

The Boston Red Sox Monday, September 9, 2019

*** *The Boston Globe***

Eddie Romero would be a wise choice to lead Red Sox, and other thoughts

Peter Abraham

The Red Sox are expected to offer up more details about their front office changes on Monday following the late-night ouster of president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

In the meantime, here are a few thoughts:

- Assistant general manager Eddie Romero, who has been with the team since 2006, would be a wise choice to take over. He has a background in scouting and player development and would work well with Alex Cora and the coaching staff.

His knowledge of the international market also is appealing given how critical that source of talent has become.

Romero has the intelligence and personality to pull the organization together at what will be a critical time. His promotion would be well received within the offices at Fenway Park.

If the Red Sox don't make Romero their GM, it's likely another team will.

But analytics chief Zack Scott should be strongly considered. The Sox also should inquire about Diamondbacks GM Mike Hazen and Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey.

Hazen was with the Sox from 2006-16 and is a Massachusetts native. Falvey is from Lynn and has quickly put the Minnesota organization on the right track after his hiring in 2016.

Arizona executives Amiel Sawdaye and Jared Porter also would be attractive candidates along with Yankees vice president Tim Lincecum, a former Sox player.

- It's likely impossible to bring Theo Epstein back from the Cubs, at least this time around. But now that Larry Lucchino isn't team president, it's worth checking into. Epstein, a liberal Democrat, can't be too thrilled working for the Ricketts family given their support, financial and otherwise, of President Trump.

It feels like the Cubs have run their course with their group. It's worth at least asking.

- Senior vice president Frank Wren, Dombrowski's chief advisor, was not selected as part of the interim group of executives who will run baseball operations. So obviously he's out. The same is probably true for Tony La Russa.

- Mookie Betts said it doesn't matter who is running the show, he wants what he considers his value to be and won't budge. That's his right. But part of what convinced Mike Trout to stay with the Angels was the relationship he had with GM Billy Eppler.

The new GM, whoever that may be, has to gain Betts' trust quickly. Betts may not be Trout, but he's also not a player you just trade for prospects. He is on a path to be one of the best players in franchise history.

- Dombrowski did what he was hired to do. He was decisive, he brought in prime talent and he won the World Series before the window closed. After all the cautious steps by Ben Cherington, Dombrowski was the closer they needed at the time.

But the Red Sox also added to their analytics staff during his tenure and their farm system is starting to bounce back. The notion that he was some out-of-touch old guy isn't true.

However the contract Dombrowski doled out to Chris Sale was rash. The Sox should have waited another year on the lefty given the long-standing concern about his mechanics. Now he's out with an elbow injury that could ultimately require surgery.

The Sox have the highest payroll in baseball this season at approximately \$236 million. You can't finish in third place when ownership gives you that much to play with.

The Sox used to be smart and creative with little moves. Under Dombrowski it felt like they hit everything with a sledgehammer. When that didn't work, they had no other answers.

The Yankees, for all their injuries, had waves of low-cost replacements ready. The Sox lost Sale and David Price and are going with bullpen games and the recently unemployed Jhoulys Chacin.

- Dombrowski's handling of the bullpen this season never made a bit of sense. The Sox were smart not to overpay Joe Kelly and Craig Kimbrel. But they tried to replace 128 innings from those two pitchers with ... Padres castoff Colten Brewer and more of Ryan Brasier?

The bullpen had a lot to do the slow start this season. Then the trade deadline came and Dombrowski sat on his hands with the Sox still in contention.

- The Red Sox are a huge, lucrative company that employs hundreds of people. But it's also an insular group set in its ways. Dombrowski, for all his outward cheeriness, never fit in with the many holdovers from the Epstein/Cherington years.

To me, he always felt like an interim. He wanted a ring to cap his long career and the Sox wanted to make the most of the opportunity they had. It worked out well for both sides.

Dombrowski will get paid for another season and eventually will get in the Hall of Fame. The Sox will get a younger GM and start ramping up to the next championship with more emphasis on player development.

- There are only 19 games left to play. The first thing the Sox should do is officially shut down Price for the rest of the season. Do the same with relievers Matt Barnes, Josh Taylor, and Brandon Workman, too. They've pitched enough at this point.

- The Sox made the playoffs three years in a row, won the World Series, and are on pace to win 86 games. Eighteen teams have worse records this season. That got Dombrowski fired. The next GM will be the fourth in 10 years.

It speaks to how out-of-control expectations are in Boston. Not just the Sox, but with every team in town. It's win a championship or else.

But Dombrowski knew that when he took the job. Now the person who follows him will get a nice press conference and pats on the back. Then the clock starts ticking.

Dave Dombrowski out as Red Sox president of baseball operations

Peter Abraham

The Red Sox fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski minutes after the team's 10-5 loss Sunday night against the Yankees, replacing him with four assistants on an interim basis.

The decision came less than 11 months after the Sox won the World Series. Dombrowski was on the field at Fenway Park before Sunday's game for a ceremony honoring longtime team employees. But just after midnight, a team spokesman said he had been let go.

"I just found out. I'm surprised and shocked," manager Alex Cora said.

Baseball operations vice presidents Raquel Ferreira, Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero, and Zack Scott will run the team until a new general manager or president of baseball operations is named.

Dombrowski did not respond to a request for comment.

The Red Sox are expected to make a more formal announcement Monday. At 76-67, the Red Sox are in third place, 17½ games behind the first-place Yankees with 19 games remaining after going 108-54 last season.

Dombrowski made a series of unexpected decisions that contributed significantly to the disappointing season, chief among them electing not to bolster the team's bullpen following the loss of free agents Joe Kelly and Craig Kimbrel. That led to a slow start, the Sox losing 17 of their first 28 games. The team got within a half-game of a wild-card spot July 27 but Dombrowski made no moves before the trade deadline, again deciding not to improve the pitching staff. The Sox responded with eight consecutive losses and fell out of contention.

Dombrowski, 63, joined the Red Sox on Aug. 18, 2015, his hiring announced during the late innings of a night game at Fenway Park. He made a series of quick, splashy improvements to fix a last-place team, trading for Kimbrel and signing lefthander David Price to a seven-year, \$217 million deal that offseason. The Sox won the American League East in 2016 before a quick elimination from the playoffs. Dombrowski then traded four prospects to get ace lefthander Chris Sale.

Dombrowski fired manager John Farrell after another first-round playoff exit in 2017 and hired Cora, who led the Sox to a championship last season.

Cora was stunned at the news, saying ownership informed him just after the game.

"I'm not ready to talk about it," he said.

Most of the players were similarly surprised.

"Honestly, it was kind of shocking to everybody," said J.D. Martinez, who was signed by Dombrowski before last season. "[Cora] let everybody know. Just a shock. It's wild."

Romero and Scott are expected to be among the candidates to replace Dombrowski. Ownership also could be interested Arizona Diamondbacks executive vice president and general manager Mike Hazen, who was with the Red Sox from 2006-16 in different capacities.

Whoever emerges will face challenges.

- Martinez has the right to opt out of his contract after the season;
- Sale, who was signed to a five-year, \$145 million deal in March, is out for the season with an elbow injury of still undetermined severity;
- Price, who has three years and \$96 million remaining, has averaged only 21 starts the last three seasons because of various injuries;

- Dombrowski also signed Nate Eovaldi to a four-year, \$68 million deal that has so far been a bust. The righthander has a 5.77 ERA in 19 games and missed three months after having elbow surgery;
- Mookie Betts, the American League Most Valuable Player in 2018, will be a free agent after next season and has so far resisted entreaties to sign an extension.

“It’s a business. It’s kind of part of it,” Betts said when asked his reaction to Dombrowski being fired.

A new general manager, Betts said, would not change his stance of getting what he feels is proper value.

“It doesn’t really matter who’s there. It’s going to be the same answer. This is proof that this is a business,” Betts said. “Like I said, I love it here, but it’s definitely still a business.”

Since the end of the 2011 season, when manager Terry Francona was fired and GM Theo Epstein left for the Chicago Cubs, the Sox have been in a state of flux. Ben Cherington was GM from 2012-15 before Dombrowski came in. Cora is the third manager in that time, following Bobby Valentine and Farrell.

Dave Dombrowski discovers having the biggest payroll always comes with a price

Dan Shaughnessy

Dave Dombrowski is out as baseball boss of the Red Sox.

The news broke after midnight that Boston’s president of baseball operations had been fired.

Fair or unfair, this felt inevitable. I wrote last month that I would be shocked if Dombrowski was still GM next year and those words were greeted with stony silence on Jersey Street. No one came to the defense of a boss that had just won the World Series and had finished in first place in each of his first three full seasons.

Dombrowski did exactly what he was hired to do when the Sox brought him on board in the summer of 2015. He traded prospects for veteran talent. He signed big name free agents. He threw around contract extensions like fun-sized Halloween candies. He ignored draft and development. And he ignored a lot of the people who worked at Fenway Park.

The Sox won every year until this year. And each season, Dombrowski became more isolated inside the walls of Fenway. He holed up with his buddies Frank Wren and Tony La Russa. He insisted that Sam Kennedy have zero input on all baseball decisions and never clicked with the “new” CEO. Dombrowski was not particularly close to the people in baseball ops. Or Tom Werner.

In the end, Dombrowski did not have much support from Alex Cora. No one in a Sox uniform was happy last week in Anaheim when Dombrowski failed to bring major league arms to California after a 15-inning win on a Friday night at the Big A. The next night, Cora was forced to call on weary, worn-out Ryan Brasier in relief of a critical game. Brasier blew a 4-3 lead, giving up six runs in the eighth inning. It was front office malpractice. Things were coming to a head.

When the team came home from the coast to play the Twins and Yankees, Dombrowski wanted clarity on his situation, and that clarity came after the Sox’ 10-5 loss to the Yankees late Sunday night.

Dombrowski and John Henry know one another well. They worked together with the Florida Marlins many years ago. But when the Sox flopped this season — despite having the top payroll in all of baseball — somebody was going to have to pay. You cannot have the top payroll in baseball and fail to qualify for a playoff field of 10 teams. Dombrowski winds up taking the fall.

Dombrowski has one year left on his contract. In Fort Myers in February, Henry said a contract extension for Dombrowski would probably happen this year. It never did. And as the team stumbled, it became apparent that Dombro would not be the man to oversee the next phase of Henry's baseball operation.

There are a lot of big decisions on deck as the Sox stagger to the finish. They have to decide if they are going to trade Mookie Betts if they can't extend his contract. J.D. Martinez has an opt-out clause that can be triggered at the end of this season. Rick Porcello is going to be a free agent. Everybody knows that Jackie Bradley Jr. should have been traded a year ago. It would be folly to have a lame-duck GM making decisions of this magnitude. So now the Sox will find a new guy to make those moves.

Henry has earned a reputation as a tough boss. Theo Epstein left in 2011 after winning two World Series. Ben Cherington was sandbagged in the middle of the 2015 season, less than two years after winning a World Series. And now Dombrowski is gone a little more than 10 months after winning a World Series in an historic 119-win season.

It will be interesting to see whom the Red Sox hire to replace Dombrowski. They still have a team that is built to win now, but the window is closing and big decisions have to be made.

Dombrowski left the Tigers in disarray after he was fired in Detroit in 2015. Boston's farm system is badly in need of replenishment, but the Sox cannot afford to tank the way Detroit is tanking.

Meanwhile, Dombro has saddled his successor with an aggregate \$75 million per year in salaries to three pitchers — Chris Sale, David Price, and Nathan Eovaldi — all of whom have arm trouble.

Running the Red Sox is never easy. Dave Dombrowski just found out the hard way. When you outspend every team in baseball, you'd better make the playoffs or you are gone.

Aaron Judge knows why Eduardo Rodriguez has made major strides this season

Julian McWilliams

In a bleak Red Sox season, Eduardo Rodriguez has made people pay attention.

New York Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge walked through the visitors' clubhouse Sunday afternoon, carrying his bat in his right hand. He had just made his way back from the batting cages, alongside teammates Luke Voit and Cameron Maybin. They won't face Rodriguez until the teams' last meeting of the year on Monday night, but Judge clearly has an idea of just how much Rodriguez has improved to become a top starter.

"With him I think [the difference] has been overall command," Judge said. "Command of all his pitches. First off he's been having great fastball command. Especially on the inner half to righties."

The Sox tried to make it a point for Rodriguez to be aggressive and establish the inner part of the strike zone. It's something he has mentioned after the majority of his starts — that when he's assertive and doesn't try to nibble, that's when he's at his best.

But Judge has noticed something else, too. "He works that cutter well, and that changeup well away to righties, he said.

"So, having that combo, when you start having righties thinking in because he's throwing that heater in for a strike, you kind of have to respect that. But when you respect that, he'll dump in that cutter away or changeup away."

Judge, who is just 3 for 18 in his career against Rodriguez, has his scouting report down pat. In Rodriguez's last outing against the Twins, Rodriguez drew 12 swinging strikes on his changeup, throwing it 29 times. His changeup usage is up this year to 23.4 percent vs. 21 percent last season.

“He’s pitching to his strength now,” manager Alex Cora said. “His changeup is one of the best in the league. His fastball is playing better for where he’s throwing it.”

In three starts this season, Rodriguez has a 4.58 ERA against the Yankees. Overall, though, he has posted a 3.81 ERA in 172⅔ innings of work. His strikeouts per nine innings is down to 8.8 but he’s having more success at getting ground balls, inducing 237 this season. And, as Judge said, it’s been his location.

“In the past, at times, I felt like when he would get into bad counts he would have to come in the middle of the plate. That’s when guys do damage,” Judge said. “But here he’s dictating the at-bat and working a good strike one. When you do that it kind of puts you behind as a hitter.”

Cora a fan of Belichick

As the Patriots opened up their season against the Pittsburgh Steelers on Sunday night, Cora raved about the Patriots’ consistency over the last 20 years, spearheaded by Bill Belichick.

“They made adjustments,” Cora said. “They’re so consistent at what they do. I saw Brad [Stevens] and he always says that it’s unreal that 11 guys do it the right way on every play. In the interview I did with Brad, Bill, and Bruce [Cassidy], [Belichick] mentioned something that caught my attention.

“Football, it’s all about practice. It’s all about the week. We don’t have time to do that. It’s every day. The adjustments are game-related in baseball. For them, they have four or five days to knock it off and then Sunday, it’s like, ‘Here we go.’ They are great at that. It’s amazing.”

Price won’t see Jays

Price played catch again Sunday, but it is unlikely that the Red Sox will have him start in their upcoming series against the Blue Jays. It will be Nate Eovaldi, followed by Jhoulys Chacin. The starter for Wednesday’s game is to be determined.

Asked if the team were in a different position would Price be well enough to pitch, Cora said:

“No. Without a changeup and a cutter, we’re not going to push him to go out there like that. If it was up to him he would try it, but I don’t think that’s something that is good for him or good for us.”

Yankees add four

The Yankees reinstated infielder Gio Urshela from the injured list. He had been out since Aug. 29 with a groin strain. Manager Aaron Boone said Urshela would likely be in the lineup on Monday night. The Yankees also added infielder Thairo Estrada, catcher Kyle Higashioka, and infielder Breyvic Valera . . . The Red Sox have 36 players on their active roster and the Yankees 34 . . . Christian Vazquez, 3 for 31 with one RBI in the previous eight games, was out of the Red Sox lineup. Cora had been using Vazquez at first base or DH when Sandy Leon caught . . . Single A Lowell lost, 2-1, against Brooklyn in Game 1 of the best-of-three New York-Penn League championship series. Game 2 is Monday in Brooklyn with Noah Songs starting for the Spinners . . . The Salem Red Sox fell to the Wilmington Blue Rocks, 6-3, in a decisive Game 5 Sunday. The win punches the Blue Rocks’ ticket to the Mills Cup Championship Series and ended Salem’s season . . . ESPN founder Bill Rasmussen threw out a first pitch in recognition of the network’s 40th anniversary. Rasmussen, 87, fired a one-hopper from on top of the mound . . . CC Sabathia, who will retire after the season, was honored by the Sox with a No. 52 from the Fenway Park scoreboard. Price presented the number to Sabathia, who received a loud cheer from the crowd. Sabathia was 18-15 with a 4.25 ERA in 44 career starts against the Sox.

Rick Porcello after latest Red Sox loss: ‘I’ve been terrible’

Julian McWilliams

Rick Porcello leaned back and watched as his 1-1 offering to Yankees left fielder Mike Tauchman in the fourth inning sailed into the right-field bleachers for a two-run homer Sunday evening. He then turned his head back toward home plate, took his cap off, wiped his forehead and asked for another ball.

It has become an all-too-familiar sight for Porcello and the Sox. The hard-hit ball that turns pitcher to spectator and leaves him still searching for answers.

Tauchman's homer, his 13th of the season, was the second Porcello allowed in his abbreviated four-inning outing in Sunday night's 10-5 loss to the Yankees at Fenway Park. After the game, the Sox fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

"I'm surprised and shocked," Cora said on the firing of Dombrowski. "I really don't have too much to say. He's the guy who gave me a chance to come here."

Said Porcello: "It's just unfortunate. I think the world of him. It's sad to see something like that happen. At the end of the day, we're the players on the field and we're the ones that can make or break a lot of things. Ultimately the onus falls on us."

Failure has fallen on Porcello all season. He's been victimized by multiple homers in six of his last 12 starts, with his final line against the Yankees almost identical to his previous outing against the Twins: six runs in just four innings.

"I don't know what else to tell you guys at this point," Porcello said afterward. "I'm grinding, trying to figure it out. I'm doing everything I can and it's not there. This has been the toughest year of my career by far. The most disappointing. The most emotional."

The Yankees hunt heaters and they didn't get cheated on any of their swings against Porcello, whose ERA climbed to 5.83. His off-speed pitches and breaking balls weren't a threat. They drew just one swing-and-miss out of a combined 28.

When that's the case, opponents can eliminate and sit on fastball, which is trouble. It's especially troublesome when that fastball is left over the plate at 91 miles per hour.

Gleyber Torres took flight on Porcello in the second inning, hitting his 35th homer of the year and giving his team a quick 2-0 lead. In the third, Porcello ran into some bad luck. Tauchman led the inning off with a jam-shot double to left which took a weird hop into the stands.

DJ LeMahieu then hit a weak infield single, bringing up Aaron Judge, who barreled a long single that scored Tauchman. Gary Sanchez plated another run on a soft ground out, which gave the Yankees a 4-0 lead.

The Sox found some life in the third inning when Jackie Bradley Jr. squared up a Masahiro Tanaka 1-2 fastball for a two-run homer to cut the deficit to 4-2.

But Tauchman's homer in the fourth put a stamp on the evening for the Sox and Porcello.

"He had some bad luck in certain places," Cora said. "But it was fastball command with him."

The Red Sox continued to battle, scoring two runs in the bottom of the fourth on doubles by Mitch Moreland and Sandy Leon.

However, for every punch the Sox offense threw, the Yankees had a counter. Ryan Brasier entered the fifth inning and surrendered a two-run blast to Judge, which gave the Yankees a comfortable 8-4 lead. It marked the Yankees' 268th homer of the season, breaking the team record set last season.

Chad Green took over for Masahiro Tanaka and he held the Sox scoreless in three innings of work. In the eighth, Mookie Betts hit a solo shot off Adam Ottavino. But Marcus Walden gave two back in the top of the ninth when Edwin Encarnacion singled to left, scoring Didi Gregorius and Sanchez.

The Sox went down in order against Jonathan Loaisaga in the ninth. The Sox are now eight games back in the wild-card race. Porcello, like he has all season, shouldered a lot of the blame for the loss.

“I’m sorry for Red Sox fans that have to watch it,” Porcello said. “I’m sorry to my teammates. It’s embarrassing to go out there every fifth day and not get it done. The only thing that I can say is it’s not for a lack of effort. I’ve been terrible and I’m sorry for that.”

*** *The Boston Herald***

Firing Dave Dombrowski was necessary, whether or not he deserved it

Jason Mastrodonato

The franchise-altering decision the Red Sox made early Monday morning will be called a strategic news-dump after the Patriots raised another banner and stomped the Steelers to open the NFL season.

To which we say, who cares? The timing hardly matters.

Did Dave Dombrowski deserve to be fired? That debate is probably an equally wasteful use of time.

The only question the Red Sox needed to ask themselves was this: is Dombrowski the best person to lead the franchise into a complex window, one in which they won’t be buyers or sellers but both at the same time?

