

## ***The Boston Red Sox Friday, October 25, 2019***

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

#### **Red Sox' search for a new baseball ops leader focusing on Rays' Chaim Bloom**

Alex Speier

The Red Sox baseball operations department may be close to gaining new leadership.

According to multiple major league sources, Chaim Bloom, the vice president of baseball operations for the Tampa Bay Rays for the last three years, has interviewed with the Red Sox about joining their baseball operations department. Multiple industry officials characterized the Red Sox as having significant interest in Bloom, though it is not known what position (general manager, president of baseball operations, or another) the team has been discussing with him.

While it is unknown if the Red Sox already have extended a formal offer to Bloom to head their baseball operations department, multiple industry sources expect the team to do so.

If Bloom comes to the Red Sox, he will do so after making a significant mark on a Rays organization that earned widespread respect for emerging as a contender despite limited resources. While Bloom has technically worked under Rays GM Erik Neander in his current role, the lines of responsibility for the two were intentionally blurred to give both significant responsibility, with the two in near-constant communication about virtually every aspect of the organization.

Tampa Bay's ability to emerge as a surprise contender in 2018 and playoff team in 2019 — despite one of the lowest payrolls in the game — owed to success in several areas that will prove critical for the Red Sox as they move forward. The Rays' strong player development system yielded a steady supply of big league contributors in recent years — and it was in the farm system that Bloom in many ways cut his teeth while working under former Tampa Bay GM Andrew Friedman. Bloom was credited as the primary author of "The Rays Way," the team's player development manual, more than a decade ago.

The Rays also thrived in recent years thanks to a strong analytics department whose work was integrated well into game management as well as roster decisions. The team's use of information likewise helped guide Tampa Bay in a number of trades that, while requiring the team to make the painful decision to part with established stars, brought back young and inexpensive foundation pieces.

At a time when the Red Sox will have to make hard decisions about which core members will remain with the team as the organization tries to reduce payroll to reset its luxury-tax penalties, Bloom's work with the Rays carries intrigue in Boston.

Bloom, who graduated from Yale with a degree in classics, joined the Rays in 2005, hired as an intern by Friedman. He became steeped in the organizational culture, which emphasized creativity, thorough processes, extensive quality control and feedback, and cross-departmental collaboration. Those inside the Rays organization and around the game rave about Bloom's executive skills, as well as his personality as a respectful and respected leader.

The Red Sox have been overseen by a four-person interim leadership team of assistant GMs Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero, and Zack Scott, and senior vice president Raquel Ferreira, since president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski was fired on Sept. 8. While principal owner John Henry initially suggested that the team wanted to talk to candidates with prior GM experience — most likely in current roles with other clubs — Bloom was long viewed around the industry as a star.

News of Bloom's interview with the Red Sox was first reported by Chad Jennings and Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic.

#### **Four Red Sox named Gold Glove finalists**

Julian McWilliams

Red Sox outfielders Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr., and Andrew Benintendi along with catcher Christian Vazquez were named Rawlings Gold Glove finalists.

Betts, a three-time Gold Glove winner in right field, led American League outfielders with 15 defensive runs saved. His 12.6 Ultimate Zone Rating was second in the AL. The Astros' Josh Reddick and the Angels' Kole Calhoun are the other finalists in right. However, Betts's numbers in addition to his range in right field at Fenway Park make it hard to imagine him losing out on this award.

While the dimensions in Fenway help Betts, Bradley's metrics take a hit in center field. Many balls that are playable in other ballparks result in extra-base hits at Fenway. As a result, Bradley can't exhibit his range to the degree of, say, Mike Trout at Angels Stadium or Kevin Kiermaier at Tropicana Field — the other two finalists. It's part of the reason why the award eluded Bradley until 2018.

Bradley posted a minus-1.2 UZR and minus-1 DRS in 2019, but, again, those numbers don't reflect what he can do in center. He has one of the best outfield arms — if not the best — in all of baseball and above-average range.

Bradley has a knack for turning his back on a ball hit over his head, running directly to a spot where he knows the ball will be, and catching it. Tough to do, considering he has to take his eye off the ball for a period of time.

If Bradley is traded this offseason, you can bet the metrics in any other ballpark will help support the eye test that has him rated as the top center fielder in most baseball circles.

Vazquez had a breakout season at the plate but his work behind it actually took a step back. He would often try to backhand balls that he could have gotten his body in front of to block.

Still, Vazquez showed at times why he's elite at his position, throwing out runners at a 38 percent clip. The Blue Jays' Danny Jansen and the Indians' Roberto Perez are the two other AL finalists at the position.

The most interesting choice might be Benintendi, who certainly had a down year in left field. Benintendi didn't exhibit that same burst he did last season, particularly on balls he came in on. While he posted a 1.7 UZR, Benintendi had a minus-3 DRS. He will be up against the A's Robbie Grossman and the Royals' Alex Gordon.

Winners will be announced Nov. 3.

#### **Red Sox narrow search for pitching coach to five**

Alex Speier

The Red Sox are in the final stages of selecting a pitching coach, and according to a major league source, they have interviewed five candidates.

The only known candidate is former Reds manager and Reds, Diamondbacks, and Mariners pitching coach Bryan Price. He is the only person with experience as a big league pitching coach to interview for the position.

The Red Sox have interviewed both internal and external candidates, exploring the possibility of plucking a pitching coach from college baseball. Derek Johnson, now with the Reds, was hired from Vanderbilt by the Brewers after the 2015 season and the Twins hired Wes Johnson from Arkansas last winter.

Once the Sox hire a pitching coach, they likely will have additional pitching positions to fill. They may hire an assistant pitching coach, and if they promote someone from the minor league system for that, they would have to hire a replacement for him.

After the 2019 season, the Red Sox reassigned pitching coach Dana LeVangie to the pro scouting staff while announcing that Brian Bannister, who'd served as assistant pitching coach in addition to vice president of pitching development, will focus on helping pitchers in the minors.

The restructuring came after a season in which they had a 4.70 team ERA, 19th in the majors, dealing with both injuries and disappointing performances, particularly in the starting rotation.

Gold Glove finalists

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**Bill James is leaving his position as a Red Sox adviser**

Alex Speier

Almost 17 years after he went from an iconoclastic outsider to a Red Sox insider and immediately became a symbol of a new direction for an organization in a multi-generational championship drought, Bill James announced on his website Thursday he is ending his tenure with the club.

“The time has come for me to end my 17-year working relationship with the Red Sox,” wrote James, 70. “I leave the Red Sox on the best possible terms.”

The Red Sox hired James — widely identified as the father of sabermetrics — as a senior baseball operations adviser in November 2002, the first offseason for the ownership group of principal owner (and current Globe owner) John Henry, chairman Tom Werner, and president/CEO Larry Lucchino.

James’s independent work as the author of “The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract” from 1977-87 was considered revolutionary. His willingness to challenge longstanding axioms with statistical data helped lay the groundwork for a profound transformation in the game, and it informed the perspective of numerous executives, including Henry and then-Red Sox assistant general manager Theo Epstein.

