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*** *The Boston Globe***

Red Sox seeking more compensation for Mookie Betts as Brusdar Graterol's medical issues hold up trade

Alex Speier

When the dust settles, it's still expected that Mookie Betts and David Price will end up in Los Angeles and outfielder Alex Verdugo will be a Red Sox. It's even possible that righthander Brusdar Graterol will head across Fort Myers, from the spring training home of the Twins to the Red Sox, and that starter Dodgers starter Kenta Maeda will end up in Minnesota.

But nearly two days after the Red Sox agreed in principle to a blockbuster three-team deal with the Dodgers and Twins, it has yet to be finalized after concerns related to the medical evaluation of Graterol, major league sources confirmed. Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic was first to report that the Red Sox' review of the 21-year-old's medical records led the Sox to conclude that he is less likely than anticipated to project as a starting pitcher.

With that conclusion, according to sources confirming the report, the Sox are seeking additional compensation in the deal. Initially, the Sox seemed to seek an additional prospect, but it's possible the Sox could seek a different player (or players) to replace Graterol in the deal. As of Thursday night, the matter of the back end of the deal — specifically, the status of Graterol — was viewed as a matter between the Red Sox and Twins.

If the Twins and Red Sox can't find common ground about how to respond to Boston's medical concerns about Graterol, it's possible the Sox and Dodgers could replace Graterol in the deal through direct negotiations, or that the teams could cut out the Twins and seek a different third team to round out the deal. Despite what one major league source characterized as the "moving parts" of the deal, sources from the Red Sox and Dodgers still believe that the framework of the trade isn't in jeopardy.

Graterol has an electric arm, throwing a sinker that regularly exceeds 100 miles per hour, along with a slider with a chance to be a true weapon. His changeup remains a work in progress.

Based on the profile of his pitches alone, multiple evaluators see the righthander as having at least a chance to be a big league starter — potentially a mid-rotation contributor or better. One NL evaluator saw Graterol as having perhaps a 20-30 percent chance of a future in a rotation. An AL evaluator said that while the righthander's future is "probably" in the bullpen, he would first want to exhaust the possibility of developing the righthander as a starter.

"I wouldn't want to give up on [Graterol starting]," he said, "and I wouldn't want to bet on it."

The Twins, according to a recent look at Graterol in the Star Tribune, saw the righthander (who pitched just over 70 innings combined in the minor leagues and big leagues last year) as a potential big league bullpen option coming out of spring training, though the team hadn't closed the door to him as a starter — presumably with further development time in the minors to build his workload.

However, even before the exchange of medical information, injury risk was a known part of Graterol's profile — and part of the reason many view the bullpen as perhaps a likelier path than starting. He underwent Tommy John surgery in 2015, and didn't pitch at all in 2016. In May 2018, he dealt with back spasms, followed by shoulder impingement syndrome in 2019. Now, a medical issue concerning Graterol may be keeping the trade from becoming official.

“It would not stun me,” one American League scout said. “He’s had issues in the past.”

The shoulder impingement limited Graterol’s innings last season, and resulted in a late-season move from the Double-A rotation to the bullpen. That said, when he returned from more than two months on the injured list, he showed his typical premium velocity on his sinker.

Though Price (elbow) and Verdugo (back) both have had their own past health issues, neither was flagged in the review of medical records. Only Graterol’s status is in question.

It’s still possible Graterol ends up a member of the Red Sox. Regardless, even if Graterol ends up not going to Boston, it remains difficult to imagine the genie being rebottled on the rest of the deal.

It could have been so much better for David Price in Boston

Dan Shaughnessy

Dear David Price,

Hope you and the family are doing well and looking forward to your future with the Los Angeles Dodgers. There’s plenty of noise about the trade back here in Boston, and fans are quite upset about the Red Sox dealing Mookie. I have tried to explain that they are going to miss you as well, but most of them aren’t buying.

Looking back, I still can’t understand what happened with you here in Boston.

Why did you hate it so much? Why did you make things so difficult for yourself? I know this can be a tough place to play, but you made it much harder by being sulky and stubborn. Every day. It encouraged folks to overlook significant contributions you made in your four seasons.

