going to be the Red Sox' night.

“He hits the ball and you think it’s out of the ballpark,” said Alex Cora. “The ball bounces off the wall, and you think (Devers) is going to score. And he’s out.”

It wasn’t a particularly close play at the plate, either. With two outs, Devers could take off from first as soon as the ball was hit, but Minnesota left fielder Eddie Rosario fielded the carom off the wall perfectly and just as he was set to make his throw home, Devers was rounding the third-base bag.

No matter. Third base coach Carlos Febles never hesitated in waving Devers home.

“I was trying to be aggressive on that play,” recounted Devers. “Obviously, I was running hard. I know Eddie has a good arm, but I was just following Carlos and he had me going. I just put my head down and went full speed and I actually thought I had a good chance of scoring. But it just didn’t work out that way.”

“Great send,” said Cora.

“Off the bat, I thought it had shot (to go out). But I had to wait and let the play develop,” explained Febles. “Rosario was playing in the left-center gap and Raffy’s coming in hot. Now, he’s got to make a decision to throw it to the plate there or hit the cutoff man. He came up and made a perfect throw to the plate.”

Febles said he didn’t factor in that the Sox had struggled offensively all night, with one run to show for the first eight innings. The call has to be made based on what unfolded in front of him, and he thought it was worth the risk to send Devers.

“Sometimes it’s not about how the team’s been swinging the bat,” he said. “It’s about whether you have a chance to score. We’re in a situation with two outs and I thought we had a great shot. Unfortunately, he made a perfect throw to the plate. The throw goes one step to the left or right and he would have scored. But like I said, let’s give Rosario credit.

“I haven’t seen an outfielder make a throw to the plate being that close to the wall. Like I said, it didn’t work our way.”

“Give credit to Eddie Rosario,” said Cora. “He was playing in left-center. He hustled to the ball, got to the ball and he made a great throw to the plate.

“Every loss is tough for the club,” said Febles. “It doesn’t matter how you lose a game. Unfortunately, we lost a game that way. That’s how the games go sometimes.”

On such gambles are games sometimes won and lost.

The Red Sox decided to be aggressive, to force the issue. Perhaps the throw would be off-line, or catcher Jason Castro would juggle the ball.

It wasn’t.

He didn’t.

Devers was out.

And a loss that the Red Sox could ill afford happened anyway.

BSJ Game Report: Twins 2, Red Sox 1 – Sox suffer another one-run loss to Twins

Sean McAdam

Betts supplies the only offense: For the night, the Red Sox mustered just four hits — and only two through the first eight innings. Betts belted his third homer in the last two games and fifth in the last six when he

drove a pitch off the Pesky Pole to lead off the fourth. He later doubled to center in the sixth. In the last 15 games, he's slashing .362/.397/.754 with 13 RBI. The two extra-base hits gave him 71 for the season, giving him four straight seasons of 70 or more extra-base hits. In Red Sox history, only Ted Williams and Nomar Garciaparra reached 70 extra-base in at least four of their first six major league seasons. And while his season has been as good last year's, he stands a good chance to score more runs, hit more homers and knock in more runs this year than last.

Eovaldi turns in his best start since April: Although he only went five innings, Nathan Eovaldi limited a tough Twins lineup to a single run. He allowed only one hit through his first four innings. In the fifth, he suddenly lost control of the strike zone and walked three straight hitters to lead off the inning. A double-play helped, though a run scored. He then ended the threat by getting Jonathan Schoop to fly out. "I felt really good all the way up until that fifth inning," said Eovaldi. "I don't know if it was mechanical, or what it was — maybe nibbling a little bit. I felt like I was all around the zone and couldn't get the strikes when I needed them."

Bullpen pays for walks, too: In a 1-1 tie in the seventh inning, reliever Andrew Cashner suffered through an inning like the one Eovaldi had two innings earlier, walking the bases loaded. The Sox opted to go to Matt Barnes with two down and the bases full, but pinch-hitter Willians Astudillo hit a soft liner to right field, enough to score the go-ahead run from first base. Of the nine walks the Sox pitching staff gave up — four by Eovaldi and five from the relievers — two scored, representing the only runs the Twins could muster all night.