At a time when they were searching for a general manager, the Red Sox viewed the hiring of James as a chance to bring in someone willing to challenge both conventional wisdom and the front-office echo chamber in a way that would yield better decisions. At his introduction, James described his role as complementary rather than that of a decision-maker.

“I will be trying to help the Red Sox think in organized ways and help the Red Sox make good decisions,” James said at the time. “I hope to be involved in all talent decisions where there is an opening for me to contribute. But I’m not going to tell the manager how to do his job.”

When he was hired, James prepared a brief report on every available free agent in the game, one that also took stock of trends and directions in the game.

Current assistant GM Zack Scott, who joined the Red Sox front office in 2004, recalled that James used to submit quarterly reports with analysis that informed but did not direct the activities of the team.

“For me, his value to us was always as a voice outside of the room,” said Scott. “We’re almost too close to things at times. He could view the entirety and give us feedback, talk through systems, have different ways to think about player development or scouting, have higher-level thoughts that we could vet out and see if there was anything we wanted to pull from that and try to implement.”

Often, his perceived role vastly outstripped his actual one.

Early in his career, he was cast in some quarters (hi, Dan!) as a Lawrence, Kan.-based, almighty Oz, dictating lineups via fax or serving as a Pied Piper who led the team down the road of a closer-by-committee strategy.

Such portrayals mischaracterized both his role and James himself.

James was less interested in pretending to have answers than in being able to help frame new questions that might lead him or his colleagues toward less uncertainty — while also acknowledging that some uncertainty was an inevitable, unavoidable, and beautiful part of all aspects of inquiry.

“When we learn one thing, it just opens up another six avenues, of inquiry, of questions that we didn’t understand before,” James said a few years ago. “You never approach infinite knowledge. It’s just not the nature of the world.”

Still, the willingness to question came with multiple controversies for both James and the Red Sox. In 2012, he suggested that Penn State coach Joe Paterno’s role in covering up for Jerry Sandusky’s sexual abuses may have been exaggerated, remarks that resulted in the Red Sox requesting that James stop

addressing the matter publicly. And last winter, James made remarks on Twitter viewed as denigrating to the role of players in the game.

“Players are NOT the game, any more than the beer vendors are,” he wrote in a series of tweets, resulting in widespread criticism from players and the MLB Players Association as well as a statement by the Sox that James was “a consultant to the Red Sox. He is not an employee, nor does he speak for the club.”

For a time early in his tenure, while his wife, Susan McCarthy, attended graduate school in the area, James lived in the Boston area and made regular appearances in the front office. But for most of his tenure, he remained in Lawrence, occasionally connecting in person with the team in spring training and during the season.

James’s defined role changed on multiple occasions. At one point during Ben Cherington’s tenure as GM, James was named an adviser to Henry rather than to baseball operations. His working relationship subsequently returned to that of the baseball operations department, but his role and contributions in recent years had diminished.

In this year’s media guide, his title shifted from that of senior adviser to baseball operations to “baseball consultant.”

Though he remained on good terms with members of the Sox front office and visited Fenway Park in recent days to express appreciation for his tenure, James acknowledged his eroding role in his announcement.

“I was very fortunate to work in and around Fenway for a couple of decades, but my time has come,” James wrote. “I’m 70 years old, maximum take-your-Social-Security-dammit age, and to be honest, I haven’t earned my paycheck with the Red Sox for the last couple of years. I’ve fallen out of step with the organization. The normal flow of work assignments to work products has deteriorated to basically nothing; honestly, I should have left a couple of years ago.”

In some ways, the reduced role for James represented the enormous impact he’d already made. The areas of inquiry for analytics and the tools of that area both have changed enormously since the Red Sox hired James, with data coming in increasingly precise forms that would have been inconceivable when James started. His entry into an official front office role served as a harbinger of a wave of mathematicians, scientists, and economists working in the game.

“He never claimed to be a data scientist,” said Scott. “The way the game has changed analytically, it’s a lot more advanced with methodologies and technologies.

“I think he’d be the first one to tell you that he has no desire to try to do the things that these guys are doing now with the type of data we’re dealing with. He’d rather have people that are better than that do that.

“The richer the data became, the more high-level his role became. He was thinking about things and systems [in recent years].”

Now, he once again will do so on his own terms.

James clarified that he is not retiring. He still plans to write books and publish on his website while navigating through “500 work projects” — just not as a member of the Red Sox organization.

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

### **Rays’ Chaim Bloom in Red Sox GM conversation**

Jason Mastrodonato

The search for the next Red Sox general manager (or president of baseball operations, if that's the title they choose to give) seems to be gaining steam.

The Herald has confirmed that the Sox have interviewed Tampa Bay Rays senior vice president of baseball operations Chaim Bloom, a 36-year-old who has been with the Rays since he graduated from Yale University in 2004.

Late Thursday night, multiple outlets were reporting that Bloom is emerging as a strong candidate.

Privately, members of the Red Sox front office did not respond to requests for comment and have been undergoing the search as quietly as possible. There are also league rules that restrict teams from making notable moves during the World Series.

Sox owner John Henry said in late September that he expected to look outside the organization to hire a replacement for Dave Dombrowski, who was fired in August.

Henry said at the time that he preferred someone with experience as a GM.

"This is a tough job, this is a tough offseason, too," Henry said then. "We talked about the challenge of (getting under the \$208-million luxury tax threshold), but I think you would all agree this is a challenging offseason. To put one of the (internal) candidates in charge and responsible for that, that's sort of a tough way to start your career as a general manager. So we are starting the search looking outward."

Bloom was considered the runner-up to be the general manager of the New York Mets last offseason, when the Mets eventually made an unorthodox hire in former player-agent Brodie Van Wagenen.

His in-laws live in the Boston suburbs, according to a feature on Bloom written in Tablet Magazine.

"It's easy to stereotype Chaim," Rays GM Erik Neander told the magazine for the story, "because of his age and his Ivy League education, as one of those people," referring to the analytical executives that have begun to take over front offices, "but Chaim is the furthest thing from them. He has deep respect for the game and knowledge of its history."

Bloom started with the Rays as an intern after studying at Yale and has been part of an organization that's been a trailblazer in Major League Baseball.

The Rays operated with a 2019 payroll of \$60 million, lowest in the majors, but won 96 games and made it to the American League Division Series, where they lost to the Astros in the fifth game of a best-of-five.

The Rays have never operated with a payroll above \$76 million but have made the playoffs in five of the last 12 years, winning 90 games or more in seven of those years, despite being heavily out-spent by their A.L. East competitors.

Perhaps more importantly, they've traditionally been so good at what the Red Sox have done so poorly, which is developing homegrown starting pitchers.

The Rays also invented the opener, a starting pitcher who only pitches for an inning or two before turning it over to the bullpen, a trend that other teams have begun to follow.