John Henry ultimately decided no, Dombrowski isn’t the guy. And at 12:07 a.m. on Monday morning, the Red Sox told a handful of reporters at Fenway Park that the organization had made its choice.

With most of New England’s attention on the over-achieving Patriots, who continue to set a new standard for excellence on a yearly basis, the Red Sox said goodbye to the architect of the winningest team in franchise history.

There will be those who are befuddled by the move. Most of those people do not live in, nor hail from any of the New England states.

Let’s quickly put away the idea that New England sports fans are all snobs, too used to winning and unable to appreciate Dombrowski’s work for building the Dream Team of 2018.

That’s wrong.

What most people forget is that baseball fans in New England have suffered more than those anywhere else until 2004. Championship seasons are never forgotten around here. There are countless personal stories about what those seasons meant to so many different individuals, and those stories will be passed down from generation to generation.

This isn’t about being unappreciative. This is about keeping the winning going and pursuing excellence on a permanent basis. This is about not accepting anything less.

Dave Dombrowski did his job. He came to Boston in August of 2015 after a suspicious exit from Detroit, where he could never bring a title to a Tigers franchise that went all-in during his final years (and is still suffering for it today).

Ben Cherington had won a title less than two years earlier and was hailed as the best GM in baseball for finding value veterans in free agency and combining them with a homegrown roster.

But Cherington wanted nothing to do with Dombrowski's reign. He declined a chance to stick around in a lesser role, saying over and over that he had a vision for the franchise and refused to dishonor that vision by carrying out somebody else's.

Dombrowski made no genius moves. He spent Henry's money and traded Cherington's prospects. Chances are, we won't look back and say, 'how the heck did he trade for Player X while only giving up Player Y?'

The Chris Sale trade wasn't a coup. It was simply what it needed to be. The Craig Kimbrel trade, too.

Signing J.D. Martinez and reading the market correctly ahead of the 2018 season might've been Dombrowski's wisest move. Chalk that one up to experience and understanding.

Hiring Alex Cora to run that team was a no-brainer, but one that deserves credit too.

The midseason trades, Dombrowski's speciality, were handled perfectly. He said no to the Orioles on Zack Britton and instead focused on acquiring Nathan Eovaldi from the Rays. He released Hanley Ramirez and replaced him with Steve Pearce.

The rest was history, history that won't be forgotten around here after the Sox rattled off 108 wins and treated us to a convincing postseason in which Cora squeezed every last drop out of an already-talented roster.

Who's to blame for the debacle in 2019, then?

Cora will deservedly catch some heat for a laissez faire attitude in April, which he treated like an extended month of spring training. He continued to manage his team the same way he did in 2018, expecting the same results despite building evidence that change was necessary.

Dombrowski messed up, too.

Extending Sale without being absolutely convinced that his shoulder was a non-issue could end up being a monstrous mistake, one that costs this team for a long time. Re-signing Eovaldi, who has been anything but reliable in his career, to be the backup plan in a starting rotation full of injury questions was a risky gamble. Wasting money to re-sign Pearce and ignoring the needs in the bullpen proved fatal.

We can go on and on, adding up the good decisions and subtracting the bad ones. No matter how you do the math, he's going to end up not far away from zero.

Dombrowski screwed up. He also won them a World Series. Let's call it even.

What happens next, though, is what's most important. This is a matter of fit. And the new challenges facing this franchise call for a new style of leadership. The next GM will need a more deft touch. It must be someone capable of nuance at a time when the team won't be simply adding or subtracting All-Star talent, but doing both at the same time.

Entering 2020, the Red Sox will lose just about exactly as much money off their payroll (around \$50-55 million) as they'll likely add in raises to players already under contract. That leaves them with razor-thin financial flexibility if they're intent on limiting spending and remaining under the highest luxury tax threshold.

There's little doubt that some of the Red Sox' best players will need to be shopped and perhaps traded this winter. But because they're the Red Sox, and because this is New England, 2020 can't be a rebuild.

It must be a retooling, of sorts.

With Xander Bogaerts and Rafael Devers looking like a pair of MVP candidates under contract for the next five years, the Red Sox have a great base to work with.

The pitching staff is a mess.

The farm system is almost completely empty, having entered the year ranked 30th by Baseball America but is now 22nd after Dombrowski did nothing at the trade deadline.

There are big challenges ahead and the Red Sox should and will search for a new leader.

We don't have to blame Dombrowski for those challenges. We don't have to blame New Englanders for craving success.

We just have to acknowledge that there are prices for winning and be thankful that the Red Sox want and will continue to pay top dollar for it, even if it means firing the president 10 months after hoisting a World Series trophy.

Dave Dombrowski's career timeline

Justin Pelletier

The Boston Red Sox are not Dave Dombrowski's first project, nor will they likely be his last. In three-plus seasons, his winning percentage was better than anywhere else he's been, but that wasn't enough to save his job with the Sox. Here is a look at his past baseball employment history, with a few notes:

Dave Dombrowski timeline

1978 — The White Sox hire Dombrowski as an administrative assistant in the minor leagues at age 22.

1987 — Dombrowski joins the Montreal Expos as director of player development.

1988 — Named the Expos' GM in July. At age 31, he's the youngest GM in Major League Baseball history.

1991 — The expansion Florida Marlins name Dombrowski the first GM in franchise history.

1997 — After spending time building the Marlins' organizational depth, Dombrowski spent big money and assets to assemble the 1997 Marlins, who under Jim Leyland won the World Series.

1998 — Under mandate from owner Wayne Huizenga, Dombrowski sells off all of the Marlins' high-priced players. In the next four seasons, the Marlins never finished above .500.

2001 — Dave Dombrowski is hired by the Detroit Tigers in November.

2003 — The Marlins win the World Series again, with players chiefly acquired by Dombrowski.

2003 — The Tigers lose an American-League record 119 games.

2006 — With Leyland again at the helm, the Tigers reach the World Series, where they lose in five games to the Cardinals.

2012 — Another trip to the World Series for the Tigers, another loss, this time swept by the Giants.

2015 — Dombrowski was released by the Tigers after 14 seasons. Prior to his arrival, the Tigers had missed the playoffs 14 years in a row. They went to the playoffs five times under Dombrowski, including to the two aforementioned World Series.

2015 — Dombrowski is hired to replace Ben Cherrington in the Red Sox front office. Later that November, Dombrowski makes his first big deal, acquiring Craig Kimbrel for four prospects. He also signs David Price to a long-term deal.

2016 — Sox win 93 games in Dombrowski's first full season at the helm, and win the AL East, but lose in the first round to Cleveland.

Preseason 2017 — Dombrowski acquires Chris Sale for four more prospects, including Yoan Moncada.

October 2017 — Red Sox again win the division, but again fall in the playoffs, this time to Houston, the eventual World Series champion. Dombrowski responds by firing John Farrell as manager, and hiring Alex Cora.

February 2018 — Dombrowski signs free agent JD Martinez.

October 2018 — The Red Sox win the World Series, after mid-season acquisitions Nathan Eovaldi and Steve Pearce come up big in the playoffs. He was named Executive of the Year for the second time, first since 1997.

Sept. 9, 2019 — After a season that never met expectations after Dombrowski returned nearly the same roster from the previous year, the Red Sox and owner John Henry — who owned the Marlins when Dombrowski was there — made a change. Following a 10-5 loss to the rival New York Yankees, the Sox announced they were parting ways with Dombrowski.

Red Sox fire Dave Dombrowski early Monday morning

Jason Mastrodonato

Dave Dombrowski's time with the Red Sox is over.

Just past midnight on Monday morning, a Red Sox spokesman entered the press conference room at Fenway Park and told reporters that the Sox had parted ways with Dombrowski, the president of baseball operations since 2015.

An official announcement will occur later on Monday, when principal owner John Henry should hold a press conference discussing the decision.

While there will be a search to find the next decision maker for the organization, the three assistant general managers, Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott, will share the responsibilities for the remainder of the season.

Dombrowski built a team that won the World Series in 2018, but has made some questionable decisions since.

Manager Alex Cora didn't have much time to process the news when he was informed after walking off the field at Fenway, where his Red Sox took a 10-5 loss to the Yankees and fell to 17-½ games back in the American League East and eight games back of the wild card with only 19 games remaining.

"I mean, I just found out," Cora said. "I'm surprised, I'm shocked, honestly. Right now I don't have too much to say. We'll talk about it tomorrow. This is a guy that gave me a chance to come here and be a big league manager. It's one of those that they just told me, so I'm not ready to talk about it."

Cora quickly pulled his team together after the game to inform them of the decision.

Inside the Red Sox locker room, players were shocked by the timing of the news, but not surprised by the decision.

Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez and Rick Porcello each said some form of “this is a business” when discussing the firing of Dombrowski, whose contract runs through 2020.

“I just found out right now, honestly,” Martinez said. “It was kind of shocking to everybody but it’s a business. I don’t know. It is what it is, kind of deal... We had a good team and I guess, like I said, ownership has their reasons. It’s a business. That’s their call. We’re here, we have a job to do, we have to just keep chugging away.”

Betts can be a free agent after 2020 and has been steadfast in his belief that he should pursue the best deal for him, regardless of what team offers it to him. Dombrowski leaving made no difference, he said.

“At the end of the day I’m going out and playing the game with the guys that are here on the field, not with those guys,” Betts said. “So I don’t pay much attention to all that. It doesn’t really matter whose there. It’s going to be the same answer. Nothing’s gonna change. This is proof that this is a business.

“Like I said, I love it here but definitely this is still a business.”

Porcello took a harder approach and said he and the players feel somewhat responsible for Dombrowski’s firing.

“There’s a business aspect to it and it’s just unfortunate,” Porcello said. “Obviously I’ve played for Dave for a long time and I think the world of him and it’s just sad to see something like that happen. At the end of the day, we’re the players that are on the field and the ones that can make or break a lot of things and ultimately the onus comes on us. It’s unfortunate to see him take some of it. But that’s the decision ownership made and it is what it is.”

Rick Porcello apologizes for awful season after Red Sox loss to Yankees

Jason Mastrodonato

In the midst of a three-year stretch in which he’s been the worst pitcher in Major League Baseball, Rick Porcello offered an apology.

After allowing six runs in four innings in the Red Sox’ 10-5 loss to the Yankees on Sunday night, pushing Porcello’s MLB-worst ERA to 5.83, the veteran right-hander was reflective during a post-game press conference.

“I don’t know what else to tell you guys,” he said. “I’m grinding, trying to figure it out. I don’t know what else to say. I’m doing everything I can and it’s not there. It sucks, man. This has been the toughest year of my career by far, it’s been the most disappointing, most emotional. I don’t have any other words to describe it besides I’m sorry for Red Sox fans that have got to watch it. I’m sorry for my teammates, the guys have been playing their (expletives) off all year. It’s embarrassing to go out there every fifth day and not get it done and the only thing I can say is it’s not for a lack of effort. It sucks. I’ve been terrible and I’m sorry for that.”

The Red Sox have committed handfuls of crimes that conflict with the spirit of winning in 2019 and their continued faith in Porcello, while built on a history of trust and (moderate) success, is one of the few still poking them as the season fades away.

Porcello was knocked around again on Sunday night, this time when the deck was stacked in his favor.

Against a Yankees team he's continuously owned at Fenway Park (he entered with the lowest ERA in history by a Red Sox pitcher with 50 innings against the Yankees at Fenway Park), Porcello had little to offer. He struck out just one batter over four innings and gave up six runs in an 10-5 loss.

For those still keeping score at home — not that there's much of a reason to — the World Series champs fell to 17-½ games back of the Yankees in the American League East. They're eight games back in the wild card standings with three teams ahead of them and 19 games remaining.

Porcello is a World Series hero and a team leader. He's admired for his professionalism and work ethic. There's a belief that he's consistent and reliable, and in a way that belief has been proven accurate.

Sunday's start was his 29th of the year, putting him on pace to make 33 starts for the fourth consecutive season.

In the first of those, back in 2016, he went 22-4 with a 3.15 ERA and won the Cy Young Award. In the three years since, he has a 4.86 ERA, the worst among any pitcher with 500 innings in that span (the next worst, Kyle Gibson, has a 4.36 ERA).

The Red Sox haven't lost faith. Each time Porcello strings together a few solid innings, their eyes widen at the idea that just maybe he's turned a corner, ignoring the very obvious signs that what made Porcello good in 2016 hasn't been working since.

He labored again on Sunday night. His four-seam fastball averaged 89-91 mph. The exit velocity of hitters against that fastball averaged 102 mph and maxed out at 114 mph.

The Red Sox like to throw fastballs up in the zone but when Porcello went up there against Gleyber Torres with a 91-mph heater in the second inning, Torres smoked it over the Green Monster for a two-run shot. And when Porcello tried going up-and-in with an 89-mph heater against Mike Tauchman in the fourth, Tauchman was able to pull it into the right-field bleacher seats for another two-run shot.

The Yankees scored two in the second, two in the third and two in the fourth. Porcello struck out just a single batter before he was removed after throwing 73 pitches, the fifth time this year he's been removed before reaching the 80-pitch mark.

The fans at Fenway understand who Porcello is and don't usually boo him with much enthusiasm, a sign of respect for a veteran who carried an average team in 2016 and has shown up with some big games in big spots (usually against the Yankees) over five years in Boston.

But as Porcello's time here comes to a likely end with his pending free agency, there's a somber mood that can't be ignored each time he pitches.

Over his last 14 starts, Porcello has collected a 7.75 ERA. He has struck out just 49 guys in 69-⅔ innings in that span, a rate of 6.3 strikeouts per nine innings. It's nearly impossible to have success in the modern game with a strikeout rate that low. Only four pitchers with a rate of 6.3 or lower have enough innings to qualify in 2019.

Overall, Porcello's 5.83 ERA is the worst in MLB this year. His strikeout rate of 7.1 per nine is 12th-worst. His fastball velocity ranks in the bottom 17 percent.

But the Red Sox have never skipped his start, never offered a breather to let him find his groove.

Part of that is the respect and trust in the pitcher, and part of it is the lack of worthy or interesting options to replace him.

Alex Cora won't compare Antonio Brown to Manny Ramirez

Jason Mastrodonato

The Red Sox aren't allowed to have cell phones or Apple watches in the dugout, but news of Antonio Brown agreeing to a contract with the Patriots still made its way to Alex Cora during Saturday's loss to the Yankees.

The reaction from the crowd said it all.

"That was interesting," Cora said before the Sox' game on Sunday night. "In the eighth inning, around there, that's when they announced it. I was like, 'what's going on?' There was nothing going on on the field and people were excited. It was like when they put the hockey scores on in the Stanley Cup and I'm like, 'OK, that's what happened.'"

Red Sox players and coaches have followed the Brown saga and weren't too surprised to learn he ended up with the Patriots.

Cora said he was talking about it with J.D. Martinez and pitching coach Dana LeVangie as they wondered how the Patriots often end up bringing the best out of players who don't work out elsewhere.

"Sometimes you wonder," Cora said. "We were talking about it, there's a guy on another team and he doesn't behave or whatever, troublemaker, and all of a sudden he signs with the Patriots. I get the culture thing because you have to have a culture that way. But going into it, are you intimidated like, 'I don't want to mess this up, I signed with the Patriots?' And you go in the first day and this is what we do. And he's like, 'OK, I'll do it.' And all of a sudden he becomes a great guy.

"He's a great talent anyways. But we were like, 'OK, what is it? The chicken or the egg?'"

The Red Sox haven't had any players who have earned Brown's level of attention and prompted so much conversation since perhaps Manny Ramirez.

Asked if Brown reminded him of any baseball players, Cora wouldn't take the bait.

"No, nah," Cora said. "No, for everything about Manny being Manny, he was here at 10 in the morning hitting with a lefty and he took us to work out every morning. So no, not to that extent."

Then Cora paused to think about it some more, smiled and said, "Nah. Not to that extreme."

Price still attempting a comeback

If the Red Sox fall out of the playoff standings, David Price could be shut down for the season.

"We'll see," Cora said.

Until then, the Sox are still focused on getting Price and his cranky left wrist feeling better on the mound. He was scheduled to play catch on Sunday, though he will definitely not be ready to pitch when the team is in Toronto this week.

Nathan Eovaldi and Jhoulys Chacin will start the first two games in Toronto.

"And then to be determined," Cora said. "I don't think he'll be ready for that one."

The Sox entered the series finale against the Yankees 7.5 games back in the wild card standings with three teams in front of them and only 20 games to play.

"We're being careful, yeah, we've been doing it the whole time the last few weeks," Cora said. "We want to make sure he's ready to roll."

If the Sox were closer in the standings, would Price be pitching?

“No, not without a changeup and a cutter,” the skipper said. “We’re not going to push him to go out there like that unless, I don’t know. I don’t see the relieving, coming out of the bullpen thing, just throwing fastballs. That’s more on us. If it were up to him, he would try it but I don’t think that’s something that’s good for him or is good for us.”

Pending free agents staying focused

With the Sox nearly out of playoff contention, attention could quickly turn to the pending free agents and the future.

Rick Porcello, who started Sunday night, Brock Holt and Mitch Moreland are eligible for free agency. Injured first baseman Steve Pearce also will be a free agent. And Martinez can opt out of his contract if he wants to.

“It doesn’t affect the season, but they talk about it,” Cora said. “I mean, they’ve got their families and obviously they have their goals...But as far as the way they go about their business or playing and all that, I haven’t seen anything different. The guys that are free agents, they’re still showing up and they get ready to play and they’re going about it the right way.

“Sometimes, you don’t play them, and they don’t get upset. I don’t think they’re chasing numbers. They’re chasing wins, which is the most important thing.”

Red Sox’ Triple-A attendance drops again, but PawSox optimistic

Jason Mastrodonato

Before Bobby Dalbec was called up to Boston to watch (but not play) as the Red Sox put a bow on their disappointing season over the next few weeks, one of the organization’s best remaining prospects finished his year by signing autographs in the concourse at McCoy Stadium.

PawSox fans didn’t waste the opportunity to snag a signature from the 6-4, 225-pound slugger. It might’ve been their last chance.

Such is life in Pawtucket, where the Triple-A home of the Red Sox has been a ghost town when it comes to top-tier talent over the last few years. Either the best prospects are leapfrogging Pawtucket on the way to The Show, or they’re making just a brief stop in Triple-A.

“I think these sorts of things are cyclical,” said Dan Rea III, the PawSox executive vice president. “And you have your cases of Andrew Benintendi who was on a fast track, or Rafael Devers with us for only a week and proved he was ready for the big leagues.”

Despite the club’s best efforts to promote the game in a creative and inclusive way – over the final 10 games, all children 16 and under were admitted free – attendance totals for the PawSox saw another steep decline in 2019. They wrapped up their 2019 campaign on Monday in front of just 5,000 people.

Across the International League, attendance totals were almost identical to those in 2018. The PawSox ranked 12th out of 14 teams with around 331,000 tickets sold, down from 395,000 in 2018 and 410,000 in 2017.

Those in the front office expected a difficult year in Rhode Island given the team has already broken ground on a new stadium, Polar Park, and will move to Worcester in 2021.

“We knew there would be a potential drop from some part of our fanbase, that parts of our Rhode Island fanbase would see a drop,” Rea said. “We were encouraged by late season trends. June, July, August were strong months for us. Not to make excuses for us, but April and May were tough from a weather

perspective. We had seven rainouts as opposed to four last year. We were playing in April and May but those were not months that people would want to sit and watch baseball.”

Their average attendance dropped significantly, from 6,000 in 2018 to just 5,200 in 2019. Weather surely wasn't the only factor.

For the second consecutive year, Rusney Castillo led the team in at-bats. The former prospect from Cuba hasn't seen big league time since 2016 and is now 32 years old. Banished off the 40-man roster three years ago, he's unlikely to ever be re-added, given the inclusion would add his eight-figure salary for luxury tax counting purposes. That's a cost the Sox won't pay for an extra outfielder who has hit an acceptable-but-not-great .293 with a .761 OPS over five minor league seasons.

The only exciting prospect who began the year on the PawSox was Michael Chavis, who played just 12 games for them before being summoned to the big league roster, which has been thin on depth all season.

Dalbec spent the majority of the year in Double-A and appeared in just 30 games for the PawSox to finish his campaign.

On the pitching side, the most exciting arm was lefty Darwinzon Hernandez, but similarly he spent just seven games in Pawtucket before the Red Sox needed his services.

There hasn't been a group up prospective big league talent in Pawtucket since 2017, when Blake Swihart, Deven Marrero and Allen Craig spent significant time with the PawSox. That year, they sold 410,000 tickets and averaged 6,400 a night.