TURNING POINT

In the sixth inning, the Red Sox used a two-out double from Betts, a walk by Xander Bogaerts and a throwing error by Martin Perez to put two baserunners in scoring position with two out. But Rafael Devers grounded out to first, stranding two.

ONE UP

Marcus Walden: He was the most effective of four Red Sox relievers, tossing a scoreless sixth and has a 2.08 ERA and a 0.92 WHIP over his last 17 appearances, dating back to July 31.

ONE DOWN

Rafael Devers: Dropped to No. 3 in the order for the night because of the lefty starter for the Twins, Devers couldn't get anything going at the plate, going 0-for-4.

QUOTE OF NOTE

"I actually thought I had a good chance of scoring, but it didn't work out that way." Rafael Devers, who was thrown out at the plate for the final out of the game.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

The loss was the first for the Red Sox while allowing just two hits since Sept. 4, 2016, at Oakland when the Sox lost 1-0.

It also marked the 18th one-run loss of the season.

Mookie Betts has now collected 40 or more doubles five seasons in a row.

UP NEXT

The Red Sox host the Yankees in the first of four with RHP Jhoulis Chacin (0-0, 0.00) vs. RHP Domingo German (17-3, 4.01) at 7:10 p.m.

*** *The Athletic***

After Zac Brown Band's skit rankled, Fenway usher speaks out and opens eyes

Steve Buckley

A doctor once advised John Young against running a marathon, the reason being that dwarfs aren't supposed to run marathons.

Young's reaction was of the to-hell-with-that variety, and soon he was out there doing those interminable Saturday morning long runs, training for his first marathon. He has since run 17 of them, including six Bostons, as well as all kinds of 5 and 10K's and triathlons, and he's now training for the New York Marathon.

Here's something else that has been said to John Young, and this goes back to when he was a kid growing up in Toronto: Adults would tell him he should consider a career in "midget wrestling." Young told me that story seven years ago, just before I had sat in on one of his classes at the Pingree School, where he's been teaching math for 15 years.

Class had ended, and a roomful of earnest students who'd been paying rapt attention to everything their teacher had been saying now moved on to the next stop on their schedules, but the lessons learned by me that day had nothing to do with math. What I did learn was 1) to know John Young is to respect the hell out of him, and 2) he is just about the toughest athlete in Boston.

It was therefore no surprise this week to hear that Young, who moonlights as a "greeter" at Fenway Park, kicked up some dust after working a pair of concerts by the Zac Brown Band at Fenway Park.

Let's have Young pick it up from there:

"I was at the show Saturday night, everything was fine, it was a great concert," he said. "But on Sunday night, right at the end of the show, with about two songs left, three songs left, I don't know, I see this fan, it looks like he jumps up on the stage, to kind of like rush the band, and this guy comes from behind the stage, and it's a little person, dressed up in black with a shirt that says 'security' on it.

"And I realized what was happening. He started to, like, wrestle the fan — pretend wrestling, I guess. They were rolling around, the (little person) kept standing up to egg on the crowd to cheer for him, and the crowd, it was late in the night, everyone was having a good time, and then he kind of pinned the guy, and then he got up, kind of looked for applause again, and then left.

"So basically it was a skit. It was something that they had planned, I don't know, in my opinion they were doing it for a laugh, and I didn't find it to be funny because, unfortunately, growing up with dwarfism, I've experienced lots of instances of people using dwarfism, or using a person with dwarfism, as the butt of a joke. And it hurt."

After the concert was over and Young was returning to the break room, he was stopped by a spectator who excitedly asked him, "Were you the guy on the stage?"

"I looked at her and I said, 'Do I look anything like that guy?' Young said. "We look nothing alike except for the fact he's short. She shook her head and walked away. I was kind of in shock because now I had to walk from there to my car with tens of thousands of people out in the streets who had just seen what happened. So I basically said to myself, 'You have to walk as big as you can.' Walk like nothing happened. Walk like you own this place.