Asked why he's stayed with the organization for a feature story in The Athletic earlier this year, Bloom said, "This organization is a really, really special place. I'm not even talking about the success we've been fortunate to have early this season and last year. But the people we have throughout the organization. It extends past the product on the field. There's a lot of work that goes into it all, and I'm genuinely happy.

“We have 200-plus full-time employees with baseball operations, and to a person, they are very special people. It is really a family environment. There’s a lot of trust here, and we really try to have each other’s backs. It’s a great feeling to come to work every day and try to build something special.”

### **Red Sox Gold Glove finalists: Jackie Bradley Jr. could win second straight**

Jason Mastrodonato

After waiting six years to win his first Gold Glove Award, Red Sox center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. is a finalist to win his second straight.

Bradley, who first won the award in 2018 after what he called the worst defensive season of his career, was named one of three finalists in the American League when Rawlings announced the news on Thursday.

The Angels’ Mike Trout and the Rays’ Kevin Kiermaier are the other two finalists, and both performed better than Bradley by the numbers. Though defensive statistics are still considered to be flawed and often unreliable, FanGraphs ranked Bradley eighth out of 10 qualified center fielders for his defensive work in 2019. Kiermaier was third and Trout was seventh.

But notably more important is that Bradley ranked 13 out of 14 in A.L. center fielders in the SABR Defensive Index (SDI), which counts for 25 percent of final Gold Glove rankings, with the other 75 percent coming from a vote by opposing coaches in the league. The latest SDI rankings are as of Aug. 18.

Other Red Sox finalists for a Gold Glove in 2019 are Mookie Betts, who has won three straight Gold Gloves in right field and once again led the league in SDI, Andrew Benintendi, who has never won but was also a finalist in left field last year, and Christian Vazquez, who has never won.

For the second straight year, the entire Red Sox outfield were named finalists. Winners will be announced Nov. 3.

Betts seems like a shoe-in for his fourth straight, but Benintendi and Vazquez are a bit surprising to see on the list of finalists given their up-and-down seasons on defense.

Benintendi, who ranked eighth out of 10 left fielders in SDI, wasn’t particularly impressive. He too often bobbled the ball while fielding routine plays and took some questionable routes, but he’s clearly grown quite comfortable playing the ball off the Green Monster. He finished tied for third among all MLB left fielders with seven assists.

Vazquez did have another strong year throwing out base-stealers (38 percent caught stealing), but struggled most of the year to block pitches behind the plate, something manager Alex Cora noted on several occasions. He ranked sixth out of 13 catchers in SDI.

Perhaps surprisingly, Xander Bogaerts was not a finalist for his work at shortstop, where he’s grown incredibly reliable but ranked dead last among A.L. shortstops in SDI.

### **Bill James departs Red Sox after falling ‘out of step’ with team**

Jason Mastrodonato

The Red Sox front office will no longer be using the consulting services of a long-tenured senior adviser.

Bill James, often referred to as the godfather of analytics, announced Thursday that he was leaving the organization after 17 years.

James, originally hired shortly after John Henry finalized his purchase of the team in 2002, wrote on his website that he no longer felt useful to the Red Sox and was ready to do something new.

“I was very fortunate to work in and around Fenway for a couple of decades, but my time has come,” he wrote. “I’m 70 years old, maximum take-your-Social-Security-dammit age, and, to be honest, I haven’t earned my paycheck with the Red Sox for the last couple of years.

“I’ve fallen out of step with the organization. The normal flow of work assignments to work products has deteriorated to basically nothing; honestly, I should have left a couple of years ago.”

James began his career as a baseball writer in 1975 and grew to fame via a Sports Illustrated article in 1981. He is often credited for incorporating sabermetrics into the game and has written more than 30 books during his career.

But he had been growing more distant to the Red Sox in recent years, most notably last November, when the team had to publicly release a statement separating their ideas from his.

James, no stranger to sharing controversial opinions, had used his Twitter account to theorize that there’s no such thing as an underpaid player.

“If the players all retired tomorrow, we would replace them, the game would go on; in three years it would make no difference whatsoever,” he wrote in a since-deleted tweet. “The players are NOT the game, any more than the beer vendors are.”

The MLB Players Association quickly slapped James on the wrist for sparking a conversation that can be sensitive given the players strike in 1994.

The Red Sox, too, had a problem with his statements.

“Bill James is a consultant to the Red Sox,” the team wrote. “He is not an employee, nor does he speak for the club. His comments on Twitter were inappropriate and do not reflect the opinions of the Red Sox front office or its ownership group. Our Championships would not have been possible without our incredibly talented players — they are the backbone of our franchise and our industry. To insinuate otherwise is absurd.”

James later apologized in an email to the Herald.

“I understand that the Red Sox are not in business to offend people, and certainly regret that I gave offense to anyone,” he wrote. “I’m not offended. None of us in the organization — or, like me, sort of attached to the organization although not exactly in the organization — none of us should give offense unnecessarily. If I did that — and obviously I must have — it isn’t their fault; it’s mine.

“I do think that my remarks, taken in context, could not be misunderstood in the way that they have been. But it is pathetic for a writer to say ‘I’ve been misunderstood.’ Our job is to make ourselves understood.”

Thursday, James thanked the Red Sox for his time with the organization and said he plans on continuing releasing his annual handbook, which he’s written and sold in some form since the ‘80s.

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

### **Who is Chaim Bloom? Likely new Red Sox GM is 36-year-old Rays VP with player development experience**

Chris Cotillo

There’s finally a favorite in the Red Sox’ search for their new head of baseball operations, and it’s Rays senior vice president of baseball operations Chaim Bloom. Bloom, who reportedly interviewed with Boston



recently, has emerged as a serious candidate and seems like the likely replacement for former president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

So who is Bloom? He's a 36-year-old Yale graduate who cut his teeth with the Padres and has worked in various capacities for the Rays since joining the organization in Feb. 2005. The Philadelphia native began working in player development for the Rays as their assistant director of minor league operations in 2008 and is credited with developing "The Rays Way," a player development plan that has shaped how Tampa Bay has worked with prospects throughout the last decade.

Bloom has worn a variety of hats in the Tampa Bay organization, working as an intern and full-time employee (2008), assistant director of minor league operations (2008-2011), director of baseball operations (2011-2014) and vice president of baseball operations (2014-2016) before being promoted to his current role in Nov. 2016. Though he is technically second-in-command behind general manager Erik Neander, the Rays have employed a dual-headed monster in their baseball operations decision-making and Bloom has had a large amount of power in the last three seasons.

Bloom drew interest from both the Mets and Giants for their open GM jobs a year ago, with New York reportedly considering him a finalist before hiring agent Brodie Van Wagenen and San Francisco showing interest before poaching Farhan Zaidi from the Dodgers. As ESPN's Jeff Passan tweeted earlier Thursday night, Bloom is considered one of the top executives in all of baseball who has not yet gotten a chance to run his own baseball operations department.