I loved your game when you pitched for the Rays, Jays, and Tigers. I loved it when you stood up to David Ortiz after Big Papi pimped a couple of homers in the playoffs. You seemed like a thoughtful guy with great talent who would be a good fit here. But you were not. It was a disaster. You didn’t like it here and the fans didn’t like you.

I guess it started with the contract. Seven years, \$217 million. Those numbers became part of your name. It’s a lot to live up to. But you made things way more difficult by playing the victim every single day.

I remember talking to you at your locker that first day in Fort Myers in February of 2016. We talked a little about Vanderbilt baseball and basketball. I told you not to believe all those nasty things your former teammate Carl Crawford said about Boston. I told you any Red Sox star could hide out in Cambridge and never be recognized. You said you wouldn’t pay attention to inevitable criticism, adding, “I don’t watch MLB Network or read the papers or stuff online. I just keep moving forward.”

Not true. It turned out that you had an obsession with negative commentary. You couldn’t stay off social media. You were bothered when Twit-wits made fun of your dog, Astro. You thought media commentators were out to get you. You even thought NESN was negative. And you brought that attitude to work every day of your four seasons at Fenway (these days, we’re calling it “Tropicana by the Charles”).

In your first year with the Sox, you went 17-9 with a 3.99 ERA, starting 35 games and leading the majors in innings. You got blown up in your only playoff start, but it was a pretty good season. Ever a believer in your talent, I defended you to the negative nabobs. Go easy on David Price, I urged.

On Baseball: Any Red Sox fans happy David Price is gone should reconsider

In early May of 2017, you had a fit in the clubhouse after a game against the Yankees. You didn't even pitch that night, but were stewing about some tweets and went off on everybody. Two and a half weeks later, you lit into Dennis Eckersley on that flight from Boston to Toronto. That was a disaster. Fans hated you for it. You never apologized and never let it go.

Let's get one thing straight about your rant on Eck: It was not a defense of Eduardo Rodriguez after Eck said "Yuck" regarding Eddie's performance in a rehab start. No. You were upset because you thought Eck was too critical every day. Eckersley had been critical of you for taking too long between pitches. You didn't like it.

We talked about this in Anaheim three weeks after the blowup. That was an uncomfortable conversation. When I explained that Eckersley is a smart and fair commentator, with an unimpeachable big league résumé, you said, "You're wrong! If you think that, you're confused! Ask anybody in this room!"

You were poison that year. You were sidelined with an elbow problem, angry at the media, and angry at the fans every day. Any time you were asked about it, you would just say, "I like the 24 guys in this room."

A year later, you dominated in the postseason. You went 3-1 with a 3.46 ERA in six playoff games. You should have been MVP of the World Series when you went 2-0 with a 1.98 in three appearances over five games against the Dodgers. That's when you told us that you now had the "trump card."

I asked you point blank: "Do you hate Boston?"

"I've never said I've hated Boston or had a problem with the fans," you answered. "That's a perception that's put on me through you guys."

Your teammates liked you, and that, too, was a problem. You were not a good role model for the younger players. In the quest to protect them, you poisoned them.

And it was all just so unnecessary.

In four years here, you went 46-24 with a 3.84 ERA. You won a World Series. You made a lot of money and played a lot of Fortnite.

Fans are happy to see you go. That's unfortunate. Because the Red Sox are going to miss your talent.

You hated it here, David. And now you are free. You are free to make Boston fans angry every fifth day of the next three baseball seasons by winning games for the Dodgers while the Sox are still paying you. It is the ultimate trump card and it could be your lasting revenge.

How baseball teams exchange medical information, and what it means for the Mookie Betts trade

Alex Speier

What does it mean that the deal that would send Mookie Betts and David Price to the Dodgers while bringing back outfielder Alex Verdugo (from the Dodgers) and righthander Brusdar Graterol (from the Twins) to the Red Sox hasn't been completed after reviewing the medical records?

Given that Graterol had Tommy John surgery in 2015 and had been sidelined for months last season with a shoulder impingement, should any of this come as a surprise to the Red Sox?