"And nobody said a thing outside the park."

If your reaction is that maybe John Young should lighten up a little, that it was all just a goof, come on, chill a little, John Young wants you to know this: “It seems to be one of the only disabilities where it’s still accepted to make fun of people.”

The “it” of which Young speaks is dwarfism. Young, 53, was born with achondroplasia, a bone growth disorder that causes the condition. His wife, Sue Casey, is a little person, as is their son, Owen, 16, a junior at Pingree who runs cross country and plays ultimate frisbee.

As Young once told me, “When my son was younger, he really struggled with not being the fastest and not being the biggest in the schoolyard, and that is what inspired me to get into this.”

It’s also why Young chose to make known his feelings about what he witnessed at the Zac Brown Band concert. He didn’t call for protests, and he certainly didn’t demand a Fenway Park boycott. He absolutely loves the old ballyard, says it has “soul, and spirit,” even if, OK, he admits he’s still a Toronto Blue Jays fan and, anyway, he prefers hockey over baseball.

What he did was take to social media to state, in so many words, that what he saw wasn’t cool. An old-fashioned fellow, he also wrote letters to the editor to some local newspapers. And guess what? People listened. He even received a phone call from Zac Brown himself.

“He left me a voicemail saying he was really upset that I was offended and he wanted to apologize, he wanted to speak to me directly,” Young said. “So I phoned him and we talked. He said he was sorry, and what I appreciated about it is that it wasn’t one of those I’m-sorry-if-you-were-offended apologies, or a you-took-it-the-wrong-way apology. He wasn’t twisting the blame to me.

“Whether or not he changes what he does, I don’t know. But he listened to what I had to say and he was honestly sorry for what was done. He heard me.”

Young, in turn, has heard from “dozens and dozens and dozens of parents with children who have dwarfism.”

And, he said, “I’m really impressed and at ease with the fact that the Boston Red Sox organization has really backed me up and supported me. I think maybe I was worried they would say, ‘Don’t use our name in this,’ or, ‘Because it happened in the park we don’t want you to say anything about it.’ They’ve done exactly the opposite. That’s the cherry on top for me.”

Young doesn’t want pitchforks and torches. And he doesn’t have any bad feelings about the little person who played the role of the security guard, who, he said, is from New York.

“If he wants to do that in a venue where it’s expected, like if there’s some wrestling thing going and that’s part of the wrestling, fine, do it,” he said. “They gotta make a buck. I don’t like it but do it. I don’t fault him personally. But I am upset that society, in this venue, at this park, at this concert, thought it was a funny thing.”

After we talked, John Young returned to his post — on this night it was Section 5 at the State Street Pavilion. The park would soon open for the Red Sox’ Thursday night series finale against the Minnesota Twins, and Young was ready to do what the job title suggests: greet people.

But just as fans began to trickle in, another Fenway greeter approached Young and leaned over and hugged him.

“I just want you to know that I appreciate you,” the guy said. “I think what you did was terrific.”

“Thank you,” said Young, who turned to me and said, “I do love this place. That’s why I try to miss as few games as possible.”

No days off.

Bill Belichick would love John Young.

The ghost of Fenway future: Bobby Dalbec floats around Red Sox this month, preparing for what's next

Chad Jennings

Aside from the fact he's 6-foot-4 and spent a bit of Thursday afternoon leaning against the batting cage, there's no real proof that Bobby Dalbec is actually with the Red Sox this week. His name isn't on the roster, his stuff is kept in Steve Pearce's locker – with Pearce's name still at the top – and by first pitch each night, he's usually back at his hotel to watch games from the relative comfort of a temporary home.

Dalbec is just passing through. He's a myth, a whisper, a ghost of Red Sox future.