The plusses in Bloom's resume are clear: his player development background and experience with Tampa Bay's low payroll will be very beneficial for a Red Sox team that is focusing on churning out homegrown talent -- especially on the pitching side -- and cutting payroll in the next calendar year. The Rays operated with a payroll of less than \$70 million, winning 96 games and pushing the pennant-winning Astros to Game 5 of the ALDS with less than a third of the financial capital of the 84-win Red Sox.

Bloom has a bit of an unorthodox educational background, as his degree from Yale came in classics (Latin) before he began working as an intern with the Padres and Major League Baseball. He discussed all of that and more in a wide-ranging podcast interview with MLB.com's Mark Feinsand last September.

It's unclear if the Red Sox plan to install Bloom as their president of baseball operations or general manager, but it does appear likely he'll be joining the organization in some capacity.

### **J.D. Martinez's opt-out: Examining Red Sox slugger's process, draft-pick compensation if he leaves**

Christopher Smith

J.D. Martinez can opt out of his contract's remaining three years, \$62.5 million once the World Series ends.

He's contracted to earn \$23.750 million in 2020, \$19.350 million in 2021 and \$19.350 million in 2022. If he doesn't opt out this year, he also could opt out after the 2020 season or following 2021.

With the 2019 season nearing an end — the Nationals lead the Astros 2-0 in the World Series — let's take a look at Martinez's opt-out and potential free agency process:

~ The 32-year-old slugger has five days after the World Series ends to give the Red Sox an answer about whether he plans to opt out.

~ If he opts out, he not only becomes a free agent with a chance to earn more money. He'll also receive a \$2.5 million buyout.

Yes, the Red Sox must give him \$2.5 million.

~ The Red Sox obviously can try to re-sign him. He can become a free agent as early as 9 a.m. the day after the World Series ends. Teams have a five-day quiet period in which they have exclusive negotiating rights with their own free agents.

Still, any team is able to talk with any free agent about interest level. But the Red Sox would have exclusive negotiation rights for five days.

That window closes at 5 p.m. eastern on the fifth day after the final day of the World Series (the day when the final game begins).

~ The Red Sox can extend Martinez a qualifying offer if he opt outs. Boston must extend him the qualifying offer by 5 p.m. on the final day of the quiet period.

“A Qualified Free Agent may accept a Qualifying Offer until the tenth day following the conclusion of the Quiet Period,” per the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

~ Of course, Martinez would not accept the one-year, \$17.8 million qualifying offer. But by extending him one, the Red Sox would receive a compensation draft after the fourth round of the 2020 June Draft if Martinez signed with another club.

It's following the fourth round — and not following the first round — because the Red Sox were a Competitive Balance Tax Payor in 2019. Their payroll exceeded the \$206 million Competitive Balance Tax threshold in 2019. Boston's payroll ended up near \$240 million.

The Red Sox wouldn't receive draft-pick compensation if Martinez signed with another club after the 2020 June Draft. That's what happened with Craig Kimbrel.

### **Red Sox GM search: Rays VP Chaim Bloom frontrunner to become Boston's new top executive (reports)**

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox interviewed Rays senior VP of baseball operations Chaim Bloom and consider him a “serious candidate” for their vacant head of baseball operations job, according to reports from The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal and Chad Jennings and ESPN's Jeff Passan.

MLB.com's Mark Feinsand adds that Bloom is the frontrunner to take over Boston's baseball operations department. An announcement is not expected Friday but could come next week if a deal is finalized, according to major-league sources, with Bloom seeming all but certain to take over for former president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

Bloom, 36, has worked for the Rays for 15 seasons and has formed a two-headed monster alongside general manager Erik Neander at the top of Tampa Bay's baseball operations group for the last three years. The Yale graduate was promoted to his current senior VP title in Nov. 2016 and drew strong interest from both the Mets and Giants for their vacant GM positions last winter.

Bloom has experience building a farm system, having served as the Rays' assistant director of minor league operations from 2008 to 2011. He worked as an intern for the Padres and Major League Baseball before joining the Rays in 2005.

Since firing Dave Dombrowski on Sept. 9, the Red Sox have kept their search process remarkably quiet. Bloom is the first candidate confirmed to have interviewed with the club after other perceived top choices like Theo Epstein (Cubs), Mike Hazen (Diamondbacks), Derek Falvey (Twins) and Andrew Friedman (Dodgers) remained with their current employers.

The Red Sox have had four executives -- assistant GMs Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott and senior VP Raquel Ferreira -- running baseball operations on an interim basis since Dombrowski was fired. All four of them are expected to remain with the organization if someone from the outside is hired.

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

### **Source: Bloom is 'frontrunner' to be Red Sox GM**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The prolonged search by the Red Sox to find a new leader of the front office has gained considerable steam. A source told MLB.com's Mark Feinsand that Rays vice president of baseball operations Chaim Bloom has emerged as the front-runner to replace Dave Dombrowski, who was dismissed by Boston on Sept. 8.

The Athletic reported that Bloom has already interviewed for the position.

The Red Sox had no announcement or update regarding the search for a new general manager.

The 36-year-old Bloom would be a significant get for the Red Sox, who have been looking for a creative and dynamic mind to build a championship-caliber team while also cutting some payroll and rebuilding the farm system.

In discussing the state of the club in a news briefing on Sept. 27, Red Sox owner John Henry and chairman Tom Werner expressed admiration for clubs like the Rays and Athletics, who were able to make it to the postseason with a payroll that was a fraction of the roughly \$240 million that Boston spent during a disappointing 2019 season (84-78 record, no playoffs).

It isn't that the Red Sox want to suddenly operate like a small-market team. But Henry made it clear that he wants the club to get below the first luxury-tax threshold of \$208 million for the 2020 season.

Red Sox president Sam Kennedy recently acknowledged there is a way the club could keep star players J.D. Martinez and Mookie Betts in '20, but it would be "difficult" to have a roster with both. Martinez has until five days after the World Series to opt out of his contract. Betts is eligible for free agency following the '20 season.

In other words, whether it is Bloom or someone else, the next leader of Boston's front office is going to have some big decisions to make.

Assistant general managers Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott have been running the front office along with senior vice president Raquel Ferreira in the interim. While the Red Sox have praised that quartet numerous times, Henry made it clear that the next leader of the front office should be someone who has experience leading a baseball operations department.

In recent weeks, several perceived candidates had come off the board. Mike Hazen, a long-time executive for the Red Sox, signed an extension with the D-backs. Theo Epstein said late in the regular season that he had a busy offseason ahead for the Cubs and added there was nothing to the story that he would entertain a reunion with the Red Sox. Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman had a contract that was set to expire, but he is staying with Los Angeles.

If the Red Sox can secure the services of Bloom, they would get someone who worked under Friedman for years with the Rays.

Bloom has been running Tampa Bay's front office alongside general manager Erik Neander. With the Red Sox, he would likely be the lead decision-maker on all personnel moves.