The PawSox have had losing seasons the last three years, as their win total has dropped from 67 to 66 to 59.

Of course, there's nothing the PawSox front office can do about that. The big league roster is always the priority and the Red Sox have no obligation to worry about who will be the face on the cover of the programs at Triple-A.

“We try to tell all the stories and realize there's a mix of diehard fans and casual fans,” Rea said. “A lot of people are going to the games not knowing any of the players.

“We saw some pretty darn good prospects coming through. Vlad Guerrero Jr. we saw. And Gwinnett, Durham, Columbus all had some talented prospects.”

Watching the best prospects from other teams might have been the most compelling reason to get to the park.

Before getting called up to the Blue Jays, Guerrero and Bo Bichette headlined a Buffalo roster that went to Pawtucket in April. The PawSox feel no shame in promoting the other teams' players to attract interest.

“It's a little tricky,” Rea said. “But when Vlad Guerrero Jr. came through, we hailed that fact and let people know there was an awesome prospect coming through. Or when Tim Tebow came through with Syracuse, we definitely promoted that.

“So we got on the radio, we talk to different writers and newspapers and let people know. Tebow was very generous and signed some footballs for us that we auctioned off for the Pawtucket Red Sox foundation. We're not above that, if there are guys from the other side we'll let you know there's a good show coming through.”

All season long the ball was flying out of the stadium. And not just at McCoy.

Home runs across the International League were up 57 percent from last year after MLB introduced new baseballs with less drag and began using the same balls in Triple-A.

“It’s been noticed, the spike in home runs,” Rea said. “I think it’ll be a big topic of conversation. We have fall meetings in Memphis in a few weeks. That’ll be a topic.

“Within reason, seeing extra home runs is not a bad thing from a baseball fan atmospheric standpoint. People like to see home runs. There’s probably a fine line. The question is, have we gone past that fine line? And have the numbers been too disproportionately extended? It’s a fair topic. It’s been nice to see some good pitching stories even though our team didn’t have the record we’d hope for.”

Next year will be the last for fans to watch Red Sox prospects in Pawtucket, with Polar Park already attracting major interest in Worcester.

The trick in the front office was not to think too far ahead and ignore the fans coming to McCoy in 2019 or 2020.

“We wouldn’t diminish efforts in Pawtucket at all, we wouldn’t cut back operationally or staffing-wise,” Rea said. “These sorts of two-year situations building a ballpark in one place and operating a team in the other, it’s unique. We couldn’t find many relatable scenarios. So we really as a management team, from Larry Luchino particularly, there were instructions to keep our focus and efforts on Pawtucket as much as possible, to give people a good experience at McCoy stadium, to make it so any kid or family coming to the game would have an experience they’d enjoy there for many years.”

All the while keeping one eye on Worcester, where ticket sales have already begun for 2021.

Rea said the PawSox are already sold hundreds of season tickets and are approaching the 1,000-mark for the debut season in Polar Park, with season tickets starting at \$11 a game for a field box seat on the third-base line.

“It’s good value,” he said. “It’s a little bit of a trial run to see how quickly things have moved. We’ve been pleasantly surprised things have moved as quickly as they have for a 10,000-person ballpark. We wanted to see how the market reacts to prices. There are some tickets in the \$20-30 range for premium tickets. Different tickets have moved consistently.”

Attracting PawSox fans to see a game in Worcester won’t be that difficult, Rea said.

“We like to think people coming to games now will still come to games in Worcester,” he said. “It’s a 45 minute drive. It’s not like we’re moving from St. Louis to Los Angeles. We’re trying to keep that brand consistent.

“As part of this, if you’re a Pawtucket season ticket holder you get priority in Worcester. So some people are signing up in Pawtucket for Worcester. I think it’s similar in a lot of ways. Pawtucket has been a great baseball town for us. Worcester is in itself a great baseball town. Our hitting coach Rich Gedman is from Worcester.”

If attendance totals are any indication, the move should be a spark for a Triple-A club badly in need of one.

“One of the questions our critics raised when we made a pitch for Pawtucket was, is the league in a strong place?” Rea said. “Because you look at it, I’ve seen the metrics, the average cost of four to go to an NFL or NBA game is crazy. You can go to a Triple-A baseball game and see a good game for \$9 or \$10 a ticket. That’s something that resonates and gives you good entertainment value.

“We’re starting to get hard at work in Worcester, working on that front. We’re knocking down some buildings on our site. That’s moving forward.”

*** *The Providence Journal***

Red Sox fire president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- Less than one year after celebrating arguably the greatest season in franchise history, the Red Sox have fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

Boston vice president of media relations Kevin Gregg confirmed the news following the club's 10-5 loss to the Yankees on Sunday night at Fenway Park. Gregg said the decision was made by principal owner John Henry and club chairman Tom Werner.

The Red Sox will issue a formal statement Monday.

Assistant general managers Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott will share the responsibility of running the club in the interim. O'Halloran and Romero are both executive vice presidents in charge of finance and international scouting, respectively. Scott is a senior vice president who oversees the club's analytics division.

"Surprise and shock, obviously," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "Right now there's not too much to say. We'll talk a little more tomorrow."

Boston slipped to 8 games behind the Athletics for the second American League wild card berth thanks to its latest defeat. The Red Sox last missed the postseason in 2015, finishing 78-84 and firing vice president and general manager Ben Cherington. Dombrowski was appointed to replace Cherington in August of that season and was signed through 2020.

"You always take an ounce of guilt with you as a player," said pitcher Rick Porcello, who absorbed the loss against New York on Sunday. "You're the one that can make or break things. That's the part that hurts."

Boston slipped into a deep midseason hole while losing eight straight games, a stretch that bracketed the Aug. 1 trade deadline. Dombrowski's lone acquisition was Baltimore right-hander Andrew Cashner, who posted an 8.01 earned-run average in six starts before being demoted to the bullpen. Dombrowski was unable to repeat his masterstrokes of a season ago when he traded for both future World Series Most Valuable Player Steve Pearce and October stalwart Nathan Eovaldi prior to the deadline.

"You never like to see anybody lose their job over what we're doing on the field," Porcello said. "Unfortunately that's the case right here."

Boston smashed through the final threshold of the Competitive Balance Tax in 2018, incurring significant financial penalties and losing 10 places prior to making their first selection in the 2019 Major League Baseball Draft. The Red Sox have remained under the final threshold of the CBT this season, but their payroll still tops \$240 million and their farm system ranks inside the bottom third among the 30 big league franchises. The Twins, Indians, Athletics and Rays – who ranked dead last in payroll on Opening Day at barely \$60 million – all sit ahead of Boston in the A.L. playoff standings.

"Anything in this sport, there's an understanding that there's a business aspect to it," Porcello said. "It's just unfortunate. Obviously I've played for Dave for a long time, and I think the world of him."

Dombrowski posted a 396-277 regular season record during his Red Sox tenure. Boston captured three straight American League East titles from 2016-18 and steamrolled its way to its fourth World Series championship of the century in 2018. The Red Sox set a new franchise record with 108 victories in the regular season and became the first team to eliminate three 100-win teams in the playoffs, dispatching New York, Houston and the Dodgers.

“It’s a new year,” outfielder Mookie Betts said. “We’ve got to turn the page on that. A lot of different things happen. A lot of things can change within a year, and this is one of them.”

Starting pitcher David Price has three years remaining on his \$217-million deal and starting pitcher Chris Sale will begin his five-year, \$145-million extension in 2020 – both have spent significant time on the injured list this season. Eovaldi was sidelined for more than two months with right elbow troubles after signing a four-year, \$68-million deal in November and Pearce has been limited to just 29 games due to various injuries after signing a one-year deal to return. The six-year, \$120-million extension inked by Xander Bogaerts in early April stands out as one of few recent pieces of prudent business.

Dombrowski presided over the firing of manager John Farrell after the 2017 season and the hiring of Cora, who previously served as bench coach in Houston. The Astros were coming off a World Series title and had just eliminated Boston in the A.L. Division Series. The Red Sox were swept in the same round by Cleveland the previous season.

“This is a guy who gave me a chance to come here and be a big league manager,” Cora said. “It’s one of those that caught me. They just told me. I’m not ready to talk about it.”

Dombrowski negotiated a host of significant acquisitions, including the free agent signing of Price and a trade with the White Sox for Sale. Dombrowski also signed free agent slugger J.D. Martinez prior to the 2018 season, extending a relationship that began when Martinez was released by Houston and agreed to a deal with the Tigers in March 2014.

“He gave me opportunity in Detroit and he gave me opportunity here,” Martinez said. “He’s always been a friend to me. We’ve always gotten along great, so obviously I’m sad to see him go.”

Martinez will enter the offseason representing one of the significant questions the Red Sox must answer. He can opt out of the five-year deal he signed prior to 2018 and become a free agent, perhaps commanding more tenure or a raise from his \$22 million average annual value. Porcello, Cashner, Pearce, Mitch Moreland, Brock Holt and Chris Owings will also be free agents.

“Obviously I’ve got to go talk to Scott (Boras, his agent) and see what he says,” Martinez said. “I don’t know enough about that side of the game to get into it.”

Boston also must look toward 2020 with Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr. and Brandon Workman among those poised to reach free agency at the conclusion of that season. Betts has rebuffed previous Red Sox attempts to sign him to an extension and intends to test his worth on the open market. He said Dombrowski’s firing will have no effect on that decision.

“It’s going to be the same answer,” Betts said. “Nothing’s going to change. This is proof that this is a business. Like I said, I love it here. But definitely, it’s still a business.”

Yankees 10, Red Sox 5: Rick Porcello thumped as Boston continues to lose ground

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- The NFL season kicked off just down the road on Sunday night, and the Red Sox should consider themselves fortunate.

The seemingly annual championship celebration enjoyed by the Patriots and their subsequent thumping of the Steelers diverted a fair share of eyes from the proceedings at Fenway Park. It was a rather grim scene indeed.

A cool breeze blew in off the Charles River, a sure sign that summer is slipping away. The crowd of 35,681 fans was shy of a sellout, with attention turned elsewhere. Boston is all but finished in the American League wild card race, losing further ground in the standings after a 10-5 setback against the Yankees.

Victories by the Rays, Athletics and Indians represented a damaging trifecta for the defending World Series champions, who are now 8 games adrift of a place in October with just 19 to play. Rick Porcello was hammered again, the bullpen leaked oil in the late innings and New York continued to steam its way toward an A.L. East title.

“It’s fastball command with him,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “He didn’t have it.”

Pitching at home against the Yankees had previously represented the last line of defense for Porcello. His career 1.51 earned-run average in 10 starts against them at this venue included a brilliant one-hitter during a four-game sweep last season. Those days seem long ago now, as Porcello was thumped yet again to the tune of six earned runs in just four innings.

“I don’t know what else to tell you guys at this point,” Porcello said. “I’m grinding, trying to figure it out. It’s not clicking. I don’t know what else to say.”

Gleyber Torres started the thunder against Porcello with a two-run homer to the Monster Seats in the top of the second and Mike Tauchman finished it with a towering two-run shot around the Pesky Pole in the top of the fourth. Aaron Judge’s RBI single and Gary Sanchez’s infield out both plated runs in the third, as Porcello’s career-worst ERA swelled to 5.83.

“This has been the toughest year of my career by far,” Porcello said. “It’s been the most disappointing, the most emotional. I don’t have another word to describe it.

“I’m sorry for Red Sox fans who have to watch it. I’m sorry to my teammates – the guys who have been playing their asses off all year. It’s embarrassing to go out there every fifth day and not get it done.”

Tauchman’s homer was the 30th this season allowed by Porcello, and it sealed a sixth time in his last 12 starts where Porcello has allowed multiple round-trippers. Porcello was charged with at least five earned runs for the 12th time in 29 starts this season, including three of his four outings against the Yankees. In some ways this has been worse than a 2017 campaign where Porcello lost 17 games and tied Tim Wakefield’s club record with 38 home runs allowed.

Judge added a solo homer to left against Ryan Brasier in the fifth, and Torres knocked in another run thanks to an infield out. New York was never seriously threatened despite a rocky outing of its own from Masahiro Tanaka, who wasn’t around for the decision. Chad Green picked up the win in relief by retiring all nine men he faced, carving his way through the Red Sox lineup from top to bottom.

Boston was in a 4-0 hole when Jackie Bradley Jr. drove a two-run homer down the line in left in the third. Back-to-back RBI doubles by Mitch Moreland and Sandy Leon made it a 6-4 game in the fourth and all but finished Tanaka, who allowed eight hits in four innings. Three Yankees relievers handled business from there, with Mookie Betts nicking Adam Ottavino for a solo homer to represent the only damage.

Red Sox pitcher Trevor Kelley relishes Fenway Park debut

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- Six of the last 10 players selected by the Red Sox in the 36th round of the Major League Baseball draft have opted not to sign with the club.

Trevor Kelley was never going to be one of those players.

The side-arming right-hander made his Fenway Park debut with a scoreless inning in Saturday’s 5-1 loss to the Yankees. Kelley was chosen out of the University of North Carolina in 2015 and had actually given up hope of being drafted at all after about the 20th round or so. All it took was one phone call from Boston to change the course of his life.

“I was just like, ‘This is not going to happen for me,’” Kelley said. “I just wanted a jersey. I just wanted a shot. I didn’t care what it would take.”

Kelley grew up in Barrington and moved to North Carolina prior to his teenage years, relocating to Wilmington with his parents, Greg and Jill. He still counts several family members and friends in Rhode Island, and he had a sizeable contingent on hand to watch him work against New York. Kelley grew up a Boston fan and made his second appearance after debuting against Toronto in July.

“Saturday, 4 o’clock game – you couldn’t write it up any better,” Kelley said. “It was just an overall cool experience.”

Kelley was named an International League postseason all-star at Triple-A Pawtucket this season, going 5-5 with a 1.79 earned-run average and 12 saves. The 25-year-old allowed 51 hits and struck out 63 in 65 1/3 innings. Kelley has pitched to a 2.37 ERA across 171 games in the minor leagues.

“I’ve been one of the more consistent guys, and that’s what I pride myself on,” Kelley said. “I’m not going to walk that many guys and I’m going to be aggressive and I’m going to get quick outs.”

Boston also drafted a future big league player in 2009. The Red Sox selected outfielder Mike Yastrzemski out of St. John’s Prep (Mass.) – he opted to honor a college commitment to Vanderbilt and has enjoyed a breakout 2019. Yastrzemski and the Giants will visit the Red Sox for a three-game series Sept. 17-19.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora on the Patriots: ‘It seems like we’re going to be watching another Super Bowl here in Boston’

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- Sunday marked the first time in nearly three months where the Red Sox were forced to share the city’s sporting stage.

The Patriots were back in action for their regular season opener against the Steelers at Gillette Stadium. The defending Super Bowl champions shocked the NFL by signing controversial wide receiver Antonio Brown on Saturday, news that sent a ripple of energy through Fenway Park while Boston hosted the Yankees.

“People were excited, like when they put the hockey scores during the Stanley Cup,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “I was like, ‘Oh, that’s what happened.’”

Game 7 of the Bruins-Blues series was played on June 12, a 4-1 Boston loss that denied the city yet another championship. The Red Sox walked off on the Rangers that afternoon, 4-3, when Mookie Betts drew a base on balls. Boston had strong hopes of reaching a fourth straight postseason with 93 games to play, but the Red Sox entered Sunday 7 games off the American League wild card pace with just 20 left.

“Where we’re at right now, that’s not the stage where we want to be,” Cora said. “But it is what it is.”

Bill Belichick and New England were set to unveil their sixth title banner prior to kickoff with Pittsburgh, and nearly two decades have passed since the Patriots won their first Super Bowl in February 2002. Cora has transitioned from Red Sox utility infielder to Red Sox manager in that time, but Belichick remains at the helm of a well-oiled machine in Foxboro.

“They’re so consistent at what they do,” Cora said. “I saw (Celtics coach) Brad Stevens two days ago, and he always says it’s unreal 11 guys do it the right way on every play.

“It’s like a pickoff play. We run it, and the timing – boom, boom – and it’s right every day. Every play is right.”

Brown was ineligible to play against the Steelers – his former team – after signing a one-year deal with the Patriots on Saturday. His tumultuous time with the Raiders lasted just a few months, as Brown publicly feuded with team executive Mike Mayock and escalated the situation with a handful of incendiary posts on social media. Brown's name is likely to appear alongside those of Randy Moss, Corey Dillon, Chad Ochocinco and more among talented Belichick reclamation projects.

“We were talking about a guy playing on another team, and he doesn't behave – he's a troublemaker,” Cora said. “All of a sudden he signs with the Patriots. I get the culture. You have to have a culture that way. It has to be that way. But going into it, are you intimidated? Like, ‘I don't want to mess this up. I signed with the Patriots.’”

“And you go the first day and it's like, ‘This is what we do.’ And you're like, ‘Okay.’ And all of a sudden you become a great guy.

“(Brown is) a great talent anyway. We were like, ‘What is it? The chicken or the egg?’”

Cora played college baseball at the University of Miami and crossed paths with football players Ray Lewis and Ed Reed. The future Baltimore Ravens and New England rivals generally had Cora's backing before he returned to Boston in November 2017. Interacting with Belichick on a few occasions and being hosted by the Patriots after winning the World Series last season has softened Cora's stance a bit on New England.

“Just to watch what they do is impressive,” Cora said. “It seems like we're going to be watching another Super Bowl here in Boston.”

Red Sox pitcher David Price (left wrist) ruled out for Toronto series

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- Red Sox left-hander David Price will not make a start in the upcoming series at Toronto.

Price was scheduled to play catch on Sunday but has not progressed to throwing another bullpen session. He was scratched from what was supposed to be a Friday start against the Yankees, a bullpen game that wound up a 6-1 Red Sox win.

“He's going to play catch again today,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “I don't think Toronto – we're going with Nathan (Eovaldi), probably (Jhoulys) Chacin and then to be determined. I don't think he'll be ready for that one.”

Price went on the injured list for the second time in early August, suffering from a cyst in his left wrist. Price had a cortisone shot to treat the injury but felt tightness during a bullpen session on Wednesday. He's made just one start over the last five weeks, that coming in a 4-3 victory over the Angels last Sunday.

“Without a changeup and a cutter, we're not going to push him to go out there like that,” Cora said. “I don't see him coming out of the bullpen just throwing fastballs. That's more on us.

“If it was up to him, he would try it. I don't think that's something that's good for him or good for us. We're actually taking it away from him.”

Price also suffered from left elbow tendinitis in May, necessitating his first injured list stint of the season. He's made 22 starts overall, going 7-5 with a 4.28 earned-run average. Price's ERA has swelled by more than a run since mid-July, which coincides with the time where he started feeling pain in the wrist.

Price has made 19 career starts at Rogers Centre and is a near-perfect 14-1. His earliest return could come next weekend against Philadelphia, but Cora said the American League wild card standings might dictate

whether or not Price pitches again at all in 2019. Price will enter 2020 with three years remaining on the contract he signed with Boston as a free agent prior to the 2016 season.

*** *MassLive.com***

Rick Porcello apologizes to Boston Red Sox fans for struggles: ‘This has been the most disappointing and emotional year of my career, by far’

Chris Cotillo

Red Sox right-hander Rick Porcello apologized to fans after suffering a 10-5 loss to the Yankees on Sunday night.

Porcello, who allowed six runs in four innings against New York, fell to 12-12 and saw his ERA rise to 5.85 on the year. The 2016 American League Cy Young winner has been Boston’s worst starter this season.

“This has been the toughest year of my career, by far,” Porcello said. “It has been the most disappointing and the most emotional. I don’t have the words to describe it other than: I’m sorry to the Red Sox fans who have to watch me. I’m sorry to my teammates, the guys who have been playing their asses off all year.”

Porcello faced the Yankees four times, posting a 12.00 ERA in 15 innings. Sunday’s loss dropped the Sox to eight games back in the A.L. wild-card race, all but eliminating them for playoff contention.

“It’s embarrassing to go out there every fifth day and not get it done,” Porcello said. “The only thing I can say is it’s not for a lack of effort. Other than that, it sucks. I’ve been terrible and I’m sorry for that.”

Porcello has been accountable after all his bad starts this season, candidly discussing his struggles and taking fault for some of the team’s woes. After Sunday, the Sox are 16-13 in his starts on the year.

Porcello will have three or four more starts with Boston before hitting free agency after the season.