Pay no attention to president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski slapping Dalbec on the shoulder to start a casual one-on-one conversation. Ignore manager Alex Cora's good-natured jab to the stomach as if old middle school friends are horsing around. Try not to think about the round of batting practice when Dalbec hit a line drive to straight center field, then hit one over the Green Monster in left-center, then homered into the home bullpen in right-center, then smoked a line drive off the top of the Monster, then finished with a fly ball to the triangle in center.

Don't think about any of it, because Dalbec isn't here. Not yet. But he will be. Rarely have the Red Sox made it so clear that a player is in their plans.

"I'm just taking it for what it is," Dalbec said. "Get more experience, learn what it's like to be here every day and prepare how they prepare, and just work on things to get better."

Since the active roster expanded Sept. 1, the Red Sox added 11 extra players, but not Dalbec. Reliever Bobby Poyner made the cut, but not the other Bobby, the one who led the Sox minor league system with 27 home runs and cracked Baseball America's list of the top 100 prospects. Dalbec was, instead, given a kind of weekly guest pass.

He'll be with the team through this homestand, sitting in on pregame meetings, taking groundballs with Mitch Moreland at first base and making minor swing adjustments with hitting coaches Tim Hyers and Andy Barkett. With deliberate and meaningful intention, the Red Sox are getting Dalbec's feet wet at this level. They're opening his eyes to the routine and the preparation of big league players, then they're sending him on his way. He's not allowed to stay in the dugout or the clubhouse during games because he's not officially in uniform, and he said it would be "a little weird" to watch from the stands. He prefers the hotel.

It's not an unprecedented situation – other teams have orchestrated similar immersive experiences for top prospects – but it's unusual, and it's telling. With first base, third base and designated hitter occupied, the Red Sox don't have readily available at-bats for Dalbec this month, but they may very well have a role for him next year. This week is a way of preparing him.

Moreland and Pearce are free agents at the end of the season, J.D. Martinez can opt out of his contract, and the Red Sox would be well served to have a cheap, internal power hitter who can fill one of those vacancies. The 24-year-old Dalbec — who finished this season with seven home runs in 30 Triple-A games — sure does look the part.

"This is a guy that's obviously very important to the organization," Cora said. "We're very excited with the strides that he made. Usually he slows down a little bit with his promotions, but I do feel like the higher the

level, the better it is for him because he can control the strike zone. So, you saw what happened in Triple-A. We were very happy with that.”

It’s telling, too, that when Dalbec goes to play for Team USA in the Premier12 tournament in November, he’s expecting to get all of his playing time at first base. He’s been primarily a third baseman as a professional – he was also an accomplished pitcher in college – but that spot’s taken in the Red Sox lineup. So Dalbec best suits the Red Sox of the immediate future at first base, where his massive frame and natural athleticism could play well. He’s considered a good defender at third, but the Red Sox started him at first base 21 times this minor league season, giving him far more time at the position than at any point since his freshman year of college. This week, he’s been working extensively at first base with Red Sox infield coach Carlos Febles and former Gold Glove winner Moreland. It’s entirely possible Moreland is helping to train his eventual replacement. But that remains to be seen.

Dalbec will be Rule 5 eligible this offseason, so it’s inevitable that he will be added to the 40-man roster. He has only a month of Triple-A experience, so it’s not a given that he’ll be in the big league picture next season.

But the Red Sox don’t have any other inactive young prospects hanging around this week.

Dalbec’s presence, even in such an unofficial capacity, makes clear the Red Sox believe he’s close. The state of their roster shows a clear path to Fenway in the near future. Dalbec said he’s been struck this week by the amount of information available in big league scouting meetings. He’s listened to the advice of big league coaches during his workouts. In the clubhouse, he’s been quick to ask his pseudo-teammates about the daily schedule, making sure he’s on time for his non-role. On Thursday, he even learned the proper place to stand in the middle of the clubhouse for large group interviews with more than a dozen Red Sox reporters.

“It’s been awesome,” Dalbec said during that scrum. “It’s an honor to come up here and kind of experience what they go through every day.”

Officially, he was never here. But all you had to do was look, and he was pretty easy to see.