Bloom has an analytics background and was a voice in Tampa Bay's revolutionary move to go with openers. Bloom is also known to be strong in helping to construct a farm system.

Promoted to VP of baseball operations by the Rays in 2016, Bloom has been with the club since '05, when he was hired as an intern.

Bloom interviewed for the Mets general manager opening last winter prior to New York's hiring of Brodie Van Wagenen and has also interviewed with the Twins and Phillies in recent years.

Under Dombrowski, the Red Sox won three consecutive American League East titles, including the World Series championship season in 2018.

Henry said recently that Dombrowski's vision of the team going forward differed from that of ownership, and the owner could sense a disconnect almost immediately following the World Series clincher last year in Los Angeles.

### **After breakout season, Devers aims even higher**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- You had a feeling that 2019 would be a breakout season for Rafael Devers. But nobody could have predicted Devers was going to go off to the degree that he did.

The left-handed slugger had one of the best seasons in history for a 22-year-old.

Consider the following: Devers became just the 10th player to hit .300 with 30-plus homers, 100-plus RBIs and 100-plus runs scored in a season before turning 23. Ted Williams, Jimmie Fox, Alex Rodriguez and Albert Pujols each did it twice. Devers is the first to accomplish the feat since Miguel Cabrera in 2005.

The exciting thing is that Devers is still evolving, and the Red Sox likely haven't seen what he is fully capable of just yet.

"I want to improve on everything," said Devers. "Just because I had a good season this year doesn't mean there aren't things I can't improve from defense to offense. I just want to improve everything going into next season."

What went right?

Quite a bit. Devers was a machine at the plate, hitting for average (.311), power (32 homers) and all those doubles (54).

"Overall, offensively, I feel like I'm proud of everything I've been able to do," said Devers. "I give a lot of credit to Xander [Bogaerts], who has helped me a lot with my preparation and just everything he's been able to help me with. Just, offensively, I had a really good season and I think I was able to have an overall season that I'm really proud of."

It was on defense where Devers made his best improvement. He became a liability at times last year, all too frequently making routine errors. After a tough first month in 2019, Devers cleaned it up the rest of the way and excelled in the field. Coaches Carlos Febles and Ramón Vázquez spent a lot of time working with Devers on his defense.

"It just all comes down to the experience [on] defense," Devers said. "I know there were some errors I was making last year where I was just like, 'Man, how did I make that?' This season, I know I've improved. Obviously I've made some errors here and there. But I've just continued to learn on how to improve."

What went wrong?

Devers isn't disciplined at the plate on a consistent enough basis. Manager Alex Cora constantly talks about controlling the strike zone. When Devers isn't able to do that, he gets exposed.

For Devers to reach the level of Nationals star phenom Juan Soto, he needs to swing at his pitch, not the one at which the pitcher wants him to swing. Devers had 119 strikeouts and just 48 walks in 702 plate appearances.

Best moment

There were many great days from Devers in 2019, but it's easy to find the one that tops the list. On Aug. 13, Devers went 6-for-6 with four doubles to help fuel the Red Sox to a 7-6 win over the Indians in 10 innings. The performance was historic, as Devers became the first player to record six or more hits and four or more doubles in the same game.

2020 outlook

If J.D. Martinez opts out of his contract and leaves the Red Sox, the importance of Devers as a run producer will grow. The Sox need Devers to be a force in the middle of the batting order -- and not just in 2020, but for the next several seasons. If he can take the next step and improve his ability to control the strike zone, Devers should become an American League All-Star for the first time.

### **James exits as Red Sox consultant**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Bill James, widely considered to be the pioneer of advanced baseball statistics, announced on Thursday that he is ending his 17-year run with the Red Sox.

James, who had been in the role of baseball consultant, explained his decision to depart in an essay on his website, [billjamesonline.com](http://billjamesonline.com).

"I leave the Red Sox on the best possible terms. I am still friendly with everyone that I have worked with there, from the owners to the security guards," wrote James, who added that he would continue to watch most Red Sox games on television.

"Well, maybe not EVERY game; retirement means I don't have to stay up to watch them play a four-hour game in Seattle ending at 1:30. In exchange for that, next time we win the World Series, I won't get a ring."

James leaves the Red Sox with four rings (2004, '07, '13 and '18) accumulated during the club's 21st century renaissance. The stats maven, who authored countless baseball books over the last several decades, turned 70 earlier this month.

"A 17-year run is a long run," James said. "I mean, I did the Baseball Abstract for 11 years, and it still defines my career 30-some years later. You look at all of the people who are moving to the sidelines in baseball -- Bruce Bochy, and Ned Yost -- I'm not only older than any of them, I'm much older than any of them."

In a candid admission, James said that he didn't do a whole lot to help the Red Sox over the last couple of years.

"I was very fortunate to work in and around Fenway for a couple of decades, but my time has come," James said. "I'm 70 years old, maximum take-your-Social-Security-dammit age, and, to be honest, I haven't earned my paycheck with the Red Sox for the last couple of years. I've fallen out of step with the

organization. The normal flow of work assignments to work products has deteriorated to basically nothing; honestly, I should have left a couple of years ago.”

However, James, who lives in Kansas, made it clear he is not retiring.

“I’m not "retiring"; I’m just retiring from the Red Sox, and I’ll start collecting Social Security, but I still have about 500 work projects that will go forward,” James said. “I have two books written that I need to get published; I have more books that I am writing and more books that I want to write.

“The annual Handbook will be out in a week or so. I have a TV project in the works; I have big dreams. I’m going to get a dog, and a bicycle, and my wife and I will travel, as we always have.

“I’m only 70; I haven’t quite decided whether I want to be remembered as a poet or a playwright or a mystery writer. I will continue to post articles here; in some ways my time will be more available now than it has been. I appreciate you all reading my work, and to the Red Sox: it’s been a blast. Thank you all.”

## **\* *WEET.com***

### **Chaim Bloom may be emerging as favorite for Red Sox GM job**

Rob Bradford

The Red Sox may be on the verge of finding Dave Dombrowski's replacement.

The Sox have interviewed Rays Vice-President of Baseball Operations Chaim Bloom for the job of their next chief decision-maker when it comes to baseball matters. The 36-year-old has been working hand in hand with Tampa Bay GM Erik Neander to oversee all functions of baseball operations for the Rays since 2016.

Bloom has been with the Rays for 15 years, taking the role of Director of Baseball Operations in 2011 before moving up to one of the top spots in the Tampa Bay front office when then-President of Baseball Operations Andrew Friedman moved on to the Dodgers in 2014.

Bloom was the runner-up for the Mets' general manager position last offseason, having also been considered previously by the Giants.

A Philadelphia native Bloom graduated from Yale University in 2004 with a degree in classics (Latin).

### **Why Red Sox may be targeting Rays exec Chaim Bloom**

Rob Bradford

The conversation with a baseball executive took place in the final days of the 2019 season, with all attention shifted away from what was happening on the field and toward the idea of who might replace Dave Dombrowski.