“I don’t know what else to tell you guys at this point,” he said. “I’m grinding, trying to figure it out. It’s not clicking. I don’t know what else to say. I’m doing everything I can and it’s not there.”

Boston Red Sox firing Dave Dombrowski sends shockwaves through Fenway Park; players, manager Alex Cora blindsided by news

Chris Cotillo

Shortly before the first pitch of Sunday night’s Red Sox-Yankees game, Dave Dombrowski was honored on the Fenway Park field with some of the team’s longtime employees. Wearing a mustard-colored jacket, he exited the field through a gate behind home plate and climbed the steps between sections 17 and 18 in the grandstand, stopping to take pictures with some fans who had spotted him.

It turns out those fans captured the fleeting moments of Dombrowski’s tenure as Boston’s president of baseball operations. As the Red Sox wrapped up their 10-5 loss to the Yankees on the field, word of a major shakeup started traveling around Fenway. At 12:07 a.m., team spokesman Kevin Gregg addressed a group of reporters, saying that Dombrowski had been fired and that an official press release would come Monday morning.

Ownership did not address the decision after it broke. Manager Alex Cora, who informed his players of the news after the game, was left to serve as the organization’s public face.

“I’m surprised and shocked, obviously,” Cora said. “Right now, I don’t have too much to say.”

“This is the guy that gave me a chance to come here and be a big-league manager,” he added. “They just told me so I’m not ready to talk about it.”

With the team in turmoil in Aug. 2015, the Sox brought in Dombrowski-- fresh off resigning his post in Detroit-- to replace general manager Ben Cherington and turn the team into an immediate contender. Dombrowski stocked the roster by adding star pitchers David Price and Craig Kimbrel in his first offseason, trading for Chris Sale after the 2016 season and adding the final piece to a championship-caliber roster by signing J.D. Martinez before 2018. The result? Back-to-back division titles in his first two years and a World Series championship last fall.

On the morning of the team’s championship parade last October, principal owner John Henry said the team was hoping to sign Dombrowski to an extension before his contract expired after this season. Less than 11 months later, the cord was cut in the most unceremonious of ways-- in the middle of a seemingly meaningless September game while the Patriots grabbed every headline in the city with their controversial signing of wide receiver Antonio Brown and a 33-3 blowout win over the Steelers in their season opener.

Inside Fenway Park, the only thing that seemed out of the ordinary was that most of the 35,681 on hand seemed to be paying only half-attention to the action while watching the Pats on their phones. The box reserved for the front office was uncharacteristically empty, but it stood to reason that the team’s top executives were somewhere watching football, too.

Behind the scenes, a cataclysmic change was taking place. Henry, team chairman Tom Werner and president/CEO Sam Kennedy were all on hand to finalize an oddly timed move that would have seemed absurd to any of the champagne-soaked Red Sox just 11 months ago.

Martinez said he could have never seen Dombrowski’s firing back then.

“Nope. Absolutely not. We have a good team,” he said. “I guess ownership has their reasons. It’s a business. That’s their call.”

Dombrowski took the fall for his team falling way short of their championship expectations in 2019. After he decided to keep the roster together without making any major changes, the on-field product regressed into a team that is now eight games out of a wild-card spot with 19 games to go.

A mix of underperformance-- from players like Rick Porcello, Matt Barnes, Ryan Brasier, Andrew Benintendi and Nathan Eovaldi-- and injuries-- to Sale, David Price, Steve Pearce and others-- have put the Sox in a precarious position. Porcello, a former Cy Young winner who has posted a 5.85 ERA in his contract year, said he felt guilt over Dombrowski’s firing.

“At the end of the day, we’re the players who are on the field and we’re the ones who can make or break a lot of things,” Porcello said. “Ultimately, the onus comes on us.”

Both Porcello and Martinez played under Dombrowski in Detroit and have close relationships with the 63-year-old. Dombrowski originally drafted Porcello in 2007 before trading him to the Red Sox in 2014 and ultimately being reunited with the pitcher a year later. He gave Martinez a chance with the Tigers after he was released by the Astros in 2014 and handed him \$110 million to join the Sox last spring.

Both players were blindsided by the change.

“I’m still processing everything,” Porcello said. “Processing myself, too. It’s really hard to reflect on it, too. I’ll have potentially a better answer for you in a couple days. You never like to see anybody lose their job over what we’re doing on the field.”

“I’m just shocked,” Martinez said. “We’re trying to think about the game and stuff and just got hit with that.”

Without Dombrowski, the Red Sox will play out the final three weeks of the season before entering an offseason filled with changes. The first step will be a search for Dombrowski's replacement with assistant GMs Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott overseeing the team's baseball operations department on an interim basis.

There will be time for reflection and time for the Sox to shape the future of the franchise. But on Sunday night, shock was all there was.

"Obviously, I'm sad to see him go," Martinez said. "It's wild."

Dave Dombrowski fired: Boston Red Sox ownership made right decision, now must pick right replacement to reload roster, rebuild farm system

Christopher Smith

Dave Dombrowski won three AL East titles and a World Series championship in his four years as Red Sox president of baseball operations.

But ownership fired him Sunday with Boston 17 ½ games behind the Yankees in the AL East and eight games behind the Athletics for the second Wild Card. The Red Sox's postseason elimination number is 12.

Seems unfair considering his resume here, right?

No, not at all. This was the right decision. Dombrowski, who had one more year remaining on his contract, needed to go. A new boss is needed to reload the 40-man roster and rebuild the farm system. Dombrowski wasn't the right person to do either.

Red Sox ownership must make a shrewd hire like the San Francisco Giants did last November when they brought in Farhan Zaidi, an MIT graduate with a Ph.D who previously worked under Oakland's Billy Beane.

Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey, Arizona GM Mike Hazen, Astros assistant GM Brandon Taubman, Diamondbacks assistant GM Jared Porter and Cubs VP of player development and amateur scouting Jason McLeod should be among the candidates. Eddie Romero, Zack Scott and Gus Quattlebaum should be three internal candidates.

GMs need to keep one eye on the present and the other eye on the future at all times.

Dombrowski often was focused only on the present. As a result, the Red Sox's minor league system went from being ranked No. 1 when he took over in August 2015 to No. 22 here in September 2019.

He depleted the Tigers' farm system as well.

The Red Sox were smart to part ways with Dombrowski before turning into the Detroit Tigers who still are trying to rebuild after the Dombrowski Era. Detroit is 42-100 (.296) this season after posting a .395 winning percentage each of the past two years.

Dombrowski drafted, signed and developed many talented prospects who turned into successful big leaguers in Montreal (1988-91) and Florida (1992-2001). But that was a long time ago. It's no longer his strength. He has valued big league talent over prospects for the better part of two decades.

He also has been known to part with too many prospects to complete trades. That happened at the 2016 Winter Meetings when he sent Travis Shaw and three prospects to Milwaukee for Tyler Thornburg.

Thornburg underwent thoracic outlet syndrome surgery during his first year with Boston, then posted a 6.54 ERA in 42 ⅓ innings during his next two seasons.

No reliever is worth four players. Not even Craig Kimbrel who was acquired from San Diego for four prospects. Kimbrel helped Boston win three AL East titles but going by WAR (wins above replacement), he was responsible for only 5.7 wins in three years here.

Dombrowski should receive credit for several decisions, including his two midseason acquisitions in 2018 that put the Red Sox over the top. He acquired Steve Pearce, who won the World Series MVP, and Nathan Eovaldi, who posted a 1.61 ERA in 22 ⅓ innings during the postseason.

He also deserves credit for re-signing Xander Bogaerts to an extremely team-friendly six-year, \$120-million extension. Give him props for acquiring Josh Taylor (2.91 ERA, 43 ⅓ innings) as the player to be named later from Arizona for Deven Marrero.

But he made too many mistakes with the game's largest payroll and it cost him his job.

The Red Sox need a GM who won't overspend on certain players in today's free agency market. Wrong personnel and free agent decisions happen, but the goal is to keep the mistakes to a minimum.

Look at what Yankees' Brian Cashman did this past offseason when he inked DJ Lemahieu instead of overpriced Manny Machado. Cashman also loaded his bullpen — signing Adam Ottavino and Zack Britton — instead of spending on the wrong free agent starting pitchers just because he needed starters. Big-market GMs should think creatively and operate in many of the same ways as small-market GMs. It's not all about spending.

Dombrowski looked like a genius when Pearce and Eovaldi dominated in last year's postseason. But Pearce and Eovaldi's lackluster 2019 seasons have showed Dombrowski's shortsightedness and simplistic approach to team building.

He re-signed Eovaldi to a four-year, \$68-million contract despite the righty's long injury history. Eovaldi ended up undergoing an arthroscopic procedure to remove loose bodies from his elbow during April. He has a 5.77 ERA in 48 ⅓ innings.

The 36-year-old Pearce, who Dombrowski re-signed to a one-year, \$6.25-million deal, has a .180/.245/.258/.503 line in just 29 games. He has spent most of the season on the injured list.

Dombrowski thought he could return almost an identical roster — minus closer Craig Kimbrel and setup man Joe Kelly (because of payroll restrictions) — and recreate the same 2018 magic.

When does bringing back almost the same exact roster ever work? Roster-building is never that simple.

The Red Sox must make decisions about first and second base this offseason. They must decide whether to trade Mookie Betts before his free agent year begins in 2020. They must improve their starting rotation, which has posted a 4.93 ERA in 2019. The new boss also needs to add at least one reliever.

A change was needed with a critical offseason awaiting.

Dave Dombrowski firing: Mookie Betts says he'll give Boston Red Sox 'the same answer' about a contract extension regardless of GM

Chris Cotillo

Red Sox star outfielder Mookie Betts said early Monday that the firing of president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski will have no impact on how he approaches his future with the team.

Betts, a free agent after next season, seems intent on hitting free agency when he becomes eligible. Though the Red Sox have expressed strong interest in a long-term extension, the reigning A.L. MVP has taken a business-like approach to negotiations and hasn't come close to reaching a deal.

Betts said negotiating with a new general manager (once one is appointed) won't change matters.

"It doesn't really matter who's there. It's going to be the same answer," Betts said. "Nothing's going to change. This is proof that this is a business. I love it here, but definitely it's still a business."

Dombrowski, who took over as Boston's president of baseball operations in Aug. 2015, was fired after the team's 10-5 loss to the Yankees on Sunday night. Three assistant GMs-- Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott-- will take over on an interim basis while the team completes a search for a permanent replacement.

Rick Porcello rocked again, Red Sox lose to Yankees, 10-5 on Sunday night

Chris Cotillo

On a night when all of New England was focused on football, the Red Sox didn't do much to recapture the attention of the region's sports fans.

The Sox lost, 10-5, to the Yankees on Sunday night, falling even further back in the American League wild-card race after the Rays, Athletics and Indians all won earlier in the day.

New York hit Sox starter Rick Porcello hard, jumping out to a 2-0 lead on a Gleyber Torres homer in the second and adding two more (on an Aaron Judge RBI single and Gary Sanchez RBI groundout) in the third. Jackie Bradley Jr. hit a two-run homer to cut the Yankees' lead in half before New York went up 6-4 when Mike Tauchman hit a two-run blast in the top of the fourth.

Porcello exited after just four innings, allowing six runs on seven hits as his ERA rose to 5.83 in his final start of the year against New York. In four outings against the Yankees, he posted a 12.00 ERA (20 earned runs in 15 innings) while allowing 27 hits.

The Sox came within two runs again in the fourth as Mitch Moreland and Sandy Leon hit back-to-back RBI doubles. New York stormed back with a pair of runs against reliever Ryan Brasier as Aaron Judge homered and Gleyber Torres made it 8-4 with an RBI groundout.

Mookie Betts hit a solo shot off reliever Adam Ottavino in the eighth. It was his sixth home run in his last nine games.

New York plated two more runs in the ninth, on an Edwin Encarnacion RBI single and a Torres RBI double.

The Sox used at least seven pitchers for the third straight day, with six different relievers following Porcello. Leon, Betts and Brock Holt each had two of Boston's nine hits.

The Sox fell to 76-64 and are now eight games behind Oakland in the wild-card race. They'll finish their season series with the Yankees on Monday night when Eduardo Rodriguez takes the mound opposite lefty James Paxton.

David Price injury: Boston Red Sox could shut down the lefty depending on AL Wild Card standings

Christopher Smith

Red Sox lefty David Price (wrist) will play catch again Sunday here at Fenway Park.

He won't be ready to start in Toronto this week and the Red Sox might shut him down if they continue to lose ground in the AL Wild Card standings.

The Red Sox are seven games behind the Athletics and six games behind the Indians for the second Wild Card spot. Fangraphs.com has Boston's playoff odds at 1.2%.

"Depending on where we're at," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said when asked about shutting down Price. "We'll see."

Price felt tightness in his left wrist during a bullpen session Wednesday. He spent from Aug. 8-Sept. 1 on the injured list because of a cyst on his left wrist.

Nathan Eovaldi will start the first game in Toronto on Tuesday. Jhoulys Chacin will start Wednesday. Cora hasn't decided yet who will start Thursday at Rogers Centre.

*** *The Lawrence Eagle Tribune***

Five Red Sox Takes: New day, same story with Rick Porcello

Chris Mason

BOSTON — If you skipped last night's Red Sox game to watch the Patriots, don't fret. It was basically a repeat from throughout the summer.

A starting pitcher underwhelmed, and though the offense fought back, they couldn't dig all the way out. Ultimately, the Sox fell to the Yankees, 10-5, and now sit 17 1/2 games back in the AL East.

Here are five takes from a brisk evening at Fenway Park:

1. Rick's free fall continues

If the Red Sox had any semblance of starting pitching depth, Rick Porcello would probably already be pulled from the rotation.

He struggled again on Sunday Night Baseball, allowing six earned runs in four innings. Porcello's ERA rose to 5.83, easily tops among qualified starters in the majors. The next closest is Seattle's Yusei Kikuchi at 5.24.

It's been a season-long struggle for him. Last night marked the 12th time Porcello allowed at least five runs. With his contract expiring in three weeks, this is far from the walk year he envisioned.

2. Braiser struggles

Tasked with getting things back on track in the fifth, Ryan Brasier's regression continued.

Last year's Cinderella story, Brasier gave up a home run to Aaron Judge, and Edwin Encarnacion rocketed an RBI single off him.

It's been a terrible run of late. In his last three appearances, Brasier has allowed 10 runs and recorded four outs.

3. Devers' defense hurts

Rafael Devers has taken a huge step forward at third base this season, but last night was a burn-the-tape evening.

The 22-year-old was charged with three errors, including two on one play in the ninth inning, in which Devers bobbled the ball in the field and then airmailed a throw into the Red Sox dugout.

4. JBJ goes yard

Jackie Bradley Jr. got the Red Sox on the board with a two-run shot in the third, slapped opposite field into the Monster Seats, No. 18 on the season.

It's somewhat remarkable that Bradley is likely to hit the 20 home run benchmark given his frigid start. Ever streaky, he didn't go deep for the first time until May 20.

5. Holt keeps hitting

Another player that'll be seeking a new contract soon, Brock Holt is having a far better year than Porcello.

With a 2-for-4 evening, Holt's batting average sits at .316 and his on-base percentage is nearing .400. If the Red Sox don't want to pay him, the jack-of-all positions will certainly garner plenty of interest on the free agent market this winter.

Red Sox fire president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski

Chris Mason

BOSTON — After another rudderless loss to the Yankees, the Red Sox threw their captain overboard.

Just after midnight, the Red Sox fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, whose contract wasn't set to expire until after the 2020 season. He's less than 11 months removed from bringing a World Series to Boston, but the Sox are likely to miss the playoffs altogether this October.

Alex Cora addressed the team after tonight's 10-5 loss to the Yankees, as both he and his players were jarred by the late-night move.

"Surprised, I'm shocked, honestly," Cora said. "Right now I don't have too much to say. We'll talk about it tomorrow. This is a guy that gave me a chance to come here and be a big league manager."

Rick Porcello, who was tagged for six earned runs in the loss, explained what it feels like to get news like that from a pitcher's perspective.

"You take an ounce of guilt with you as a player because you're the one that can make or break things," Porcello said. "That's the part that hurts. But at the end of the day it's a business decision and it's completely over my head."

J.D. Martinez has quite a bit of personal history with Dombrowski.

After the Astros designated him for assignment in 2014, it was Dombrowski that took a flier on Martinez and gave him a second chance.

"Dave, he gave me an opportunity in Detroit and now he gave me an opportunity here," Martinez said. "He's always been a friend to me. We obviously got along great. Obviously I'm sad to see him go. It's just wild."

The Red Sox haven't decided on a replacement, and for the remainder of the season, assistant general managers Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott will split the duties.

Dombrowski's successor will be tasked with making a crucial decision on Mookie Betts, as the reigning MVP is set to hit free agency after 2020. But Betts was adamant his outlook will remain the same, regardless who shows up at the negotiating table.

"It doesn't really matter who's there, it's going to be the same answer," Betts said. "Nothing's gonna change. This is proof that this is a business. Like I said, I love it here but definitely this is still a business."

Martinez, who could opt out at the season's end, expressed a similar sentiment.

"Obviously, got to go talk to Scott (Boras)," Martinez said. "See what he says. I don't know enough about that side of the game to get into it."

Dombrowski was hired in 2015, handed a middling team with a strong farm system, and didn't hesitate to deal prospects for Chris Sale, Craig Kimbrel and others.

Ultimately, he won three division titles and a World Series, but in 2019 Dombrowski outspent everyone else in baseball by a wide margin and his team is likely to finish third in the AL East.

With his lame-duck year looming, ownership opted for a new direction, one we'll learn more about in the coming months.

Alex Cora awed by Bill Belichick's dominance

Chris Mason

BOSTON — As the Patriots began their title defense in Foxboro on Sunday night, another was pittering out 20 miles north at Fenway Park.

Though it was a Sunday Night Baseball showcase, the Red Sox and Yankees had about as much buzz as Friday morning's media game between writers from Boston and New York.

There were hundreds of empty seats at Fenway and a spirited Harry Potter debate raged in the press box (seriously though, if he's magic why does he need to wear glasses?)

It wasn't the engrossing matchup ESPN jumped at when the schedule came out.

The Sox entered last night with a 1.8% chance of making the Wild Card game, and at 16 1/2 back of the Yankees in the AL East, their World Series defense is well on its way to the scrap heap.

It's the same place baseball's last 19 champions have ended up. Nobody has gone back-to-back since the 2000 Yankees. It's seemingly impossible to repeat.

Which makes Bill Belichick's sustained success down the road all the more remarkable to Alex Cora.

"They're so consistent at what they do," Cora said. "I saw Brad Stevens two days ago and he always says, 'It's unreal that 11 guys do it the right way on every play.' It's like a pickoff play. If we run it, it's timing, boom, boom. And every play is right."

Cora pointed to the culture Belichick has engineered as catalyst. The coach's my-way-or-the-highway approach is well-documented, and with 53 players moving in the same direction, Belichick is seemingly able to squeeze more out of them. Look no further than Saturday afternoon.

When news broke that the Patriots were taking a flier on All-World receiver/reality TV dream Antonio Brown, the Sox were on their way to a 5-1 loss. The fans in the ballpark didn't seem to mind — at least for a spell.

“In the eighth inning, when they announced it, I was like, ‘What’s going on?’” Cora said. “There was nothing going on, on the field and people were excited. Like when they put the hockey scores on in the Stanley Cup.”

The NFL is king — football was on every TV in both clubhouses before last night’s game — and the conversations extended beyond the games alone. How is it that the Patriots can dominate for two straight decades and continually get malcontents like Brown to buy in?

“We were talking about it with J.D. (Martinez) and Dana (LeVangie),” Cora said. “I think it was on ESPN, (former Patriots) Randy Moss and Tedy Bruschi. They were talking about it, ‘It’s all about football and the culture.’ Sometimes you wonder. I love Bill and what he does, not because I’m here but from afar it’s like, wow, that’s great what they do.

“But we were talking like, there’s a guy on another team and he doesn’t behave or whatever, a troublemaker, and all of a sudden he signs with the Patriots. Is it like, ‘OK, I get the culture because you have to have a culture that way.’

Cora continued: “But going into it are you intimidated like, ‘I don’t want to mess this up, I signed with the Patriots.’ And you go in the first day and this is what we do. ‘OK, I’ll do it.’ All of a sudden, he becomes a great guy. He’s a great talent anyways. But we were like, ‘OK, what is it? The chicken or the egg?’”

Whichever you believe, there’s no denying the result, as the Patriots dropped Super Bowl banner No. 6 last night.