*** *The New York Times***

The Dying Art of the Manager Meltdown

Bob Klapisch

Yankees Manager Aaron Boone’s theatrical run-ins with umpires this summer might have surprised more than a few observers, given his otherwise mild-mannered demeanor. Still, the second-year manager’s mastery of the jabbing index finger, the in-your-face stance and a willingness to get ejected has earned roars of approval from Yankee Stadium crowds.

But as charged up as Yankees fans have been with Boone’s fiery side, he isn’t all that impressed with himself. Asked to grade his most talked-about performance, a July 19 outburst in which he told a rookie umpire his Yankees hitters were “savages in the box,” Boone gave it a mere “B ... maybe.”

“I’m actually not overly confrontational or a yeller,” he said. Still, Boone’s antics have stood out in an era in which the wild, drawn-out arguments between hysterical managers and antagonistic umpires have been reined in and toned down.

Despite the introduction and expansion of instant replay in the last decade, the number of ejections in M.L.B. has remained steady. Some data suggests an influx of younger, less-tolerant umpires could be propping up those totals. Another factor is the computerized box that now defines the strike zone on game

broadcasts, which has led to steady bickering from the dugout; these days, ejections are more often borne out of disagreements over ball-and-strike decisions than blown calls on the bases.

Still, the overall hostility between umpires and managers, some of which grew into yearslong feuds, seems to have receded. Some would call it natural evolution of a wealthier and more-sanitized game, but the most obvious change may be technological: Super-slow motion cameras and video replays now ensure that virtually every close call is correct.

It's clean, efficient and a safeguard against human error, one that eliminates disasters like Don Denkinger's blown call at first base in Game 6 of the 1985 World Series. And with the independent Atlantic League now experimenting with motion sensors calling balls and strikes instead of humans — and its introduction to the big leagues all but inevitable — the former Mets manager Bobby Valentine predicted that “soon we'll be at the point where there's nothing left to argue about.”

But as baseball ushers out the era of umpire imperfection, it is also saying goodbye to the old-fashioned disputes that livened up the game for viewers and drew more attention from fans and the news media than a well-timed double-play or a robbed home run.

Some tirades were overblown and cartoonish — managers kicking dirt and heaving bases. But some fights were born of genuine dislike. When Orioles Manager Earl Weaver and the umpire Bill Haller produced one of the most well-known confrontations ever in 1980 — an expletive-laden argument that still can be found (with full audio) on YouTube — it was obvious there was nothing fake about their vitriol. At one point Weaver screamed at Haller, “You're out here for one reason, and that's to bury us!”

Davey Johnson, the former Mets manager who played for Weaver in Baltimore in the 1970s, said: “That's how Earl really felt about Haller. He felt it to the core that the umps were out to get us.”

Not everyone was quite as explicit as Weaver, but many of his peers — Billy Martin, Whitey Herzog, Bobby Cox — wielded a similarly confrontational style, forging an antagonism with the umpires that persisted into the 1990s.

Valentine recalled being invited to lunch by a veteran umpire when he was a young manager with the Texas Rangers. “I thought, Wow, that's really cool. An umpire wants to get to know me,” he said. “Well, we meet the next day, sit down to eat and all of a sudden the umpire says to me, ‘If you ever come onto the field to argue with me again like you did last night, I'll bury you for the rest of your career, just like I buried Dick Howser until the day he died.’”

Before Valentine could reply, the umpire got up and walked out.

“And of course he left me with the check,” Valentine said.

The tide began to turn in 2000, when American and National League umpiring crews merged. As a larger, single subset working under the auspices of the commissioner's office, umpires were warned about their combative style.

“How we dealt with arguments changed at that point,” said the former umpire Dale Scott, who retired in 2017. “Baseball wanted us to stop being the aggressors. Of course, that was easier said than done, but you could see the difference in the minor leagues. That's where the culture started to reverse, with the new guys coming up.”

The new generation displaced umpires with distinctive flair — such as Dutch Rennert's operatic strike calls behind the plate — and brought a homogeneous style, the same demeanor, even the same trim physique. Minor league umpires are strongly urged not just to master the contours of the strike zone but to stay in shape and work on their mobility.