Some candidates' names were surfaced, with the exec bringing up Tampa Bay decision-makers Chaim Bloom and Erik Neander.

"Those guys," he said, "just don't care about what people think."

And it is that analysis that should be remembered as the Red Sox are seemingly on the precipice of reeling in Bloom.

There is a long list of reasons why the 36-year-old is a logical fit for the Red Sox job. (And the fact he majored in the classics at Yale really isn't one of them.) Bloom has experienced a wide array of responsibilities with an organization that has figured out how to do a lot with little. He learned under the guidance of Andrew Friedman, who was universally identified as the perfect guy for this position before re-upping with the Dodgers. And when it comes to baseball's constant quest of getting out ahead of the curve, the Philadelphia native has been part of the group that everyone seems to be chasing.

But it is the trait brought up in the waning days of the Red Sox' seasons which jumps to the top of the list in this situation.

Red Sox principal owner John Henry put a specific decision-making process in place when he hired Dombrowski. There was going to be no room for interpretation when it came to who made the call on baseball decisions, leaving the confusing power structure involving Ben Cherington/Larry Lucchino/Henry and Tom Werner behind. That worked well until it didn't.

Henry clearly didn't agree with Dombrowski's approach toward building the 2019 roster and beyond, a notion that first surfaced when speaking to WEEI.com in London on the final day of June.

"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," he 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."

It was a notion that was confirmed when the Sox owner told the media just days before the end of the regular season that he and Dombrowski had immediate disagreements on how to proceed into 2019. Still, Henry seemingly always defaulted to Dombrowski's judgement.

This has left the Red Sox with a boatload of even more difficult decisions, many which are going to lead to the kind of discomfort not signing World Series hero Nathan Eovaldi or re-upping Chris Sale would have elicited from some a year ago.

The Rays just do things and don't look back. Henry and Co. know that approach will be a huge necessity this time around. Maybe more so than ever before.

Listening to Bloom on MLB.com's excellent podcast "Executive Access" with Mark Feinsand, one would never surmise this was the kind of executive we are talking about. He talks about the difficulty that comes with informing players they are no longer in the team's plans, admitting that human interactions actually do take place between the athletes and executives. Bloom also identifies the ability to build relationships as one of the key elements in building success.

"I would say, and I hope other people would say about me, is that I care about people," Bloom said when asked what he believed were some of his biggest strengths. "I listen to them and I'm thoughtful and I also have a degree of humility of what I don't know."

This doesn't scream someone with the kind of impersonal mentality so many execs like Bloom are being labeled as.

But that doesn't mean the Rays' approach was remotely based in the kind of sentimentality that gets organizations in trouble. For evidence just remember when they traded their cornerstone superstar Evan Longoria to San Francisco. That is just one of many examples. In fact, besides the analytics and forward-thinking model put in place, one of the Tampa Bay front office's biggest resume-builders has been its ability to get out ahead of bad contracts just in time to rebuild a competitive team with the majors' lowest payroll.

There are plenty of other examples ...

Sure, Bloom and his co-workers with the Rays always had a safety net built of apathy, low expectations and no money. None of those exist in Boston. And there can't always be an apples-to-apples approach when bringing over everything from Tampa Bay.

There will be, however, the need to make some unpopular decisions that are rooted in a vision few others can see. That happened with the Rays and it's about to take place in the coming months with the Red Sox. It worked out for one, not we're about to find out how it might translate to Jersey St.

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

### **Here's why Chaim Bloom has emerged as frontrunner in Red Sox GM search**

John Tomase

It looks like the Red Sox general manager's search may start and end with the same man: Chaim Bloom.

According to multiple sources, the Red Sox have interviewed Tampa Bay's vice president of baseball operations, and he is described as not only the leading candidate for the job, but effectively the only candidate. The widely respected Bloom is considered a rising star who checks most boxes for a Red Sox ownership group seeking more dynamic leadership after firing president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski in September.

Bloom, 36, is a Yale graduate who has spent the past 15 seasons in Tampa, first in player development, and for the past three, working alongside general manager Erik Neander in a power-sharing arrangement that has delivered exceptional results. Since 2016, the Rays have improved their win totals from 68 to 80 to 90 and finally 96 this year, when they took the Astros to Game 5 of the Division Series.

J.D. Martinez-to-Yankees would be a nightmare scenario for Red Sox

Tampa has emerged as one of the game's most innovative franchises despite a bottom-five payroll, pioneering the concept of the opener, integrating analytics into everything from roster composition to lineup structure, and proving for more than a decade that it knows how to develop starting pitchers.

If Bloom is the guy, each of those skills will be put to use in Boston, which faces its most consequential offseason since another Yale grad, Theo Epstein, arrived in November of 2002.

The Red Sox are expected to trim their payroll from more than \$240 million to no higher than \$208 million in order to reset their luxury tax penalties. That could necessitate watching J.D. Martinez depart in free agency and possibly even trading defending MVP Mookie Betts.

The Rays were no strangers to star churn in Bloom's tenure, constantly flipping standouts for younger, cheaper replacements. Most recently, they shipped former ace Chris Archer to the Pirates for a pair of underachieving prospects whom they ended up unlocking. Right-hander Tyler Glasnow raced to a 6-1 start before suffering an arm injury, while outfielder Austin Meadows was named an All-Star en route to 33 homers.

Archer himself had previously been acquired for one-time ace Matt Garza, while the Rays also developed Cy Young Award winners David Price and Blake Snell, All-Star left-hander Matt Moore, Rookie of the Year Jeremy Hellickson, and double-digit winners like Alex Cobb and Jake Odorizzi, just to name a few.

**MORE TOMASE:** Sox starters are an albatross

Bloom is considered proficient in analytics, but where he really shines is player development. He wrote the "Rays Way" player development handbook in 2008 and has since watched Tampa's farm system consistently rank among the strongest in the game. Baseball America just named Tampa's system the best in baseball, led by franchise shortstop and consensus No. 1 overall prospect Wander Franco.



The Red Sox want their new baseball boss -- it's unclear exactly what title Dombrowski's replacement will hold -- to rebuild the farm, cut costs, develop pitching, create a more versatile roster, and keep the team in contention while doing all of the above.

Bloom's performance in Tampa suggests he's an ideal candidate for the job, especially with other possibilities like Arizona's Mike Hazen, Chicago's Theo Epstein, and the Dodgers' Andrew Friedman either signing extensions or taking themselves out of consideration.

If there's one question, it's how he'll transition to a major market after a career in St. Petersburg, but the Red Sox watched his predecessor, Friedman, jump from Tampa to L.A. and build a big-money powerhouse.

Can Bloom do the same here? It's possible we're about to find out.

### **J.D. Martinez to the Yankees would be nightmare scenario for Red Sox**

John Tomase

It makes little sense, given their needs. But is a door cracking for the Yankees to take a run at J.D. Martinez?