“It’s amazing,” Cora said. “I’m having fun actually. They weren’t my favorite team because of (fellow University of Miami Hurricanes) Ed Reed and Ray Lewis. Those guys I really liked when they played for the Ravens, but just to watch what they do is impressive. It seems like we’re gonna be watching another Super Bowl here in Boston.”

*** *RedSox.com***

Red Sox part ways with Dave Dombrowski

Ian Browne

Shortly after midnight on Monday, the Red Sox revealed that they’ve parted ways with president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

Team spokesman Kevin Gregg informed the media of the news roughly 10 minutes after the underachieving defending World Series champions took a 10-5 loss to the Yankees.

A formal announcement on Dombrowski’s departure will come Monday.

Eddie Romero, Brian O’Halloran and Zack Scott will share leadership of baseball operations for the rest of the season. The trio had been assistant general managers under Dombrowski.

According to MLB.com’s Mark Feinsand, that trio will be joined by Raquel Ferreira, the club’s senior vice president of Major and Minor League operations. She is in her 21st year with the organization and if she is elevated by the club she will become the highest-ranking woman ever in an MLB team’s baseball operations department.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora told his players about the news in a team meeting right after Sunday’s defeat, which dropped the team to 76-67, and eight games behind the Athletics for the second Wild Card spot.

"I mean, I just found out," Cora said. "Surprised. I'm shocked, honestly. Right now, I don't have too much to say. We'll talk about it tomorrow. This is a guy that gave me a chance to come here and be a big league manager. It's one of those that they just told me, so I'm not ready to talk about it."

The players were similarly trying to process the early morning development.

"Probably the same reaction you guys had," said Red Sox slugger J.D. Martinez. "Just a shock. We're trying to think about the game and stuff and then we just get hit with that so it's just, you know, wild."

It was under similar circumstances -- in the late stages of a game at Fenway Park -- that Dombrowski's hiring was announced on Aug. 18, 2015.

At that point, Dombrowski was tasked with putting an underachieving yet talented team over the top. The Red Sox finished in first place in the AL East the next three seasons, winning the World Series title in 2018, but this season has been marred by inconsistency.

"It's a new year," said Red Sox right fielder Mookie Betts. "Got to turn the page on that, and a lot of different things happened. A lot of things can change within the year and this is one."

However, Martinez admitted that the news on Dombrowski was jarring considering it came just 10 months after the club had a World Series parade.

"We had a good team and, I guess, like I said, ownership has their reasons," Martinez said. "It's a business. That's their call. We're here, we have a job to do, we have to just keep chugging away."

While Dombrowski made fruitful offseason moves after the 2015, '16 and '17 seasons, the same was not true this past winter.

Dombrowski opted to let key relievers Craig Kimbrel and Joe Kelly sign elsewhere as free agents in the months after the championship celebration in Los Angeles. Aside from that, the veteran executive brought back the entire cast that fueled Boston to a franchise-record 108 wins in 2018.

This included the decision to re-sign Nathan Eovaldi (four years, \$68 million) and World Series MVP Steve Pearce (one year, \$6.25 million). Both those players have spent most of 2019 injured.

In Spring Training, the Sox gave ace Chris Sale a five-year, \$145 million extension that starts next season. Sale had the worst season of his career (6-11, 4.40 ERA) before being lost for the season due to left elbow woes. On the plus side, Dombrowski also signed Xander Bogaerts to a six-year, \$120 million extension, and the shortstop has responded with the best season of his career.

"Obviously I've played for Dave for a long time and I think the world of him and it's just sad to see something like that happen," said Red Sox righty Rick Porcello. "At the end of the day, we're the players that are on the field and the ones that can make or break a lot of things, and ultimately the onus comes on us and it's unfortunate to see him take some of it. But that's the decision ownership made and it is what it is."

With the Red Sox struggling to live up to expectations in the days leading up to the July 31 Trade Deadline, Dombrowski decided to stand pat rather than make a move to try to put the team over the top, as he had done in each of the previous three seasons.

Coincidence or not, Boston went on an eight-game losing streak from July 28-Aug. 4. The club was just 2 1/2 games back in the Wild Card race the day of the Trade Deadline.

While Dombrowski wound up being the perfect leader to put a talented team over the top prior to this season, the franchise is in a place now where it needs to bolster the farm system.

The Red Sox also need to make some big decisions, including what to do with Betts, who is eligible for free agency after the '20 season. Betts has been steadfast in his desire to become a free agent rather than sign an extension. This could lead the club to at least explore trading last year's American League Most Valuable Player during the offseason.

Betts said the decision ownership made with Dombrowski will have no bearing on his future.

"It doesn't really matter who's there, it's going to be the same answer," Betts said. "Nothing's gonna change. This is proof that this is a business. Like I said, I love it here, but definitely this is still a business."

With 19 games to go and in need of a miracle to get back to the playoffs, the players will try to keep their focus on the field.

"Keep playing. Keep playing ball -- that's why we're here," Porcello said. "There's no question about that; obviously we'd like to be playing a lot better than we have been the entire year, but keep going out there and grinding."

The Red Sox let Dombrowski go with one year left on his contract. Dombrowski ran front offices for the Expos, Marlins and Tigers before coming to the Red Sox, and he started his career with the White Sox in 1978.

Porcello's struggles continue in 'toughest year'

Ian Browne

The window is getting smaller and smaller for Rick Porcello to be able to salvage something from the most trying season of his life.

The latest opportunity for the veteran righty was on Sunday night against the Yankees. Instead, it was a reprisal of events that have happened far too often this season.

In a 10-5 defeat, Porcello gave up a steady stream of runs -- two in three straight innings. Over four innings, Porcello was tagged for seven hits and six runs as his ERA rose to 5.83.

The American League's Cy Young Award winner in 2016, Porcello is having a rough go of it in what could be his final weeks in a Boston uniform.

"I don't know what else to tell you guys," Porcello said. "I'm grinding, trying to figure it out. I don't know what else to say. I'm doing everything I can and it's not there. It sucks, man. This has been the toughest year of my career by far; it's been the most disappointing, most emotional."

"I don't have any other words to describe it besides I'm sorry for Red Sox fans that have got to watch it, I'm sorry for my teammates, the guys have been playing their [butts] off all year. It's embarrassing to go out there every fifth day and not get it done and the only thing I can say is it's not for a lack of effort. It sucks. I've been terrible and I'm sorry for that."

The free-agent walk year has not been pretty for Porcello, who has been one of several members of the pitching staff to underperform for the defending World Series champions.

And the ramifications of the struggles of the team were felt immediately after the game, when the club revealed that it parted ways with president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

With 19 games left in their season, the Red Sox are eight games back for the second Wild Card spot.

Porcello has given up five runs or more in 12 of his 29 starts.

What was the issue on Sunday?

“Fastball to Torres he tries to come in and left it inner third, Gleyber put a good swing on it,” said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. “Fourth inning, fastball in, kind of cut and stayed inner third and [Mike Tauchman] hit it out of the ballpark. Got some bad luck in certain hits but [Aaron] Judge hit the ball hard, Torres hit the ball hard. Fastball command with him. He didn’t have it.”

Price, Chavis in limbo as season winds down

Ian Browne

Red Sox lefty David Price continues to play catch on a daily basis, but there’s no target date for him to pitch again.

Manager Alex Cora said it will not happen in the upcoming three-game series at Toronto that starts Tuesday.

Price was placed on the injured list with a cyst on his left wrist on Aug 12. He has pitched just two innings since then -- on Sept. 1 at Anaheim.

With Price’s best long-term interests in mind, could the Red Sox opt to shut him down for the rest of the season?

“I mean, depending on where we’re at [in the standings],” said Cora. “We’ll see.”

The Red Sox entered Sunday night’s game against the Yankees with a 1.2 percent chance of making the playoffs. In other words, they’d just about need to run the table over the final 20 games to get to the American League Wild Card Game.

Would Price be pitching if the Red Sox were closer in the standings?

“No, no, no, without a changeup and a cutter, we’re not going to push him to go out there like that,” said Cora. “I don’t know, I don’t see the relieving, coming out of the bullpen thing, just throwing fastballs. That’s more on us. If it was up to him, he would try it but I don’t think that’s something that’s good for him or is good for us. We’re actually taking it away from him. Whenever he can throw his pitches, we’ll make a decision.”

Price is signed for three more seasons and the Red Sox will continue to proceed with caution when evaluating when or if he will pitch again this season.

“Just careful, yeah, we’ve been doing it the whole time the last few weeks,” said Cora. “We want to make sure he’s ready to roll.”

Chavis: Goal is to play again this season

Another player who has been unable to play in recent weeks is rookie infielder Michael Chavis, who first had a sprained AC joint in his left shoulder and then a right oblique injury. The latter could prevent him from playing again this season, but not if Chavis has his way.

“Oh, 100 percent, one of my goals is just to not finish the season on the IL,” Chavis said. “I really just want to play before the season is over. I don’t know how that looks or how these things usually play out but I know we’re still pushing for playoffs. Nobody in here has given up so I’m doing my best to get ready for October or the end of September, or whenever I’m ready.”

As of now, Chavis isn’t able to do baseball activities.

“It’s not a day-to-day injury but each day determines what I can do that day,” Chavis said. “I really don’t know how long I’m looking at. It feels pretty good. The majority of stuff I’m doing is treatment. It’s weird, man, because it’s your core, and baseball is such a rotational sport, all that stuff is so important. I’m doing everything I can.”

Antonio Brown news lit up Fenway

In Saturday’s nondescript 5-1 loss to the Yankees, Cora couldn’t help but notice the one time there was a buzz in the air. It happened when news broke that the Patriots signed star wide receiver Antonio Brown, who had been released by the Raiders earlier in the day after his widely-publicized dispute with the team.

“When they announced it, I was like, ‘What’s going on?’ There was nothing going on on the field and people were excited,” said Cora. “Like when they put the hockey scores on in the Stanley Cup [back in the spring] and I’m like ‘OK, that’s what happened.’”

Though the 2019 baseball season hasn’t gone the way Cora would have hoped so far, he sees the local football team making yet another deep playoff run.

“It seems like we’re going to be watching another Super Bowl here in Boston,” said Cora.

*** ESPN.com**

Red Sox fire Dombrowski one season after title

Jeff Passan

The Boston Red Sox fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski on Sunday, and they will elevate senior vice president Raquel Ferreira and assistant general managers Eddie Romero, Brian O’Halloran and Zack Scott to jointly lead their baseball operations department for the rest of the season.

Dombrowski, 63, was the architect behind Boston’s 2018 World Series championship and had a contract that ran through the 2020 season. The Red Sox are in the midst of a disappointing campaign that has them eight games back of the second wild-card spot in the American League and 17½ games behind the first-place New York Yankees in the AL East.

The Red Sox are expected to formally announce the firing Monday.

Ferreira, the senior vice president of major league and minor league operations in her 21st year with the Red Sox, will be part of an interim decision-making team and is set to become the highest-ranking woman ever in a Major League Baseball team’s baseball operations department.

Romero, O’Halloran and Scott are longtime and well-respected Red Sox employees, as well, each hired by former Red Sox GM and current Chicago Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein. When Epstein resigned from the Red Sox after the 2005 season, they installed a committee to make baseball operations decisions before rehiring Epstein in January 2006.

While Dombrowski’s job security has been in question in recent weeks, the change is nevertheless a shocking about-face for an organization that less than a year ago was basking in the afterglow of a 108-win regular season and a dominant run through the postseason that included a five-game World Series victory against the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora, whom Dombrowski hired before the 2018 season, said after Boston’s 10-5 loss to the Yankees on Sunday that he was “surprised and shocked” to learn of the move.

"This is a guy that gave me a chance to come here and be a big league manager," Cora said. "It's one of those things that caught me. They just told me, so I'm not ready to talk about it."

Dombrowski, who was hired in August 2015, had embraced the Red Sox's championship-or-bust mandate and used the team's ample farm system to acquire star players and build a go-for-broke major league roster. His hiring of Cora, trades for pitchers Chris Sale and Craig Kimbrel and signings of J.D. Martinez and David Price supplemented a homegrown core to deliver the team's fourth championship in 15 seasons.

It was not enough to keep his job. Despite returning almost all of the vital contributors to last season's championship, Boston has stumbled through the 2019 season and is in a tenuous position going forward because of financial commitments made under Dombrowski.

The signing of Price has produced solid return but not the sort expected from a \$217 million deal. He has \$96 million remaining on the final three years of his contract.

Sale, who is out for the remainder of the season with a left-elbow issue, signed a five-year, \$145 million contract extension in spring training that doesn't begin until next season.

Dombrowski also gave \$68 million to right-hander Nathan Eovaldi, who has struggled in his first season of the four-year deal.

The three will cost a combined \$79 million in each of the next three seasons -- years during which the Red Sox have other significant moves to consider.

Their franchise player, right fielder Mookie Betts, can hit free agency after the 2020 season. Martinez, a middle-of-the-lineup force for the past two seasons, can opt out of the final three years of his contract this winter.

"It doesn't really matter who's there," Betts said of the effect Dombrowski's exit will have on his impending free agency. "Nothing is going to change. This is proof that this is a business. I love it here, but definitely still a business."

At the same time, the Red Sox still are replete with talent across the diamond. Shortstop Xander Bogaerts is one of the game's best, and he signed a very reasonable six-year, \$120 million extension this spring that kicks in next season. Third baseman Rafael Devers is in the midst of a breakout year and is still just 22 years old.

With whom the Red Sox complement them is the question. Their farm system is considered among the thinnest in baseball, with scouts projecting few impact-type players.

Starter Rick Porcello, first basemen Steve Pearce and Mitch Moreland and utility man Brock Holt are among their free agents this winter, though arbitration raises for Betts and Jackie Bradley Jr. alongside the new contracts for Sale and Bogaerts would place their payroll at well over \$200 million before making a move.

Issues with a \$200 million payroll are baseball's definition of a first-world problem, but they don't lessen the difficulty of what Dombrowski's successors will inherit -- particularly with the possibility of trading Betts, who is expected to make well over \$25 million in arbitration.

Porcello spoke fondly of Dombrowski, who drafted the pitcher while he was the Detroit Tigers' general manager in 2007 and traded him to Boston seven years later.

"He's seen me throw more innings than anyone other than my immediate family in person," Porcello said. "There's obviously something there. It's a business. I had a great time playing for him. At the same time, he's the same guy who traded me from Detroit to come here. It is what it is. We've all been in that revolving door of business transactions."

"It's unfortunate. Anything outside of player moves and things like that that translate to what we're doing on the field, you take an ounce of guilt; but as a player, you're the one that can make or break things. That's the part that hurts. At the end of the day, it's a business decision and completely over my head."

* **WEEI.com**

Why this Dave Dombrowski firing isn't all that complicated

Rob Bradford

When the subject of Dave Dombrowski's future with the Red Sox was broached the last few months it didn't seem cut-and-dried by any stretch of the imagination. Cases could be made for the president of baseball operations both staying and getting the boot.

But in the end, this was far less complicated than many wanted to make it.

The Red Sox are headed into one of the most important offseasons in recent memory, with significant decisions to be made regarding Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr., the starting rotation and the integration of a few soon-to-be major leaguers. Whoever was to make those choices better be the person at the helm for at least the next few years while we see how this whole thing unfolds. Dombrowski was headed into the final year of his contract.

Do the math.

If the Red Sox wanted Dombrowski to be the one pulling the strings following this sad trombone of a season than one would think they had to extend his contract beyond 2020. If they weren't willing to commit to the president of baseball operations beyond next season then you certainly couldn't have a lame-duck decision-maker guiding the future of the franchise, thereby necessitating a parting of the ways.

It wasn't complicated. Dombrowski wasn't going to be viewed by this ownership group as that long-term guy so it was time to move on.

No need to wait. Whether it was in early Sept. or after the regular season, this was the unavoidable reality.

But there are some elements of this equation that need to be digested when realizing why John Henry, Tom Werner and Co. didn't choose to view Dombrowski as a guy who should be steering the ship for another three, four or five years.

Remember, it was Henry who said just a few days after the Red Sox won the World Series that his next order of business was to find a way to keep Dombrowski around for a while. So, when and how did that sentiment change?

Let's reflect back on the principal owner's comments to WEEI.com in London.

First, there was the remark regarding the best way to approach roster-building after winning it all.

"My take is that maybe it isn't the best thing in the world to bring back the same team in its entirety every time," Henry said. "You don't want to break a team down. But maybe a few changes wouldn't hurt. But the feeling is always different after you win, apparently."

This, of course, was not the approach taken by Dombrowski, who used a good chunk of his offseason resources to bring back postseason heroes Nathan Eovaldi and Steve Pearce. Both were more part of the problem than the solution throughout 2019.

Then came the money quote ... literally.

"It's not a luxury tax issue, it's a question of how much money do we want to lose," Henry explained. "We're already over budget and we were substantially over our budget last year and this year. We're not going to be looking to add a lot of payroll. And it's hard to imagine fielding a better team. If we play up to our capabilities we'll be fine. That's the question: Will we? We're halfway through and we haven't. ... It's a worthy team because we invested. Two years in a row we have the highest payroll. It's not a matter of investment, it's a matter of playing well. If we play up to our capabilities we will easily make the playoffs. That's how I see it."

If you're looking to crack the code when it comes to Sunday night's decision start with those comments.

Henry was basically saying, "You told us spending all this money would be worth it and it wasn't." That was it in a nutshell. That is the kind of thing that will get someone fired.

The easy narrative is that Dombrowski did what many expected he would do, win in the short-term while leaving the farm system barren. But considering the list of prospects he parted ways, this can't really be the impetus for the late-season transition to Eddie Romero, Zack Scott and Brian O'Halloran. Dombrowski did usually have an ability to identify the right minor-leaguers to include in deals. Perhaps there was a lack of creativity in getting some young talent back or too much of a willingness to add an extra body or two. But we have to be fair, here.

The organization was coming up to a crossroads, much like it was when Dombrowski was hired. It was the right move at that time, partly because the Red Sox needed one voice, a dynamic that the Red Sox were starving for after a series of questionable approaches toward the roster and contracts. Now there will be different priorities.

There is no question that the Red Sox are going to be digging out from a hole that was made in large part because of Dombrowski's allocation of resources. What the team's ownership wanted to make sure is that they weren't going to fall deeper into the abyss, as happened to the Tigers following their former general manager's departure.

Dombrowski's approach -- as viewed from both inside and outside the organization -- had come under growing criticism, and not making the postseason with this sort of payroll is always going to put a target on your back. But this isn't about keeping score when chronicling the good and the bad. This was more about what was to come than what had already taken place.

The future is now for these Red Sox, and that didn't bode well for the man who was still leaning on the past.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

Dave Dombrowski built last great Red Sox team, but next one will be up to someone else

John Tomase

The Red Sox simply couldn't entrust what comes next to a lame duck.

The approaching offseason will reshape the organization for years. Sign or trade Mookie Betts? Find a taker for David Price, Chris Sale, and/or Nathan Eovaldi? Acquire young pitching despite a maxed-out payroll? Lock down J.D. Martinez before he tests the market?

Any one of those items could be franchise-altering. Taken together, they're a job for someone whose contract doesn't expire in 2020.

We now know that person won't be Dave Dombrowski. The midnight news dump that the Red Sox had fired their president of baseball operations could legitimately be portrayed as unfair — three division titles and a World Series crown don't buy much in the way of job security anymore.

But let's not kid ourselves. Building the next great Red Sox team was always going to fall to someone else, so the Red Sox decided to get a jump on the project.

Dombrowski did more with more, which isn't as easy it sounds, but doing more with less hasn't been his forte in two decades. This isn't 1997, and these aren't the Marlins. The Red Sox decided they needed a president of baseball operations (or, for simplicity's sake, general manager) who could serpentine his way through a transitional offseason without forcing questionable moves simply to save his job.

That's why the Red Sox turned over the baseball operations for the time being to the four-headed monster of longtime execs Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran, Zack Scott, and Raquel Ferreira. They largely represent the skills that Dombrowski doesn't necessarily feature, whether it's international scouting (Romero), picayune CBA knowledge (O'Halloran), analytics (Scott), or player development (Ferreira). Those are the areas an organization must lean on once it has maxed out its payroll if it wants to remain competitive.

They're the only way to solve problems when the cash spigot runs dry, and no ownership group spends more on its roster than John Henry and Co. Sadly, that's not sustainable.