“There are so many of them I don’t recognize, and honestly a lot of them look alike these days,” Pirates Manager Clint Hurdle said. “Maybe I’m just getting old.”

That’s meant the end of a theatrical era — gone the way of stirrups and chewing tobacco on major league diamonds. As the former manager Buck Showalter, 63, put it, “arguing used to be an actual skill that you worked on and improved. But there’s less and less of a need for it.”

In this tamer era, Indians Manager Terry Francona, 60, said that he has to suppress a smile when he hears his players complain about balls and strikes.

“I tell them, ‘You guys are lucky you weren’t around 20, 30 years ago,’” Francona said. “Imagine having a bad umpire who was out to screw you, as well. Now that was a problem.”

And even when arguments do occur in today’s game, Scott said, the younger, newer managers don’t measure up to their predecessors — “especially the one who are all about numbers and sabermetrics.

“They come out to argue,” Scott added, “and they have no clue what to actually say.”

The thing is, baseball veterans say, the best arguers often said nothing of value. It only looked that way.

*** *The New York Post***

‘What are they, 15 games out?’ A Yankees-Red Sox role reversal

Dan Martin

What a difference a year makes.

The Yankees head to Boston for a four-game set beginning Friday in command of the AL East and with the best record in the majors — pretty much where the Red Sox were last season.

And the Red Sox are trying to make a late surge to get into the playoffs as the second wild card.

Brett Gardner doesn’t know exactly what to make of the reversal.

“We’ve played better,” Gardner said. “How do you explain it? I can’t explain it. I look at their team. I know they’ve dealt with some things, like Chris Sale being shut down. But with all the guys we’ve been without, it’s something I can’t explain. Nobody could have predicted our injuries and for us to be in the position we’re in. But somehow, here we are.”

Where they are is with a 9.5-game lead over Tampa Bay in the division — as well as a whopping 16.5-game advantage over Boston, which remains on the outside looking in at the AL playoff picture.

In part because of their dominance throughout the year, the Yankees say they’re not all that focused on where their main rivals are in the standings.

“What are they, 15 games out?” Aaron Judge said. “That’s not what we’re thinking about. We’ve been set on winning the division since spring training, so this is what we expected.”

But even Judge acknowledged the path to get to this point is not what he or anyone else planned on, with dozens of players on the IL and a seemingly endless supply of replacements who have played as well if not better than some of the regulars who got hurt.

“This isn’t the way we thought we’d navigate to get here, but we’re set up well,” Judge said.

Their sizable lead in the division should afford them the opportunity to configure their pitching however they want leading up to the ALDS.

“That’s part of the reason why Boston had so much success last year,” Judge said. “It’s not like they relaxed, but they could gear up for the playoffs. I talk to our hurt guys all the time about not rushing back. I tell them, ‘It’s not like September is the last month. We’ve still got two months left of baseball. Take your time and make sure you’re right for the postseason.’ That’s why winning the division is huge.”

And that’s why they have no intention of slowing down as long as there is a division title, as well as home-field advantage in the playoffs, to play for.

It’s also why Gardner expects the usual intensity at Fenway Park this weekend, despite the gulf between the teams.

“All the games are gonna matter,” Gardner said. “I can assure you, both teams want to win as bad as always.”

The Yankees find themselves pretty much where the Red Sox were in 2018, when they won an MLB-best 108 games en route to a title. But their eyes are still on October, where they want to advance beyond where they’ve been the last two seasons.

“I like where we are, and I don’t think we’re going to slow down,” Gardner said. “We’ve done it for five-plus months. And possibly getting guys back like [Luis] Severino and Dellin [Betances], [Giancarlo Stanton] and [Aaron] Hicks only strengthen our chances. We can still be better than we’ve been.”

*** *The Minnesota Star Tribune***

Monster play: Eddie Rosario's throw cuts down runner at plate to end Twins' 2-1 win over Boston

Phil Miller

The biggest victory on the greatest road trip during the most preposterous season deserved the most unbelievable finish, too.