If so, what's already projecting to be a painful Red Sox offseason could end up becoming catastrophic.

In the old days, the marriage would've made complete sense. The Yankees can never boast enough sluggers, and adding Martinez would serve the dual purpose of also weakening their rivals.

The only problem is, the Yankees have practiced fiscal responsibility under the stewardship of Hal Steinbrenner, who's nowhere near as reactionary as his legendary father. The Yankees haven't led the league in payroll since 2013, but cutting costs hasn't stopped them from topping 100 wins for two straight years. Their opening day payroll of \$167 million in 2018 ranked seventh in MLB, and even as it rebounded to \$206 million this year, still ranked only third.

**TOMASE:** Why Sox shouldn't consider any Astros in GM search

After an American League Championship Series loss to the Astros that saw their lack of starting pitching badly exposed, the Yankees are expected to be in the market for multiple starters. With CC Sabathia retiring, Masahiro Tanaka undergoing elbow surgery, and Luis Severino limited to only three starts, the Yankees can't afford another season of openers, James Paxton, and Domingo German. They should be directing their considerable resources at starters. They'll undoubtedly make a run at Astros ace Gerrit Cole.

But then came Thursday's news that center fielder Aaron Hicks needs Tommy John surgery that will sideline him for eight to 10 months. With 36-year-old one-dimensional DH Edwin Encarnacion coming off a putrid ALCS (1 for 18, 11 Ks), New York could easily decline his \$20 million option.

That creates two openings in New York's crowded outfield/DH mix, and suddenly Martinez doesn't look so far-fetched.

If the Yankees wanted to build a devastating lineup, they could find the money for Martinez while maintaining the flexibility to add a frontline starter. Sabathia's retirement clears \$8 million off the books, and they could save another \$50 million by declining Encarnacion's option and bidding adieu to free agents Brett Gardner, Didi Gregorius, and Dellin Betances.

Sox have a killer rotation... and not in a good way

The risk in signing Martinez is a considerable one, since \$300 million man Giancarlo Stanton was limited to only 18 games all season and is looking more and more like a full-time DH. Similarly, caveat emptor to any club looking to outfit Martinez with a glove, given his back issues in 2019.

But if the Yankees are comfortable with the two sluggers splitting left field and DH, imagine how potent New York's lineup would look with Gleyber Torres, D.J. LeMahieu, Aaron Judge, Martinez, Stanton, Gary Sanchez, Luke Voit, and Gio Urshela.

Martinez has proven himself to be a difference-maker over two seasons with the Red Sox, with a pair of All-Star berths and a near Triple Crown. Over the last three years, he has averaged 41 homers and 113 RBIs while hitting .313 with a 1.007 OPS. That's superstar production, and given the dearth of teams willing or able to extend major resources to a DH, he could end up being a bargain on a three- or four-year deal.

It's the kind of move the Yankees used to make with regularity before embarking on this era of relative austerity. Maybe Martinez will tempt them to strike again, which would be a disaster for Boston.

#### **Four Boston Red Sox players named 2019 Gold Glove award finalists**

Justin Leger

MLB announced its 2019 Gold Glove award finalists on Thursday, and four Boston Red Sox players made the cut.

Catcher Christian Vazquez, left fielder Andrew Benintendi, center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr., and right fielder Mookie Betts were each recognized for their defensive prowess in the 2019 campaign.

This is Vazquez's first Gold Glove nomination since entering the league in 2014. While making an impact behind the plate, the 29-year-old enjoyed the best offensive season of his career hitting .276 with 23 home runs and 72 RBI. Joining Vazquez as finalists in the American League are Indians catcher Roberto Perez and Blue Jays backstop Danny Jansen.

Benintendi was nominated for a Gold Glove award last year, but it was Royals left fielder Alex Gordon who took home the hardware for the fifth time in his career. Gordon will compete with Benintendi again this year, along with the Athletics' Robbie Grossman.

Bradley is a perennial Gold Glove candidate, so this one doesn't come as much of a surprise. The 2018 Gold Glove award winner certainly has some competition this year, though, in Rays center fielder Kevin Kiermaier and Angels superstar Mike Trout.

Betts, like Bradley, earned a Gold Glove in 2018. If he does so again this year, it'll be his fourth straight. The '18 AL MVP will go up against Angels right fielder Kole Calhoun and the Astros' Josh Reddick.

#### **Boston Red Sox senior advisor Bill James leaving team after 17 years**

Justin Leger

Influential statistician Bill James is leaving the Boston Red Sox after 17 years, he announced on Thursday.

James, who's responsible for the sabermetric movement across baseball, shared the news of his departure on his website:

"I leave the Red Sox on the best possible terms," he wrote. "I am still friendly with everyone that I have worked with there, from the owners to the security guards. I still intend to pay the extortionary rates of DirecTV's baseball package so that I can watch every Red Sox game. Well, maybe not EVERY game; retirement means I don't have to stay up to watch them play a four-hour game in Seattle ending at 1:30. In exchange for that, next time we win the World Series, I won't get a ring."

Now that his time with the Red Sox has come to an end, James notes he will continue to work on publishing two books and writing numerous others. He also states he has a TV project in the works.

James joined the Red Sox organization in 2002 and has served as a consultant for ex-Sox general managers Theo Epstein, Ben Cherington, and Dave Dombrowski. He helped Boston earn four World Series titles in that timespan (2004, 2007, 2013, 2018).

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

### **In search for new top baseball executive, Red Sox appear to have found their man**

Sean McAdam

The Red Sox' search for a new head of baseball operations has been conducted quietly, but Thursday night, all indications were that it was coming to an end.

The Red Sox, who surprised baseball when they fired Dave Dombrowski on Sept. 8, appear to have chosen Chaim Bloom, the senior vice president of baseball operations of the Tampa Bay Rays as his replacement.

For now, a baseball source indicated, there isn't an official agreement in place. But there is strong mutual interest in getting a deal done, and at this point, it would be a surprise if a deal didn't get done.

Bloom, 36, has been with the Rays for 15 seasons, serving in a variety of capacities. For the past two seasons, Bloom has worked as the No. 2 to Erik Neander in the Tampa Bay front office. He's worked in player development, and the Rays' ability to develop young pitching has surely caught the attention of the Red Sox.

Bloom is a Philadelphia native who attended Yale.

The Red Sox, for all their success in developing position players internally, have failed in their efforts to do the same with, in particular, starting pitching. The organization's last homegrown starter of any accomplishment was Clay Buchholz, who made his major league debut 11 years ago.

Bloom, along with the entire Tampa Bay organization, has demonstrated an ability to do more with less. The Rays annually have fielded competitive teams with modest payrolls. In 2018, the Rays missed the playoffs, but still managed to win 90 games. In 2019, the Rays won 96 games — 12 games ahead of the Red Sox — and qualified for one of the two wild-card spots in the American League, defeating Oakland in the wild-card game before being outclassed by the Houston Astros in the Division Series.