That's not to say Dombrowski lacked strengths. He arrived in August of 2015 to do one job — spin one of the game's best farm systems into a champion. Predecessor Ben Cherington used to joke that he was leaving incredible talent for his successor, and he was right. Dombrowski knew what to do from there.

He spent money (David Price), traded prospects (Craig Kimbrel, Chris Sale), and waited out the market (J.D. Martinez) to build a juggernaut. The 2018 Red Sox raced to 108 wins and the team's first championship since 2013, and they bore Dombrowski's stamp up and down the roster. A shrewd evaluator of big-league talent, he turned seemingly minor acquisitions like Steve Pearce and Nathan Eovaldi into breakout postseason stars.

That doesn't mean the Red Sox were built to last. The starters broke down. The bullpen wilted without the security blanket of Kimbrel. Even the offense, so good the previous fall, found itself struggling to overcome the lack of superstar production from defending MVP Mookie Betts and Triple Crown candidate J.D. Martinez.

The 2019 Red Sox played consistently below the sum of their parts, and for that Dombrowski deserves his share of the blame, especially since he has left the franchise in a tenuous position. Megabucks contracts to David Price (8 years, \$217 million), Chris Sale (5 years, \$145 million), and Eovaldi (4 years, \$68 million), could potentially hamstring the club in 2020. That's over \$400 million committed to a trio of pitchers with serious injury concerns, which isn't the kind of detail a GM would necessarily highlight on his résumé.

The Red Sox must walk the high-wire where they augment their young contending core without sacrificing future pieces. That's not an easy needle to thread, which is why on Sunday night they made a change, just as they did four years ago when they replaced Cherington with Dombrowski.

Back then, Dombrowski was the right man for the job. He has since transformed prospects into talent, and it's hard to argue with the results. But it's also true that new challenges await, and with them comes the need for new leadership.

It is the way of the world in a brutal business. Surely the hyper-aggressive Dombrowski can appreciate that ownership decided not to mess around.

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

As Red Sox make yet another front office change, expect the pendulum to swing in different direction

Sean McAdam

As the 2019 Red Sox season grinds to a merciful end, change is in the air at Fenway Park.

So what else is new?

The announcement late Sunday, minutes after another one-sided loss to the New York Yankees, that Dave Dombrowski is out as president of baseball operations means that, soon, the Red Sox will employ their fourth top baseball executive this decade.

Theo Epstein, who helped end the franchise's decades-long championship drought by winning two titles, bailed after the 2011 season to go to the Chicago Cubs. His replacement, Ben Cherington, who won a World Series in his second season on the job, was nudged aside two and a half years later in favor of Dombrowski.

And now, a mere 11 months after leading the Sox to a championship and a record-setting 108-win season, Dombrowski is out, too.

That's hardly the kind of stability to which a franchise aspires. It's simply not a good look to be changing general managers — or their titular equivalents — every three or four seasons. It suggests chaotic leadership at the top and frequent philosophic shifts.

Yet that's where the Red Sox are.

When a Boston Globe report earlier this summer strongly suggested that Dombrowski wouldn't return next season, the story was met with silence from the upper levels of management. That was the first suggestion that the story had merit.

But while speculation intensified over Dombrowski's job security — or lack thereof — it was widely assumed that any change in the Baseball Operations Department would come after season's end. Instead, his dismissal came on a night when the Sox were being throttled (again) by the Yankees, giving off yet another whiff of dysfunction.

Dombrowski was seen on the field, taking part in some pre-game ceremonies before the Sox and Yankees played in front of a national audience on ESPN. He was not spotted in his luxury box to the first base side of home plate during the game, lending credence to the idea that he was informed of his firing at the start of the game.

Both principal owner John Henry and team chairman Tom Werner were in attendance Sunday night, along with team president and CEO Sam Kennedy.

It's unknown why the organization didn't want until the end of the season, now exactly three weeks away, or if anything triggered the move to be made so suddenly, though the timing may give the Red Sox a bit of a head start on the search for Dombrowski's replacement.

The thinking is that Dombrowski was not fired for the job he did — three division titles and a World Series win in three of his first four seasons at the helm — but rather, for his unsuitability for the job ahead.

The Sox face a rash of big decisions in the next 15 months, not the least of which is the future of outfielder Mookie Betts, who is eligible for free agency after the 2020 season. Of more immediate concern is the possibility that J.D. Martinez, who has been stellar in the middle of the lineup in his first two years here, could opt-out after the current season.

Then there's the matter of the farm system, which has been depleted by a number of trades executed by Dombrowski. In obtaining the likes of Craig Kimbrel and Chris Sale, Dombrowski constructed a roster which won a record 108 games in 2018 and steamrolled past three 100-win teams in the postseason, en route to the Sox' fourth title this century.

But now the cost of those deals have come due. The team's minor league system, which ranked among the handful of best in the game when Dombrowski was hired, is now ranked in the bottom third, with Baseball America classifying it as the 30th — and last — in the business at the start of this season.

Another factor not to be overlooked is the price — literally — of the team's recent success.

More than once, Henry has noted that, by virtue of their enormous payrolls in recent seasons, the team was failing to turn a profit and failing to generate any revenues for its limited partners and minority owners.

Henry said the team was willing to make the sacrifice in 2018 for the chance to win a World Series. But when the team spent even more on this year's team — barely staying under the third and final luxury tax threshold of \$247 million — that proved harmful to Dombrowski's job security.

Dombrowski's MO was well established in the game. He made big deals — acquiring Miguel Cabrera and Max Scherzer in Detroit; obtaining David Price, Sale and Kimbrel in Boston — and focused almost entirely on the major league roster, often at the expense of player development.

It's likely that, as the pendulum swings back, the Red Sox will be looking for someone who prioritizes player development, thus enabling the franchise to field a competitive team at a more modest cost. As Henry and others surely know, spending freely on free agency — as Dombrowski did with Martinez, Price and Nathan Eovaldi — is hardly an efficient way to conduct business.

Cherington, Dombrowski's predecessor, had a player development background and helped plant the seeds of the current team, having developed, among others, Xander Bogaerts, Rafael Devers, Jackie Bradley Jr. and Betts.

Now that Dombrowski — known for expensive star players — is gone, look for the Red Sox to again return to someone associated with player development and takes more of a macro view of the organization.

Red Sox fire Dave Dombrowski as president of baseball operations

Sean McAdam

Minutes after the Red Sox lost their second straight game to the New York Yankees, the team announced that it had fired Dave Dombrowski as its president of baseball operations.

The team's three assistant general managers — Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott — will be in charge of Baseball Operations for the remainder of the season, at which point the team will undertake a search for Dombrowski's replacement.

Dombrowski's dismissal comes just 11 months after the Red Sox won the 2018 World Series in a season in which the team established a franchise record for most wins in a season. In Dombrowski's first three full seasons, the Sox won the American League East three times and one World Series title.

Questions about Dombrowski's job security first surfaced last month when Boston Globe columnist Dan Shaughnessy speculated that Dombrowski would not return for the 2020 season. Dombrowski, hired to replace Ben Cherington in August of 2015, was given a five-year deal which began with the 2016 season and had one year remaining on his contract.

As recently as last fall, on the morning of the team's World Series celebratory parade, principal owner John Henry said the team needed to get to work on a contract extension for Dombrowski and intimated that it would get done before the end of the 2019 calendar year.

But the team's deeply disappointing play on the field — to say nothing of having the game's biggest payroll for the second year running — apparently changed all of that.

"I just found out," said Alex Cora, who shared the news with players immediately after their 10-5 loss to the New York Yankees. "Surprised and shocked, obviously. Right now, I don't have too much to say. We'll talk a little bit more tomorrow. But he's a guy who gave me the chance to come here and be a big-league manager."

Asked how surprised he was at the shakeup after the team won the World Series, Mookie Betts said: "It's a new year. You've got to turn the page on that. A lot of different things happened. A lot of things can change with the new year and this is one."

Betts, who is eligible for free agency after the 2020 season, said the change at the top wouldn't impact his decision-making.

"It doesn't really matter who's there," said Betts. "It's going to be the same answer. Nothing's gonna change. This is proof that this is a business. Like I said, I love it here but it's still a business."

J.D. Martinez, who was signed twice by Dombrowski — once in Detroit and again here — said he was shocked by the announcement.

"It is what it is," said Martinez. "We're trying to think about the game and stuff and then we get his with that — wow."

This is the second time Martinez has been on a team that has fired Dombrowski in mid-season. He was with the Tigers in early August when they fired Dombrowski and replaced him with Al Avila.

Martinez admitted that, last October, he couldn't have imagined Dombrowski would be fired 11 months later.

"Nope, absolutely not," said Martinez. "I guess ownership has their reasons. It's a business. That's their call. We have a job to do. We have to just keep chugging away. ... Dave gave me an opportunity in Detroit and he gave me an opportunity here, so he's always been a friend to me and we've always gotten along great, so obviously, I'm sad to see him go."

"But like I said, it's just wild."

"It's tough to process, just coming out of the game," said Rick Porcello, the losing pitcher in the loss to the Yankees. "There's a lot of things to think about right now. But anything in this sport, there's a business aspect to it. It's just unfortunate. Obviously, I've played for Dave for a long time. I think the world of him. It's just sad to see something like that happen."

"At the end of the day, we're the players that are on the field and we're the ones that can make or break a lot of things. Ultimately, the onus comes on us and it's unfortunate to have to see him have to take some of it, but that's the decision ownership made and it is what it is."

"It's really hard to reflect on it right now. I'll have potentially a better answer for you in a couple of days. But you never like to see anyone lose their job over what we're doing on the field. Unfortunately, that's the case right here."

A 20-win season is in reach for Eduardo Rodriguez

Sean McAdam

From the start of the season — in fact, especially from the start — the Red Sox rotation has been one massive disappointment.

Chris Sale endured his worst season in the big leagues before going down with a season-ending elbow injury. David Price began well but has seen his year nosedive in July and has been interrupted by injury on three occasions. Nathan Eovaldi missed half the season. Rick Porcello sports an inflated ERA and is among the league leaders in homers allowed.

Eduardo Rodriguez stands alone as the exception. Rodriguez leads the staff in every significant category from innings pitched to ERA to WHIP.

Moreover, with as many as four or five starts remaining, including Monday night, Rodriguez stands a chance to win 20 games for the first time in his career. He brings a 17-5 record into the series finale with the Yankees.

In recent years, starting pitcher wins have been devalued with the realization that they don't always provide a telling snapshot of a pitcher's year.

And yet 20-win seasons are seldom fluky occurrences. Over the course of better than 30 starts, too much has to go right.

Three more wins and Rodriguez will become just the fifth Red Sox pitcher this century to post a 20-win season and just the second in the last 12 seasons.

"If the 20 comes, it comes," said Rodriguez. "That's something that I can't control. I can go out there and throw nine innings the rest of my starts and not know whether I'm going to win or not. My goal this year is just to go out there and be available to pitch the whole season, which is what I'm doing right now. I want to finish strong.

"If the 20 comes, it comes. But I just wanted to make more than 30 starts and hopefully get to 200 innings (he's at a team-leading 172.2 innings)."

It may well be that the innings total is Rodriguez's top accomplishment, especially given the underperformance — and at times, unavailability — of others in the rotation. While Sale, Price and Eovaldi were preserved in spring training with an eye toward having them at full strength later in the year, the trio seldom provided length.

Rodriguez, who previously had the reputation as the least efficient pitcher on the staff, has become the team workhorse. Twelve times in his first 29 starts, he has gotten at least one out in the seventh inning and he's thrown seven innings in three of his last four outings.

"Probably after the first month of the season," said pitching coach Dana LeVangie, "Eddie has been one of the better pitchers in the big leagues. The season he's had speaks to his maturity, his consistency, his routine. He's taken a huge step forward this year and having a chance to win 20 games just speaks volumes about how much he's grown up.

"It would be pretty special. It's been a disappointing season (for the team), but that doesn't take away from what the guy's done, taking his turn every five days. It's been fun to watch."

The Red Sox noticed a difference in Rodriguez as soon as he reported to spring training. In addition to being healthy, Rodriguez had dropped weight over the winter and came in motivated. He was pushed by his rotation-mates, each of whom has adopted a big brother role with the lefty.

Manager Alex Cora was publicly critical of Rodriguez following an outing in Port St. Lucie, when Rodriguez failed to pitch aggressively enough to go sufficiently deep into the game. It may have only been a Grapefruit League outing, but Cora's point registered.

In addition to routinely going deeper into games, Rodriguez also developed a hard curveball — to go with his plus changeup, cutter and fastball. The arrival of a fourth pitch, said LeVangie, gives Rodriguez “a chance to be a truly elite pitcher for a long period of time.”

Among his teammates in the rotation, Porcello has won 22 games (in 2016) and Price won 20 while with Tampa Bay. Sale, for all his domination in past seasons, has never reached the milestone.

Getting there and joining two of his mentors would be an accomplishment in itself and offer concrete evidence that he's arrived in an exclusive club.

“If I get it, I'm going to be really happy,” he Rodriguez, “because that's something that I've never done. If I get to that point, that would be great.”

*** *The Athletic***

The hunt for a TV at Fenway: Even at Yankees-Red Sox, fans focused on Patriots season opener

Jen McCaffrey

Edwin Cifuentes made a mistake, but he wasn't the only one.

If he'd known his Red Sox-Yankees tickets for Sunday night were going to coincide with the Patriots season-opener, he probably wouldn't have planned to be at Fenway Park.

“I actually got my dates messed up so it would have been a different story,” said Cifuentes, wearing a Patriots jersey in the stands at Fenway prior to Sunday night's game. “But we're here. We're going to make the best of it.”

The struggling Sox found themselves in an awkward situation on ESPN's Sunday night broadcast. At 16 1/2 games back of the first place Yankees to start the day, 7 1/2 games back of the top wild-card spot, and a first-pitch thrown in the middle of the Patriots' Super Bowl LIII banner ceremony, the Red Sox were far from the main event. The Sox game was scheduled long before the NFL slotted the Patriots opener into the Sunday night spot.

Even the guy throwing out the first pitch was wearing a Patriots hoodie. It was hard to walk a few feet in the vicinity of Fenway without running into someone decked in Patriots garb. Nevertheless, the Red Sox hosted a mostly full park at first pitch with 35,681 tickets sold, though many admittedly had divided attention. By the fifth inning of an eventual 10-5 Red Sox loss, the crowd had thinned out considerably.

“I'll be watching on my phone, that's the plan,” said Ralph Poirier. Poirier splits season tickets with a group of friends and gets one Red Sox-Yankees game a year. He picked the wrong one.

Poirier invited his friend and fellow Patriots fan, Steve Nolan, to the Sox game with him, but wasn't sure if Nolan would even oblige.

“I was surprised he said yes to be honest with you,” Poirier said.

“I was so on the fence,” added Nolan, as he stood on Lansdowne Street wearing a Patriots t-shirt.

A few yards away, the Bleacher Bar was buzzing. The watering hole that offers fans a glimpse inside Fenway during games, thanks to a shared wall in center field, only had one of their TVs tuned to the Red Sox game.

“We’ll probably have Patriots on most of the TVs, Red Sox are kind of almost out of it,” general manager Tyler Heineman said. “I think more people are into the Patriots, regardless, just because they win more. But we’ll put the (Patriots) audio on, of course. There would be riots if I didn’t.”

Inside Fenway, the TVs in the grandstand section showed the Red Sox game to help out those with obstructed views, but in the suites, it was a different story.

“Luckily we’re in one of the boxes that has a TV. We’re in a suite so it’s not much of a dilemma other than do I go during the (Patriots) commercial breaks and watch the (Red Sox) game or not?” said Alex Levental, a Pats fan from Andover who stood on Jersey Street in a Brady jersey while his kids had their caricature drawn.

“I think they’ll be watching more of the Red Sox but I’m going to be watching more of the Patriots game for sure.”

Tully’s Tavern, a bar behind the right field grandstand seats, had four TVs tuned into the Patriots-Steelers matchup. Fans were pleasantly surprised to see the game on the big screens as they walked through the cramped space.

If he’d known about the Tully’s Tavern TVs, Sam Currie might have ventured over that way. Currie and his friend Collin Casey, Red Sox and Yankees fans, respectively, had flown in from Phoenix to take in a few games of the rivalry over the weekend. The trip had already been planned before they realized the date for the Patriots opener.

“As soon as I saw it was Sunday, I was like, ‘That’s opening day of football.’ And I’m like, ‘Shit,’” Currie said as he watched the Patriots game on his phone and informed Casey that Josh Gordon had just scored.

The plan for Gilberto and Sandra Colon, decked in Rob Gronkowski and Tom Brady jerseys, respectively, was to watch five innings of the Red Sox game then head to a nearby bar to watch football.

“We knew, but we already had the tickets so we decided to come anyway,” Gilberto Colon said. “We’re recording it at home, too.”

Lucky for them, they wouldn’t have to venture far outside the park to find a bar with the Patriots game on. At Cask ’n Flagon on the corner of Lansdowne and Brookline Ave., all but one of their TVs was tuned into the Patriots game. Game On, situated on the same block as Fenway, had all 14 TVs in their main room on Patriots.

The baseball game started before, coming in at 3 hours and 48 minutes, finished after the Patriots opener. Nevertheless, the novelty wasn’t lost on some fans.

“Fenway is a special place,” Levental said. “It’s special to watch the Patriots season opener at Fenway Park.”

Dave Dombrowski won’t be part of Red Sox’ future because he dwelled on team’s past

Steve Buckley

That was a nice touch by Dave Dombrowski last month, telling Bob Nightengale of USA Today that Red Sox fans “have been great.”

And yet in that same story he also demonstrates precisely why he was fired Sunday night as the organization's president of baseball operations. Asked to comment on speculation he might be dismissed, Dombrowski said, "I don't want to say too much about it ... but I am surprised. At least a little bit. I mean, we did win three divisions and a World Series."

That's perfect. It's better than perfect: It's Dombrowski's Boston epitaph.

Think about it: Here's a guy who got so wrapped up in the 2018 Red Sox winning the World Series that he essentially brought the same team back for 2019. You'd think a man with his baseball resume would understand that each season is a separate entity, and that all teams, regardless of record, even if a championship is involved, need to be reviewed dispassionately during the cold months.

Other than allowing closer Craig Kimbrel to move on, Dombrowski more or less pasted a "2019" over the "2018" on last year's 25-man roster and then wandered off to his beloved Dunkin Donuts for coffee. Not only did he bring back the 2018 band, Dombrowski went so far as to give talented but fragile lefty Chris Sale a five-year, \$145 million contract extension. And while he made some clever in-season pickups last year in right-hander Nathan Eovaldi and first baseman/outfielder Steve Pearce, what was not clever was overpaying them for 2019. Pearce, a journeyman who came up big for the '18 Sox and emerged as World Series MVP (though the honor should have gone to David Price), received a one-year deal worth \$6.25 million. As for Eovaldi, Dombrowski looked past the man's history of arm problems and saw only the fine pitching he did in 2018, including a memorable relief outing in Game 3 of the World Series in which he worked six shutout innings until the Dodgers' Max Muncy ended it with a walk-off homer.

Dombrowski gave Eovaldi a four-year, \$68 million deal.

Eovaldi has missed a good chunk of this season. When he has pitched, he's 1-0 with a 5.77 ERA in 19 appearances, including eight starts.

But Dombrowski doesn't want Red Sox fans to dwell on those bad contracts. He wants you to dwell on the three division championships — and the World Series championship. That is, the World Series championship the Red Sox won last year.

Dombrowski is right about this: Boston is different. It's different because the city's four big-league sports franchises keep having overlapping stretches of history-making greatness; from October 2018 to this past June, the Red Sox won the World Series, the Patriots won the Super Bowl and the Bruins took the St. Louis Blues to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup final before being blown off the Garden ice. Since February 2002, the Pats (six), Red Sox (four), Celtics and Bruins (one apiece) have combined for 12 championships. Nothing like that has ever happened in professional sports in this country. It's been a hell of a lot of fun but makes it tough to bask in past glories.

Yes, yes, yes, the Red Sox won the 2018 World Series. And to be fair to Dombrowski, it's rare in the modern age for a franchise to repeat as World Series champions. It hasn't happened since the Yankees won back-to-back-to-back championships in 1998-00. If recent history has taught us anything, it's that the Red Sox weren't supposed to win this season.

But the Sox brought a ton of arrogance into 2019 and now they are paying a price for that arrogance. It began with Dombrowski's laissez-faire approach to roster construction, continued with manager Alex Cora's spring training proclamation that there was no need to "turn the page," which was a precursor to a scheme to keep the starting pitchers from wasting their time in those boring Grapefruit League games.