Leave it to Eddie Rosario, the human exclamation point.

Rosario, born for these oh-my-goodness moments, calmly gloved the rebound of J.D. Martinez’s wall-scraping double, pivoted toward the plate, and unleashed a one-hop laser to catcher Jason Castro, who applied the tag to a futile slide by Rafael Devers. And just like that, the Twins’ most successful road trip in decades concluded with an iconic maybe-it’s-meant-to-be memory, a euphoric celebration — and an oddball 2-1 victory over the Red Sox at Fenway Park.

“It was a perfect way to end the game. A phenomenal throw, obviously strong, accurate,” gushed Twins manager Rocco Baldelli. “As big of a moment as we’ve had all year long.”

And it was the zenith to the Twins’ spectacular 10-game road trip, a three-city trek that included eight victories — the first time since, gulp, the 1991 championship season that Minnesota took eight out of 10 on one swing — plus their first series victory in Fenway since 2013.

That success nearly doubled their lead in the AL Central. The Twins, who left Target Field with a 3½-game lead over second-place Cleveland, now come home for a weekend “showdown” with the Indians sporting a 6½-game lead.

“It was a wonderful trip, all the way around,” Baldelli said. “We had to win games in many different ways, [which] just shows everyone, shows ourselves a little bit just what we are capable of.”

The most prodigious home run-hitting team of all time, he means, won this game with stout pitching, dazzling defense and an offensive arsenal that consisted of eight walks, a couple of paper clips, two measly singles and some chewing gum. The Twins scored both of their runs after Red Sox pitchers walked the bases loaded, in the fifth inning on a double play (one of four the Red Sox turned), and in the seventh on Willians Astudillo's pinch-hit, looping line drive that he had just predicted to hitting coach James Rowson.

Yeah, that kind of night.

It broke a 1-1 tie and delivered the Twins' first victory with so few hits since Aug. 23, 2005, when Johan Santana, backed by only one hit from his teammates, beat the White Sox.

This time it was another Venezuelan lefthander, Martin Perez, making do with little help. Perez threw only 70 pitches, enough to mow down the Red Sox for six innings with only one mistake: a two-out double to deep center field by Mookie Betts in the sixth. But Perez escaped the jam when Rafael Devers grounded out.

Oh, the run he allowed? Pardon Perez if he's not impressed. Betts, who belted two homers the night before over the Green Monster, blooped a soft pop fly to right field in the fourth inning. It came down only 321 feet from home plate — but not before glancing off the right-field foul pole — the Pesky Pole — awarding Betts the shortest home run possible in the major leagues.

Did it feel like he had allowed a home run? "Ah, no," said Perez, who became a 10-game winner for the fourth time in his career. "It was ... I'm not allowed to say."

The Twins' rapidly solidifying bullpen allowed even less, though it had some help. Trevor May relieved Perez for the seventh inning and retired three hitters in order, but with a catch: The second of them, Red Sox catcher Christian Vazquez, crushed a long fly ball to deep center, a certain extra-base hit that Jake Cave turned harmless with a diving catch.

Tyler Duffey pitched a perfect eighth, and Taylor Rogers, after Sergio Romo allowed a single, closed out the game to earn his 24th save — albeit in the most dramatic way possible.

"When I saw the ball off the wall, I was thinking I had the chance to take this guy at home plate. I tried to make a good throw," Rosario said. "Since I was younger, I liked the spotlight, moments like that. I try for those and I think I do a good job."

And this one? "I did everything perfect."

*** *Associated Press***

Rosario nails Devers at plate, Twins hold off Red Sox 2-1

Eddie Rosario knew he was the only chance Minnesota had at avoiding extra innings when he saw J.D. Martinez's drive heading for the big left field wall at Fenway Park.

Rosario was positioned perfectly for the bounce off the Green Monster and delivered a strike to home plate for the final out, preserving the Twins' 2-1 victory over the Boston Red Sox on Thursday night.