Tampa's payroll was the lowest of any team in the American League this season, not an insignificant factor as the Red Sox look to cut back spending, having spent better than \$240 million in 2019, only to finish third in the division. The Sox are intent on resetting their luxury tax rate after going over various thresholds in each of the last two seasons.

The only surprise with the Red Sox' choice is that Bloom has never been the No. 1 decision-maker with a team, having worked under — albeit, closely — Neander. In multiple press conferences near the end of the season and after the season, Red Sox had prioritized hiring someone from outside the organization and someone with the experience of running a Baseball Operations department.

But the organization's initial wish list, comprised of some of the game's biggest front office names (Theo Epstein, Andrew Friedman), failed to gain traction with high-profile candidates and their search widened.

One baseball source familiar with Bloom Thursday night compared him to former Red Sox GM Ben Cherington, while noting that Bloom's background was more focused on analytics, while Cherington had specialized in player development.

Should Bloom's hiring be, as expected, officially finalized, it will be interesting to see how many of the current Gang of Four — the quartet of longtime executives in Boston's baseball operations department — remain with the team.

Assistant GM Eddie Romero, for instance, is known to have aspirations for the position and may feel slighted that the organization went outside to hire someone who hadn't himself been a No. 1.

Bloom will also inherit a front office that has undergone changes — with elevations and promotions — since the season ended, despite not having a permanent GM on board. Many executives would want input into determining their scouting director and other positions, but in Boston, recent moves have already put candidates in place.

The Athletic was the first to report that Bloom had interviewed with the Red Sox.

### **Red Sox still waiting on Chris Sale's follow-up visit with Dr. James Andrews**

Sean McAdam

When Chris Sale was examined by Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla. in mid-August, he was given a PRP (platelet-rich plasma) injection for his ailing left elbow, instructed to refrain from throwing for the time being and told to return in six weeks.

That was better than nine weeks ago.

Sale has yet to return for his follow-up with Andrews, but according to a baseball source, that's not an indication that the pitcher has suffered a setback, or, for that matter, any indication that the initial diagnosis that avoiding Tommy John surgery has changed.

Some background:

When Sale initially felt some soreness in the forearm and elbow, the Red Sox remained wild-card playoff contenders. Longshot contenders, to be sure, but contenders nonetheless.

Sale was initially hopeful that a visit with Andrews in late September would result in him getting the green light to resume throwing with an eye toward making himself available to pitch again at some point in the postseason.

As September unfolded and the Red Sox fell further out of contention and were subsequently eliminated, it became clear that there would be no need for Sale to hurry back, as there would be no October games in which he could pitch.

Similarly, the need to visit Andrews in late September was also scrapped. With no deadline to meet and the start of the 2020 season still months away, additional time to rest and to allow the PRP injections to work became the new point of emphasis.

Sale is now, according to a baseball source, expected to visit with Andrews during the second week of November. The expectation is he'll be given the go-ahead to resume throwing and begin his normal offseason program soon after.

Sale is currently rehabbing and undergoing treatment at the team's spring training complex in Fort Myers, Fla., not far from his offseason home in Naples.

It's not hard to discern the mystery that has surrounded his rehab. Sale is known to be highly guarded about sharing details about any injuries he's incurred. In 2018, when he missed most of the final two months with shoulder inflammation, Red Sox officials repeatedly invoked HIPPA laws in explaining why they could not provide additional details on the pitcher's condition.

Similarly, when Sale was briefly hospitalized during the 2018 ALCS — reportedly from intestinal woes linked to anti-inflammatory medication — he half-jokingly announced that the problem had been an infection stemming from a pierced navel.

Later, multiple Red Sox officials confirmed that Sale had instructed Red Sox personnel to not provide any specific details about either the shoulder inflammation or the stomach ailment.

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

### **Source: Red Sox targeting Tampa's Chaim Bloom to become new GM**

Chad Jennings

The Red Sox have made their choice.

According to a source, the team's ownership group has targeted Chaim Bloom to take over as head of baseball operations. Bloom, 36, spent the past three years as the Rays' vice president of baseball operations. He was a finalist for the Mets general manager job a year ago.

It is unknown whether Bloom has accepted the Red Sox job, but *The Athletic* has been told that he did interview, and a source says he's the favorite.

In the nearly two months since Dave Dombrowski was fired as president of baseball operations, there's been little outside chatter about the Red Sox search for a replacement. Before late Thursday, the most definitive information was principal owner John Henry announcing in late September that the search would start from the outside.

"I think you would all agree this is a challenging offseason," Henry said, after putting a quartet that includes Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero, Zack Scott and Raquel Ferreira in charge of the team in the interim. "To put one of the (internal) candidates you keep bringing up in charge and responsible for that, that's sort of a tough way to start your career as a general manager."

Bloom's resume doesn't look all that different from the Red Sox internal options, but the Rays have been a progressive team, winning at least 90 games in back-to-back seasons despite a relatively low payroll. They've used the "opener" pitching strategy to help stay afloat, and the lopsided 2018 trade of longtime ace Chris Archer for young standouts Austin Meadows and Tyler Glasnow helped the Rays finish 12 games ahead of the Red Sox this season, with roughly a quarter of Boston's payroll.

According to his Rays bio, Bloom spent 15 years in the organization, playing key roles in minor-league operations, contract and trade negotiations, player development, and the "baseball performance science department." Within baseball circles, his status is somewhat similar to Alex Cora's when he was hired as manager two years ago: Bloom is seen throughout the industry as a popular choice to eventually become a general manager. In an April interview with *The Athletic*, Bloom even sounded a bit like Cora.

"We know the season is long," he said. "There are ups and downs. A lot of times, you look back at the patience that got us here, making sure we could ride with those players through the ups and downs. We'd be naive to think there aren't going to be some struggles along the way. I think the important thing is you come to it with a mindset of consistency, and you show them that consistency, and you show them that you're in their corner. More often than not, players will respond positively to that."

If Bloom takes the job, he would step to the front of a baseball operations department that's been busy. Four vice presidents — O'Halloran, Romero, Scott and Ferreira — have been running the show since Dombrowski's departure. They've fired coaches, hired new ones, and made changes within the scouting department. Ferreira was not believed to be particularly interested in the top job, but O'Halloran, Romero

and Scott had the resumes to be serious contenders. Their backgrounds are relatively similar to Bloom's, and all have been with the Red Sox more than a decade.

The Rays front office, though, has been successful, and a hire from that organization would have obvious appeal, especially given the Red Sox desire to cut payroll and build from within.

This offseason will, indeed, present significant challenges. The Red Sox would like to trim payroll, but they have no fifth starter, no established first baseman or second baseman, and they could be without their DH and cleanup hitter if J.D. Martinez opts out of his contract. They also have the question of Mookie Betts, who is in his last year of team control and seems reluctant to sign an extension. They have a fan base that always expects to contend.

For nearly two months, the Red Sox have searched for someone to take on that challenge. They seem to have made their choice.