And now, as the 2019 Red Sox are slowly fading away, the deposed Dave Dombrowski wants to remind you that the Red Sox won the World Series last year.

It's funny how Dombrowski, a man who seems to take great pleasure in refusing to share his thoughts about how he runs the team — unless he's talking to those great Red Sox fans!!! — can prattle on and on if the discussion involves covering his own tracks. When Sale was shut down for the season last month

because of inflammation in his elbow, Dombrowski made sure to point out that it was a new injury — in other words, it didn't pop up during a physical last spring as the contract extension was being drawn up.

Also last month, he offered up the bit about the three division titles and the World Series championship.

And then he gets fired on the same night the Patriots open the season with a dismantling of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Try mentioning to Bill Belichick the Pats' 13-3 victory over the Los Angeles Rams earlier this year in Super Bowl LIII and see how far that gets you.

The only dependable starter the Red Sox have right now is Eduardo Rodriguez, who might win 20 games this season. Beyond that, the rotation is a mess. Given the rebuild ahead, then, it doesn't make sense for ownership to leave Dombrowski in charge for 2020.

And if it's true that Eddie Romero and Co. are going to be running baseball ops, it might do well for ownership to have a little chat — with the entire department — about attitude.

The discussion can start here: If you want to relive the 2018 World Series, go to MLB.com and order the film. Otherwise, get to work.

'Shocked' Red Sox clubhouse a dour scene amid news of Dave Dombrowski's ouster

Jen McCaffrey

Some time in the middle of their 67th loss of the season — and 13th to the New York Yankees — the Red Sox fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

By the time the news emerged minutes after midnight on Monday morning, most of New England was long asleep, satisfied with a Patriots victory and apathetic about a lost season for the defending World Series champion.

The details of Dombrowski's departure will trickle out in the coming days and weeks, but in the immediate aftermath there was only shock inside Fenway Park.

When manager Alex Cora didn't immediately arrive for his postgame media session, vice president of media relations Kevin Gregg entered the interview room to announce the team had "parted ways" with Dombrowski and there would be a more formal announcement on Monday. Assistant general managers Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott will assume control of the team for the remainder of the season.

Cora emerged moments later wearing the emotion of the news and the stress of a long, disappointing season.

"I just found out," Cora said. "Surprised. I'm shocked, honestly."

"This is a guy that gave me a chance to come here and be a big league manager. It's one of those that they just told me, so I'm not ready to talk about it."

Dombrowski arrived in August 2015 in a manner eerily similar to his eventual departure, announced via a team press release in the middle of the eighth inning of a game. Four years and one World Series title later, he took the fall for an underperforming club that had hopes of a championship repeat.

The numbness brought on by the abrupt nature of the announcement blanketed a dour Red Sox clubhouse. Just as the Red Sox players have struggled to explain why they haven't been collectively better this season, the remaining players in the clubhouse were at a loss for words about the firing. Still, in an intensely competitive market, they know the stakes of failure and the cruelty of the business.

“You always kind of take an ounce of guilt with you as a player because you’re the one that can make or break things,” Rick Porcello said.

Porcello, who knew Dombrowski as well as anyone on this team from his years in both Detroit and Boston, scuffled on the mound once again Sunday night in a 10-5 loss to the Yankees. He allowed six runs in four innings of work. Third baseman Rafael Devers didn’t help him out, committing three errors on the night.

Cora informed his players of the franchise-altering news immediately following the game, leaving little time for them to reflect and process what this meant for their season and the future of the organization.

“You never like to see anybody lose their job over what we’re doing on the field and unfortunately that’s the case right here,” Porcello said.

J.D. Martinez, too, had previously played for a Dombrowski-run team in Detroit.

“He gave me an opportunity in Detroit and now he gave me an opportunity here,” Martinez said. “He’s always been a friend to me. We obviously got along great. Obviously I’m sad to see him go and like I said, it’s just wild.”

Money, power and pressure permeate every market, but they’re amplified in Boston individually and collectively.

“At the end of the day, we’re the players that are on the field and the ones that can make or break a lot of things,” Porcello said. “Ultimately the onus comes on us and it’s unfortunate to see him take some of it. But that’s the decision ownership made and it is what it is.”

After the 19 games remaining on the schedule are complete, several big decisions await the person who will permanently fill Dombrowski’s vacancy. A bullpen and rotation in need of repair and several soon-to-be free agent deals are just a handful of the pressing items ownership didn’t trust Dombrowski to fix.

The fate of Mookie Betts, heading into his final year of team control, is one of those big issues.

“It doesn’t really matter who’s there, it’s going to be the same answer,” Betts said when asked about his future. “Nothing’s gonna change. This is proof that this is a business. Like I said, I love it here but definitely this is still a business.”

Dave Dombrowski’s stunning fall: When even a World Series wasn’t enough

Chad Jennings

Dave Dombrowski knew nothing but winning seasons with the Red Sox. He arrived at a time of free fall, aggressively rebuilt the major-league roster and won a championship in his third full season as president of baseball operations. The parade rolled through the streets of Boston a mere 10 months ago.

On Monday morning, Dombrowski was fired.

Just past midnight, mere moments after the Red Sox lost to the Yankees on national television, the team announced Dombrowski had been let go. He had one year left on his contract. For the time being, the team said, Dombrowski’s duties would be split among his three top-ranking assistants.

“I’m shocked, honestly,” manager Alex Cora said.

Cora, of all people, should have seen this possibility coming.

It was less than two years ago that Red Sox ownership fired manager John Farrell after two straight division titles. Farrell, too, had a championship to his name. He, too, had once appeared to be the right man

at the right time. But ownership did not look back on a couple of 93-win seasons and a long-ago title. It looked forward to see the need for a fresh vision and a more modern approach. That's how Cora came to be hired, and it will be the same for the next general manager or head of baseball operations.

Dombrowski did exactly what the Red Sox hired him to do. He stayed true to his brand of roster building until he was told to step aside.

Ben Cherington can relate. Cherington was the Red Sox general manager from 2012 through Aug. 18, 2015, when Dombrowski was hired with a similar out-of-nowhere announcement during an otherwise nondescript game. Cherington had been the architect of the Red Sox' stunning 2013 championship season. He had a player development background and a plan to build a core from within. He'd helped put Xander Bogaerts, Mookie Betts, Rafael Devers and Andrew Benintendi in place, but many of his big league moves – among them, signing Pablo Sandoval and Hanley Ramirez – had fallen flat, and so he was replaced with a veteran executive with a history of wheeling-and-dealing. Dombrowski lived up to his reputation.

Within months, he signed David Price and traded for Craig Kimbrel. The Red Sox went from last place in 2015 to first place in 2016. Dombrowski traded for Chris Sale and signed Mitch Moreland, and the Red Sox won another division title in 2017. Dombrowski signed J.D. Martinez, and the Red Sox won their 2018 championship while recording the most victories in franchise history. They're going to have another winning season this year, but they won't win enough to make the playoffs, and they didn't win enough to mask their flaws.

What happens next is tricky. It's delicate. Dombrowski brought a sledgehammer and an excavator to the job. He made massive, bold moves with big prospects and even bigger paychecks. He stood amidst Cherington's foundation and recognized what could be built on top of it. The Red Sox have a ring to show for his work. They also have the game's largest payroll, and a depleted-but-improving farm system.

Dombrowski spent lavishly on his rotation this season, only to see it collapse from expected strength to Achilles heel. His preseason extension with Bogaerts looks like a masterstroke, but his extension with Sale has yielded an elbow injury and the highest ERA of Sale's career. Relatively minor trades for Nathan Eovaldi and Steve Pearce paid huge dividends last season, but deals for Carson Smith and Tyler Thornburg brought nothing but disappointment and frustration.

For whoever takes it from here – whether it's an internal candidate such as Eddie Romero or Brian O'Halloran, or perhaps a former member of the front office such as Diamondbacks general manager Mike Hazen – the job will come with immediate challenges.

- Betts is heading toward his final season of team control and has shown little interest in an extension.
- Martinez has the right to opt out after this season and could play hardball in an effort to get more money or a longer commitment after another terrific offensive season.
- The rotation is saddled with long-term contracts to Sale, Price and Eovaldi, each of whom has been injured and largely underperformed this season.
- Rick Porcello is about to be a free agent, and with no clear internal option to fill his hole in the rotation, the team will surely need to acquire at least one starting pitcher.
- The bullpen was largely ignored last winter, and though it outperformed most expectations, adding relief help will be a point of outside interest.
- Principal owner John Henry has committed massive amounts of money to the game's largest payroll – including many players being paid to play elsewhere – but he's been clear that such spending is not sustainable. Cutting payroll might be in the cards.

· The farm system has improved greatly in the past two years, but it's still not elite, and there will be some question about the benefit of trading on-the-rise assets vs. having the patience to build another core.

The Red Sox' window of opportunity has not closed with this disappointing season. Betts, Bogaerts and Devers form one of the best offensive trios in the game. Eduardo Rodriguez just experienced a breakout season and the veteran starters around him aren't necessarily finished. Matt Barnes and Brandon Workman have handled the late innings. Benintendi's had a terrific second half, Darwinzon Hernandez has arrived, and infield prospect Bobby Dalbec is right behind him. Even if ownership cuts payroll, Henry has never indicated he's going to turn truly cheap. There should be an opportunity to win again next year.

But the Red Sox are no longer in a position to simply pile pieces on top of their existing foundation. The young guys aren't so young anymore, the cheap guys are getting more expensive and what happens next will be a juggling act of payroll concerns, player development goals and championship ambitions.

It will be a difficult but enviable job for someone. But it was no longer the job for Dave Dombrowski.

*** *The New York Times***

Red Sox Fire Dave Dombrowski a Season After Winning the World Series

James Wagner

BOSTON — Mired in mediocrity only less than 11 months after setting a team record in victories and winning a World Series, the Red Sox on Sunday night fired Dave Dombrowski, their president of baseball operations.

A formal announcement was expected on Monday, but players were told of the news late Sunday after a 10-5 loss to the Yankees.

Manager Alex Cora called the team together in the clubhouse at Fenway Park after the game and shared the team owners' decision on Dombrowski, a longtime baseball executive who is one of the few general managers to lead three franchises to the World Series.

“Surprise and shock,” Cora told reporters after the game. He added later: “This is a guy that gave me a chance to come here and be a big-league manager. It's one of those that caught me. They just told me. So I'm not ready to talk about it.”

The Red Sox (76-67) had been expected to contend again this season, but they have been maddeningly inconsistent and are unlikely to reach the playoffs. After their 13th loss in 18 games against the Yankees this season, the Red Sox sat eight games behind the Oakland Athletics for the second American League wild-card spot with 19 games left to play.

Despite possessing one of the best offenses in baseball, the Red Sox have been hampered by a subpar pitching staff, which ranks 19th in the major leagues with a 4.65 earned run average.

The Red Sox opened the season with the largest payroll in baseball at \$236 million and were relatively quiet at the July 31 trade deadline in addressing a pitching staff saddled with injuries and poor performances by stars such as David Price, Chris Sale and Rick Porcello.

“We had a good team,” the Red Sox slugger J.D. Martinez said after Sunday's game. “And ownership has their reasons. It's a business. It's their call.”

Doubts about Dombrowski's future had been growing in recent weeks. With a lot of money committed to the current major league team and a farm system depleted by trades, the Red Sox faced difficult decisions about how to solve their flaws.

Not long ago, the Red Sox seemed destined to keep Dombrowski, 63, who was under contract through the 2020 season. In February, the Red Sox' majority owner, John Henry, indicated that the team was likely to extend Dombrowski's contract.

"This day and age, it probably doesn't make sense for your general manager to go into his final year without a contract, so that would mean something should happen this year," Henry said then.

That did not happen. And instead of waiting until the end of the regular season to let Dombrowski go, the Red Sox' leadership made a change now. According to news reports, the team will be guided for the remainder of the season by the senior vice president Raquel Ferreira and the assistant general managers Zack Scott, Eddie Romero and Brian O'Halloran.

Known through his career for making big trades and big free-agent signings to build a contender, Dombrowski did just that in Boston. He took over during the 2015 season for General Manager Ben Cherington, who guided the Red Sox to a 2013 World Series title but resigned after two subsequent losing seasons.

Under Dombrowski, the Red Sox won three straight A.L. East titles from 2016 to 2018, which culminated with a World Series win. It was Dombrowski's second World Series title; the first came in 1997 as the general manager of the Florida Marlins. He previously held the same title with the Montreal Expos and the Detroit Tigers, who made two World Series appearances during his tenure.

"Sad to see something like that happen," Porcello said. "At the end of the day, the players on the field are the ones that can make or break a lot of things. And ultimately the onus comes on us. It's unfortunate to see him have to take some of it."

The Red Sox Confront a New Curse

Tyler Kepner

Ask Alex Cora about the difficulty of winning consecutive championships, and you're setting him up for a punch line.

"I don't know," Cora, the manager of the Boston Red Sox, said with a wink on Saturday. "I won back to back in '17 and '18, you know?"

That he did, though Cora had to switch teams to do it. He was the bench coach for Houston in 2017 before joining the Red Sox after the Astros won the World Series. Another title followed in Boston. But no team has repeated as champions since the Yankees won three in a row from 1998 to 2000, and these Red Sox will soon extend that streak.

They have not been eliminated from the playoffs, not yet. But this weekend's four-game Yankees series has the feeling of desperation in New England, where autumn is in the air, football is on the mind and the bullpen is as crowded as the South Station T stop on a Monday morning.

The Red Sox are missing their left-handed aces, Chris Sale and David Price, Sale with an elbow injury and Price with tightness in his wrist. The team owes the pitchers a combined \$186 million for the next three seasons, but for now, at least, Cora can cover their absence with a swollen September pitching staff.

"I'm not going to apologize for having 21 pitchers here," said Cora, who used seven pitchers on Friday and eight on Saturday. "The rules are the rules."

The rules will change next season, when rosters will be capped at 28 in September, down sharply from the familiar 40-man limit. The bullpen shuffle mostly worked for Cora on Friday and Saturday, holding the

Yankees scoreless in 15 of 18 innings. Yet the Red Sox merely split the games — a 6-1 win, then a 5-1 loss — at a point when every defeat is a body blow.

“It’s kind of been like that through August,” said J.D. Martinez, who lost a liner in the right-field sun on Saturday, leading to a four-run inning. “We knew we had to step it up, we knew we’ve got to get some wins. We’ve got to start playing really, really well. I feel like we haven’t been playing bad, but we haven’t been hot-hot.”

Their lukewarm season began adrift, with eight losses in 11 games on the West Coast. Just as the Red Sox were pulling into shore, a tidal wave blew them right back: eight losses in a row, all to the Yankees or the Tampa Bay Rays, from July 28 to Aug. 4.

Before that stretch — which bridged their oddly quiet trading deadline — the Red Sox stood a game and a half out of a wild-card spot. When it ended, they were six and a half back. The Red Sox have played better since then, but the standings have hardly budged.

The Yankees are the runaway East division winner — a crown they have not won since 2012 — and the Red Sox want desperately to join the Oakland Athletics, the Cleveland Indians and the Rays in the race for the two wild cards. Forget this four-game series; the bigger one for Boston comes Sept. 20 to 23 at Tampa Bay.

“It’s going to be the best series of the year, I would say,” shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. “We can’t make any mistakes. We’ve just got to try to win as much as possible before going there, and I think that’s where the season will be decided, in Tampa.”

It could be decided before then for Boston, if Oakland and Cleveland outpace them. A team that earned a franchise-record 108 victories last season is largely helpless in this chase.

“We know we haven’t been good; we know the odds are very slim,” Cora said. “You get caught up in watching other teams and you’re like, ‘Come on, let’s go, make that play.’”

Boston’s pitching brought them to this awkward spot. Only two teams — the Minnesota Twins and the Yankees — have scored more runs than the Red Sox, but Boston starters had a 4.93 earned run average through Saturday, ranking 20th in the majors. All the teams with a worse rotation E.R.A. have losing records.

The Red Sox leaned heavily on Sale, Price, Rick Porcello, Nathan Eovaldi and Eduardo Rodriguez last October, using them all to both start and relieve. They tried to ease them into this season — and keep them strong for another potential playoff run — by restricting their workload in spring training.

The pitchers fell flat in April and never really recovered; only Rodriguez has had a healthy, successful season. Give the Red Sox credit for anticipating a problem, but when their solution failed, it exposed a thin bullpen.

“It’s funny, because a lot of people talk about spring training and the way we handled the pitching staff — well, the last 17, they haven’t won it,” Cora said. “People make adjustments, and you try.”

Cora was speaking of the 17 previous champions (technically 18, if you include the 2000 Yankees, who lost the next World Series) who tried and failed to repeat. The Red Sox will soon add their name to the list, extending the longest stretch in major league history without a back-to-back winner.

In an industry that measures the angle of every swing, the rotations of every pitch and the route efficiency of every fielder, the formula for repeating remains the ultimate unsolved riddle.

*** *The New York Daily News***

Yankees set a new team record for home runs in rout of Red Sox

Kristie Ackert

This year's Red Sox team is all but in the Yankees' rear-view mirror. That was clear by the fifth inning Sunday night when Aaron Judge hit his 21st home run of the season and the Bombers broke their single-season franchise record for home runs. But the Yankees did not let up there, scoring two more in the ninth inning as they beat the Red Sox 10-5 at Fenway Park.

They are looking to finish off the defending World Series champion Red Sox and finish their job this season.

The Yankees (94-50) can eliminate the Red Sox (76-67) from the American League East race on Monday with another win. After the game, the Red Sox fired their President of Baseball Operations Dave Dombrowski, who guided them to the World Series title last season.

"This team, it doesn't matter if we win or lose, we've got the same energy. We are like a family, always coming to the ballpark. Everybody is on the same page," Gleyber Torres said. "We're trying to win all the games. It doesn't matter if the playoffs are coming. We live in the moment right now, day to day, and try to be focused. We try to win most of the games and are ready for the next step."

Sunday night, the Yankees did it with their bats.

Masahiro Tanaka was fine, but lasted just four innings, allowing on eight hits. Chad Green was terrific, throwing three scoreless innings and striking out five.

"It means a lot to the team. Pitching wise, after me everybody closed the door on their offense, and obviously our offense did what they did tonight," Tanaka said. "So it's a very good win except for my performance."

The Yankees' offense picked him up.

They pounded Rick Porcello, who came into the game with an 11.45 ERA in three previous starts against the Yankees this season. He also lasted just four innings, allowing six runs on seven hits, giving up two homers.

The Bombers hit a total of three home runs to pass the record 267 they hit last season. Torres hit a two-run shot in the second to get them on the scoreboard. Mike Tauchman homered in the fourth, scoring Torres, before leaving the game with a tight left calf in the bottom of the inning. And Judge crushed a solo shot in the fifth to give the Yankees 268 with 18 games left to play this season. This season, the Twins have already broken the record from 2018 and lead the majors with 275 dingers.

They have done it with an MLB-record 29 players going on the injured list, including sluggers Giancarlo Stanton, who has played nine games, Aaron Hicks, Miguel Andujar, out for the season, Judge and Luke Voit also on the IL at times.

"Anytime you break your own record, you've done it with a number of different guys, it's a credit to them," Boone said, before making sure to credit the hitting coaches. "A credit to Marcus (Thames) and PJ (Pillitter) and how they get them ready to go each and every night. "Obviously it's a big part of our offense."

They have hit 12 home runs in their last five games and 36 in their last 14. The Yankees have hit a home run in 18 of their last 20 games, with multiple homers in nine of their last 13 games.

But they don't just do it with the long ball.

Judge singled in Tauchman, who had doubled, in the third and Torres drove a run with a fielder's choice and another with a double in the ninth. Edwin Encarnacion singled in yet another in the ninth as the Yankees took advantage of two errors to tack on runs.

"My goal, when you are facing our offense, I want you to feel it. Today, I felt like that was the case. I felt like we made it very difficult on them," Boone said. "Obviously we got results today and it's not always necessarily results. The last couple of weeks, we've been scoring some runs, having some success and obviously winning games and things, but today felt like when we're at our best and making it difficult and hitting the ball hard. Get into some hard outs today and gave ourselves a lot opportunities."usa

*** *The New York Post***

Red Sox fire team president Dave Dombrowski after losing to Yankees

Ken Davidoff

BOSTON — Winning a World Series in this championship-drunk town apparently doesn't get you very far.