"I like the spotlight -- moments like that," Rosario said in a jubilant Minnesota clubhouse, where the Twins were celebrating the completion of an 8-2 road trip that moved them closer to an AL Central title.

Rafael Devers tested Rosario's arm and lost when he attempted to score from first base on Martinez's double with two outs in the ninth.

Pinch-hitter Willians Astudillo drove in the go-ahead run in the seventh with just the second hit of the night for the Twins, who compensated by capitalizing on nine walks.

Clutch as Astudillo was, the play of the night belonged to Rosario. After playing the Green Monster correctly, which is no easy task for visiting left fielders at Fenway, Rosario's throw reached catcher Jason Castro on one hop.

"I think it was a perfect way to end the game. It was a phenomenal throw," Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said. "Obviously strong, accurate -- as big of a moment as we've had all year long in any game."

The Twins took two of three in Boston and extended their AL Central lead to 6 1/2 games over Cleveland. They will be back home this weekend hosting the Indians for three games.

The Red Sox lost for the third time in five games, further diminishing their chances of making the postseason after winning the World Series last year.

"Give credit to Eddie Rosario," manager Alex Cora said. "He made a great play."

Cora also stood by the decision to send Devers as he attempted to score the tying run.

"I just tried to be aggressive on that play," Devers said. "I just put my head down and went full speed and I actually thought I had a good chance of scoring but it just didn't work out that way."

Mookie Betts homered for the third time in two nights and added a double. He had Boston's only two hits until Xander Bogaerts singled with one out in the ninth.

Minnesota starter Martin Perez (10-6) allowed one run and two hits in six innings. Taylor Rogers got his 24th save, thanks to Rosario's throw that was in plenty of time to get Devers.

"He's got a knack for that stuff," said Rogers, who was backing up home plate and had a perfect view of the play. "Obviously he's got a great arm and a knack, so it's kind of the perfect combination."

CHANCES ARE

Cora said the Red Sox initially thought Martinez came through with a two-run homer that would have won it for Boston. When the drive came up a little short, Cora said the Red Sox were still pretty confident the double would drive in at least the tying run.

"We didn't make adjustments offensively today, but we had our chances," Cora said. "We thought it was out. When it bounced off the wall, we score, and all of a sudden, he throws a strike to the plate."

The Red Sox didn't have a hit until Betts lined a homer off the Pesky Pole in right in the fourth to put Boston up 1-0.

COMING THROUGH

Boston pitchers loaded the bases on walks twice and Astudillo made them pay the second time with a single that scored Miguel Sano.

Andrew Cashner (11-8) got two outs in the seventh but loaded the bases on three walks. Astudillo batted for Jonathan Schoop and singled to right off Matt Barnes, the only Boston pitcher not to walk a batter.

"We have a lot of different guys that can do a lot of different things on our team," Baldelli said. "Willie has that really unique ability to hit pitches that almost nobody else in the game can get a barrel on and he does it regularly."

Minnesota tied it in the fifth when C.J. Cron grounded into a double play with the bases loaded.

Nathan Eovaldi pitched five innings for Boston, allowing one run on one hit and four walks. He struck out three. Marcus Walden worked a scoreless sixth before Cashner took over in the seventh.

Twins center fielder Jake Cave robbed Christian Vazquez of extra bases with a diving catch on a sinking drive to right-center in the seventh.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: SS Jorge Polanco was out of the lineup after leaving Wednesday's game in the eighth inning with a sore knuckle on his right hand.

Red Sox: LHP David Price experienced tightness in his wrist while throwing Wednesday and will not pitch this weekend against the Yankees, according to Cora. Price just came off the injured list Sunday after missing most of August with a cyst on his left wrist.

UP NEXT

Twins: RHP Michael Pineda (11-5, 4.11 ERA) starts Friday against Cleveland RHP Adam Plutko (6-4, 4.53).

Red Sox: Had not announced a starter for Friday's opener against the Yankees and RHP Domingo German (17-3, 4.01).