Minutes after the Yankees' 10-5 defeat of the Red Sox on Sunday night at Fenway Park, the defending World Series winners fired Dave Dombrowski, their president of baseball operations. A trio of assistant general managers — Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott — will run the team's baseball operations on an interim basis, the club announced. Romero, whose father, Ed, played for the Red Sox, has long been considered a potential future GM.

While the timing surprised, with Dombrowski failing to make it to the end of the regular season, his job security had been a topic here throughout the season, and legendary Boston Globe columnist Dan Shaughnessy had written twice recently that Dombrowski would take the fall for the Red Sox's disappointing 2019 campaign, with nary a denial or objection from Boston's ownership.

The Bosox own a 76-67 record, putting them 17½ games behind the Yankees in the AL East — a Yankees victory Monday night would officially eliminate the Red Sox from the divisional race — and eight games behind the A's in the competition for the second wild-card spot.

The team largely rested on its laurels over the offseason, declining to spend money on its questionable bullpen. Yet two investments that Dombrowski did make — a four-year, \$68 million commitment to former Yankee Nathan Eovaldi, a free agent, and a five-year, \$145 million extension to ace Chris Sale — quickly backfired.

Nevertheless, the team's nucleus remains strong, with a respected manager in Alex Cora, and the Red Sox did win 108 regular-season games last year before cruising to their fourth title in 15 years. The quick dismissal of Dombrowski in the wake of such success enhanced speculation that something beyond the state of the team fueled ownership's quick trigger finger.

With a ring from the 1997 Marlins and two AL pennants (2006 and 2012) from his time with the Tigers, the 63-year-old owns the sort of résumé that will get him on a Hall of Fame ballot sooner rather than later. Whether he builds on that, however, stands in question.

Yankees' takedown of Red Sox includes bit of everything

Dan Martin

BOSTON — At some point, the litany of injuries that have hit the Yankees this season may catch up to them.

So far, that hasn't happened, as they won again despite losing another key player Sunday.

This time, it was Mike Tauchman who left during a 10-5 victory over the Red Sox at Fenway Park.

One thing that has remained a constant for just about the entire season is Gleyber Torres, who hit the first of three Yankees homers as they won for the fourth time in five games.

Torres hit his 35th homer, had a single, a double and drove in four runs to overshadow another rough outing from Masahiro Tanaka in Boston.

"Gleyber is smart and he's an instinctive baseball player, too," Aaron Boone said. "He's gained experience with what pitchers are trying to do. He processes things very well, which is what a lot of great players do."

Torres is fast becoming just that.

Tanaka, coming off the worst start of his career in his previous outing at Fenway — when he allowed 12 runs in just 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings — gave up four runs in four innings before being replaced by Chad Green.

Tanaka got some quick support from Torres, who gave the Yankees a 2-0 lead with one out in the second when he followed a single by Edwin Encarnacion with a shot over the Green Monster off Rick Porcello.

The Yankees added two runs in the third to make it 4-0, but the Red Sox cut into the lead in the bottom of the inning. Jackie Bradley, Jr. lined an opposite-field two-run homer to left to get Boston to within 4-2.

But the Yankees responded in the fourth with Tauchman's first home run in nearly a month, a two-run blast with two out that also scored Torres and put the Yankees up, 6-2.

Tauchman exited with two outs in the bottom of the inning when he pulled up before fielding Brock Holt's single to left. He was replaced by Cameron Maybin, who has been dealing with a left wrist injury.

Tanaka said through an interpreter, "It was a very good win, except for my performance."

Aaron Judge's 21st homer of the season that opened the fifth was the Yankees' 268th of the season, breaking the single-season mark they set last year — which was also an MLB record that has already been snapped by the Twins this year.

"Obviously, home runs are a big part of our offense," Boone said.

Torres, who leads the team in homers, said he wasn't even aware they had reached a milestone, but called it "amazing."

"We attack early," Torres said. "When we hit home runs, we're great."

Green, whose services as an opener are not needed — for now — tossed three perfect innings in relief of Tanaka. He struck out five and has whiffed 17 in his last five appearances. In those games, the right-hander has also pitched 9 $\frac{1}{3}$ scoreless innings.

Boone then went to Adam Ottavino, who had only allowed one run in his previous 11 appearances, but immediately gave up a homer to Mookie Betts to lead off the eighth.

After the Yankees pushed two more runs across in the ninth, Jonathan Loaisiga finished it and the Yankees went a season-high 44 games above .500.

And with Torres surging and Judge with five homers in his last 10 games, the offense shows no signs of slowing down — even with the loss of Tauchman hurting an already battered outfield.

“We always have the same energy, no matter what happened the day before,” Torres said. “That’s how we stay strong.”

*** *The USA Today***

Defending champion Red Sox fire Dave Dombrowski as president of baseball operations

Bob Nightengale

The Boston Red Sox, in a stunning move Sunday night, fired David Dombrowski, their president of baseball operations, less than a year after winning the World Series, Dombrowski confirmed to USA TODAY Sports.

Dombrowski, who joined the Red Sox in August 2015 and led the Red Sox to three consecutive AL East titles, took the fall for the Red Sox’s struggles this year. They are 76-67 and all but mathematically eliminated from the playoff chase, sitting eight games out of the second wild-card spot and 17½ games back of the New York Yankees.

Dombrowski was fired minutes after the Red Sox’s 10-5 loss to the Yankees in the ESPN Sunday night game.

The Red Sox will make a formal announcement Monday, but no permanent replacement is expected until after the season. The Red Sox will be hiring their fourth president of baseball operations in the last 10 years.

Dombrowski knew his job was in jeopardy the past month, but still didn’t understand it. He was criticized for giving Chris Sale a five-year, \$145 million contract extension this spring and re-signing pitcher Nathan Eovaldi to a four-year, \$68 million contract.

“I don’t want to say too much about it,” Dombrowski, 63, told USA TODAY Sports last month, “but I am surprised. At least a little bit. I mean, we did win three divisions and a World Series.

“But I get it. This is a tough market. It’s been known as that. Growing up in this game, I was always told there are three markets that are different than everywhere else: Boston, New York and Philadelphia. And I’d have to say it’s probably lived up to be true.

“If you don’t have thick skin, you’re not going to survive in this game. You won’t survive in this market for sure.”

The Red Sox have won four AL East titles and two World Series championships since the Yankees last won a division title in 2012, but it wasn’t enough to save Dombrowski.

“I know people wanted us to win, and we wanted to win, the expectations were there,” Dombrowski said. “It’s just a situation where you look back, somebody seems to get blamed for whatever happened. The fans have been great. And so has ownership. It’s just a [media] theme that always seems to take place.

“We haven’t played as well as we hoped, and people have problems with the decisions we made. I understand that. I guess that’s just the way it is.”

Word spread quickly in the clubhouse about Dombrowski’s firing, with reigning MVP Mookie Betts saying it won’t affect his contract negotiations for a long-term deal before being eligible for free agency after the 2020 season.

“I love it here,” Betts told reporters, “but this is proof that it’s still a business.”

*** *The Bergen Record***

Yankees take down Red Sox, and offer some hints about their postseason pitching plan

Pete Caldera

BOSTON – Luis Severino is staying with Class AA Trenton for the time being, pitching a third minor league rehab start before re-entering the Yankees rotation.

And veteran lefty CC Sabathia is due to return on Wednesday, with a twist.

Domingo German will enter that game after Sabathia, providing a possible window into how the Yankees might use the right-hander during postseason.

Manager Aaron Boone revealed those plans before the Yankees' 10-5 Sunday night victory against the Red Sox at Fenway Park.

Afterward, the Red Sox rather stunningly announced that Dave Dombrowski was out as president of baseball operations, less than a year after Boston won the World Series.

Chad Green earned the win with three scoreless innings (five strikeouts) in relief of Masahiro Tanaka, who yielded four runs in four innings.

Gleyber Torres (4 RBI) and Mike Tauchman each clobbered two-run homers off Seton Hall Prep grad Rick Porcello, charged with six runs over four innings.

But the Yankees are dealing with another injury.

Tauchman exited in the fourth inning with a left calf injury, pulling up after fielding a base hit in left field. He was replaced by Cameron Maybin, who received his first at-bats since Aug. 28, due to a left wrist issue that he might have to manage the rest of this season.

The Yankees announced that Tauchman is headed back to New York for an exam and an MRI on Monday.

Aaron Judge added an RBI single and a solo home run as the Yankees (94-50) moved another game closer to clinching the AL East division and eliminating the defending world champion Red Sox (76-67) from playoff contention.

With 268 home runs, the Yankees have exceeded last year's MLB-record total (267) for a single season, though they currently trail the Minnesota Twins (274 home runs entering Sunday).

The Severino plan

And yes, they're counting on Severino being an important part of this October run, nearly a year after the right-hander last pitched in a big-league game.

"We certainly like where he's at," Boone said earlier on Sunday.

Reluctantly for Severino, he'll be throwing for Trenton on Wednesday night instead of making his 2019 debut for the Yankees at Detroit.

However, "assuming everything is fine, he'll join us after that," Boone said of Severino, who'd be lined up to pitch on Sept. 17 at Yankee Stadium against the Los Angeles Angels.

Severino came through Friday night's 50-pitch outing at Trenton in good shape, with Boone suggesting he was ready to go after a month rehabbing from shoulder and lat issues.

Why keep him at Trenton?

"Just having a controlled environment where we can build him up a little more," said Boone, adding that Severino would throw "60-plus" pitches this time around.

Via video, Boone watched Severino's entire three-plus innings at Trenton and came away feeling there was more life on his fastball, more shape to his slider and more conviction with his changeup — a pitch he mixed in frequently.

"I thought it was a good overall work day with all of his pitches," Boone said. "I felt he flashed some polish to it...another really good step forward for him on his way back."

CC Sabathia & Domingo German

Sabathia is due to throw another bullpen session on Monday, leading up to Wednesday's start at Detroit.

It'll be his first outing since Aug. 30, when Sabathia experienced yet another flareup of the arthritic right knee condition he's dealt with over the past five seasons.

If healthy, the Yankees have plenty of trust in Sabathia pitching in October, and hooking him to someone like German might be one postseason scenario.

"We may explore some different roles for guys here and there," Boone said as the Yankees race toward their first AL East crown since 2012.

And with German having exceeded his previous career professional innings total for one season. Wednesday's plan is partly "a way of controlling Domingo's workload while keeping him on a regular (day)," Boone said.

"Domingo's a guy you could see...pitching in relief in certain situations," Boone said of a postseason scenario. "We'll see how it looks moving forward."

Looking ahead

Boone said it's fair to consider the next three weeks as a time for pitchers like the surging J.A. Happ to make their final arguments.

Yet, "as far as mapping out" an October plan, Boone said that won't happen "anytime soon."

First, the Yankees want to secure the division title before formulating a Division Series pitching plan.

Tanaka would figure to draw a Game 1 assignment, but what comes next?

Do you save James Paxton for a road Game 3 or start him in Game 2? Is German really a better option to enter midgame than as a starter?

And how can they best maximize what Severino can provide?

The answers will start unraveling soon.

*** *The Newark Star Ledger***

Yankees blow past Red Sox and set homer record, but Masahiro Tanaka roughed up and Mike Tauchman hurt

Randy Miller

BOSTON — Winning is always what's most important, and that'll never change for the Yankees.

They won again Sunday night, thumping the Boston Red Sox 10-5 at Fenway Park to reduce their magic number for clinching the AL East to 10 and stay tied with the Houston Astros for the best record in the majors.

This win wasn't all fun for the Yankees though because starting pitcher Masahiro Tanaka didn't look good allowing four runs over four innings and left fielder Mike Tauchman exited in the early innings with a left calf injury that may be serious.

The Yankees want Tanaka, a postseason beast the last two Octobers, finishing the regular season strong so that he goes into this year's playoffs throwing well and confident. And Tauchman, a two-way star in the second half as a fill-in starter, would be the Yanks' best outfield insurance in case Giancarlo Stanton doesn't return from a knee injury, which is no sure thing.

Tauchman doubled and hit a two-run homer in his first two at-bats, then came up hobbling badly in the bottom of the fourth after he charged in from left field to retrieve a two-out single by Red Sox second baseman Brock Holt.

The Yankees announced the injury as left calf tightness, but while that sounds like it could be a minor issue, it may not be because Tauchman is returning to New York on Monday to have tests done and be examined by team physician Dr. Christopher Ahmad.

Veteran outfielder Cameron Maybin, who has played very little over the last two weeks due to a mysterious wrist issue, replaced Tauchman in left and got his first two at-bats since Aug. 28. He looked good at the plate lining out to second and singling to center.

There were a lot of Yankees highlights, most notably three more homers to set a new single-season franchise record.

Homers by Gleyber Torres, Tauchman and Aaron Judge gave the Yankees' 268 for the season with 18 games to play. The Yanks set a major league record hitting 267 homers in 2018, but the 2019 Minnesota Twins are the new record-holder with 275 in 143 games through Sunday.

Also, reliever Chad Green (3-4) turned in his best outing of the season retiring nine in a row with five strikeouts after replacing Tanaka for the start of the Red Sox fifth.

Tanaka began his night with two scoreless innings, before serving up a two-run homer to Jackie Bradley Jr., in the third and allowing two more runs in the fourth on three hits. The Yanks were up 8-4 when Tanaka was removed after 73 pitches and finished an inning short of qualifying for a win.

Tanaka entered this start having fared well in four of his previous five outings, but he's pitched to a 6.39 ERA over his last 13 starts. For the season, he's 10-8 with a 4.53 ERA that is the second highest in his six big-league seasons.

NOTABLE

-- Retiring Yankees pitcher CC Sabathia, who is on the injured list with a knee injury, was honored by the Red Sox before his final game in Boston. He received a standing ovation after Red Sox pitcher David Price gave him two numbers from the Fenway Park scoreboard, a five and a two. Sabathia's uniform number is 52.

-- Sabathia will come off the IL on Wednesday and start that night in Detroit. Domingo German will pitch in relief in the same game to lighten his workload for a turn and prepare the 17-game winner for possible relief outings in the playoffs.

-- No. 1 starter Luis Severino will make a third rehab start before coming off the injured list and starting his season. He'll pitch in Trenton on Wednesday night when the Double-A Thunder host Bowie in Game 2 of the Eastern League championship series.

-- The three-time reigning AL East champion Red Sox officially will be eliminated from this year's division chase if they lose to the Yankees on Monday night.

-- Third baseman Gio Urshela was activated from the IL on Sunday and was inserted for defense for the final two innings. He grounded out to third in his only at-bat.

-- Catcher Kyle Higashioka and infielder Breyvic Valera were recalled from Triple-A the day after Scranton/Wilkes-Barre was eliminated from the International League playoffs.

-- Reliever Ben Heller, who had Tommy John surgery in April 2018, joined the Yankees in Boston on Sunday after a rehab assignment and will be activated from the injured list early this week. The Yanks opted to wait to add Heller to their active roster because he pitched two innings for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Saturday night and won't be available to pitch again until Tuesday or Wednesday.

Buy Gleyber Torres Yankees jersey: Fanatics.com, Dick's Sporting Goods, Champs Sports, MLB.com, Lids

LOOKING AHEAD

Monday: Yankees at Boston Red Sox, 7:10 p.m., YES & MLB Network. LHP James Paxton (12-6, 4.16) vs. LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (17-5, 3.81).

Tuesday: Yankees at Detroit Tigers, 6:40 p.m., YES. TBA vs. RHP Edwin Jackson (3-9, 9.16).

Wednesday: Yankees at Detroit Tigers, 6:40 p.m., YES. LHP CC Sabathia (5-8, 4.93) vs. LHP Matthew Boyd (8-10, 4.57).

Thursday: Yankees at Detroit Tigers, 1:10 p.m., YES & MLB Network. LHP J.A. Happ (12-8, 5.10) vs. RHP Spencer Turnbull (3-14, 4.68).

*** *Associated Press***

Torres, Tauchman, Judge homer, Yankees beat Boston 10-5

The Bronx Bombers have a new record for home runs and 18 games still to go.

Gleyber Torres, Mike Tauchman, Aaron Judge hit home runs as the New York Yankees broke the franchise record for homers in a season Sunday night in a 10-5 win over the Red Sox.

"Today was really good to see because I felt like we were heavy again," manager Aaron Boone said.

"When you play us, my goal is always when you're facing our offense, I want you to feel it. Today I felt like that was the case. I felt like we made it very difficult on them."

The Yankees have won two of three in the four-game series that wraps up Monday night. The slumping Red Sox announced after the game that they have parted ways with president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

"I just found out, so (I'm) surprised and shocked, obviously," manager Alex Cora said.

While the Boston clubhouse was almost silent following the loss and the stunning news of a major front office move, the Yankees' clubhouse was thumping with loud music and yet another victory celebration.

The Yankees won for the fourth time in five games and improved to 94-50, keeping pace with Houston for the top record in the majors. New York also moved a step closer to claiming the AL East with another victory over the rival Red Sox, whose string of three straight division titles is coming to an end.

The Yankees entered the game two homers shy of the club record of 267, set last year. Torres' two-run shot in the second was No. 266, Tauchman went deep with a man on in the fourth and Judge added the record-breaker by leading off the fifth with his 21st of the season.

"We hit into some hard outs today and gave ourselves a lot of opportunities," Boone said. "I thought the guys overall had a lot of great at-bats tonight."

Torres went 3 for 5 with four RBI. His 35th homer moved him one ahead of Gary Sanchez for the club lead.

TAUCHMAN OUT

The only low point for the Yankees on Sunday was losing Tauchman in the fourth inning when he came up limping while fielding a routine single. Tauchman left with tightness in his left calf.

"It felt like I got kicked, which would be weird because I was the only person in left field," Tauchman said.

Tauchman was scheduled to return to New York and be evaluated Monday, when his teammates will wrap up the four-game series at Boston.

"I'm not going to speculate until we get the test results back. So, we'll do that," Tauchman said. "I'm sure in the next 24 hours we'll have a little bit clearer picture, but whatever happens it's just, whatever the time frame is I'm just going to do my best to get back on the field."

HOME HEARTBREAK

Although it's already a given that Boston won't win the AL East again, one more win for the Yankees or another loss by the Red Sox will guarantee it. The Red Sox would like to avoid having that happen at Fenway Park, if possible.

Jackie Bradley Jr. and Mookie Betts homered for the Red Sox, who lost for the third time in four games. Boston fell eight games behind Oakland for the second AL wild-card spot with only 19 games remaining.

BUSY BULLPEN

Chad Green (3-4) pitched three perfect innings of relief for New York and got the victory. Rick Porcello (12-12) lasted just four innings for Boston, which used eight pitchers before it was finally over.

Porcello got the Yankees in order in the first, but the game unraveled quickly from there for the Red Sox. New York scored a pair of runs in each of the next four innings and the Red Sox never recovered.

After Bradley pulled Boston within 4-2 on a two-run homer in the third, Torres led off the fourth with a single and scored on Tauchman's homer to right.

Porcello allowed six runs on seven hits. Ryan Brasier took over in the fifth and Judge jumped on the second pitch he saw for a homer to left that put the Yankees up 7-4.

Masahiro Tanaka went four innings for the Yankees, allowing four runs on eight hits and striking out one. He was replaced in the fifth by Green, who struck out five and did not allow a baserunner in his three innings of work.

FRIENDLY FAREWELL

The Red Sox honored Yankees lefty CC Sabathia before the game with a No. 52 from Fenway Park's iconic left-field scoreboard. Sabathia, who is on the injured list with inflammation in his right knee, received a standing ovation from the Fenway fans and players from both clubs after Red Sox lefty David Price presented him with the green placard.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Yankees: RHP Luis Severino (right shoulder rotator cuff inflammation, lat injury) will make another rehab start for Double-A Trenton on Wednesday and probably return to the Yankees after that, manager Aaron Boone said. ... Sabathia will do some light throwing Monday and is scheduled to start Wednesday at Detroit. ... OF Aaron Hicks (right flexor strain) will get a second opinion Monday after having a setback in his rehab, Boone said. ... New York reinstated 3B Gio Urshela (left groin) and IF Thairo Estrada (right hamstring) from the injured list and recalled C Kyle Higashioka and IF Brevic Valera from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

Red Sox: Price (cyst left wrist) will not pitch when Boston visits Toronto for three games Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, manager Alex Cora said.

UP NEXT

Yankees LHP James Paxton (12-6, 4.16 ERA) faces LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (17-5, 3.81) for the Red Sox on Monday night in the finale of the four-game series.