To answer those questions, here's a primer on medical information exchanges with an eye toward the Red Sox' reported conclusion that Graterol is more likely a reliever than starter after a review of his medical records:

- How is the medical information exchanged, and how long does it take?

Prior to the completion of trades, teams are aware of the official injured list/disabled list histories of players in the transaction. That information is chronicled in a Major League Baseball database called eBIS (Electronic Baseball Information System).

They've also typically researched publicly available information, such as a couple of days missed because of a sore hamstring or a player who has dealt with some soreness in his back, to identify areas of potential concern. Scouts also provide information about player health that might not show up in transactions.

But it's only after teams agree to a trade that their trainers make available their organization's complete files on player medical histories. Those files include MRIs and other images, trainer notes, and virtually every detail about a player's medical history since his entry into professional baseball — thus offering far more thorough information than is known before a trade agreement.

The files are reviewed by a trainer, who coordinates the sharing of information with other members of a team's medical staff. Sometimes that means consulting with a team's head of internal medicine, but more often a team orthopedist will examine specific concerns.

That process occasionally takes a couple of hours — but there are plenty of instances when it might take longer. If a team sees anything concerning — perhaps a question about whether a known condition is more serious than thought — and wants a closer inspection of an MRI or other image, it will typically need to have the files sent on a disc by mail and then reviewed by orthopedists and/or specialists.

That isn't a turnkey process. After all, orthopedists frequently have previously scheduled workdays that keep them from being able to offer immediate feedback.

Between the transportation of medical files and the need to have them reviewed, it's not at all uncommon for medical evaluations to take a day or more. So, in a hypothetical case involving Graterol, it's easy to imagine the Sox looking at the images of his shoulder impingement on Tuesday night, seeing a resulting issue — perhaps associated fraying of the rotator cuff or labrum (again, hypothetical) — and wanting to get a better look.

The file then might have taken much of Wednesday to get into the right hands.

And so, it might not have been until late afternoon or early evening on Wednesday that a determination could be made, based on the scans, that Graterol's physical condition might be worse than known at the time of the trade. That's an atypical but not unusual timetable.

■ And so the Sox might suddenly conclude that they'd be comfortable with Graterol as a reliever but not a starter?

That certainly could happen — and in fact does happen quite often. What a team sees in images about a player's health — how his body responds to the stress of pitching, how it recovers — informs decisions about whether a pitcher should start or relieve.

■ But wasn't Graterol already a reliever last year?

Yes, but one whom evaluators of multiple teams thought had a chance — based on his pitch mix and how he was throwing at the end of last season — to start.

The 21-year-old hasn't been durable to this point. Even so, one National League evaluator gave him a 20-30 percent chance to be a mid-rotation starter or better when he heard of the trade. An American League evaluator said that Graterol is a pitcher who should be given every opportunity to start. Another AL evaluator noted the similarities in arm strength and body type to suggest Bartolo Colon as a ceiling for Graterol, albeit with a more likely reliever floor. (It's worth noting that none of those evaluators ever had access to Graterol's medical records.)

In other words, based on the feedback of others in the industry, it's not unreasonable that the Red Sox traded for Graterol thinking he had a chance — even if limited — to be a starter. And it wouldn't be unprecedented for the Sox to reassess based on what they saw in his medical file.

■ So, what then?

The Sox likely reached a conclusion about Graterol's medicals on Wednesday late afternoon or evening — determining that he had a chance to remain valuable as a reliever, but that the chance that he would be a starter had been diminished, perhaps even eliminated. In that case, they'd be trading for a less valuable package of players.

Once that determination was made, the other teams involved in the deal likely would have to make their own assessments as to the accuracy of the Red Sox' evaluation. So, more orthopedists and more specialists looking at medical files that might have to be physically transferred. The three-team nature of the trade increases the complexity of those dynamics.

At that point, the front offices of the teams could get to work in determining if there was another compensation package — for instance, Verdugo and Graterol plus an additional prospect — that would supply the Sox with their expected return.

■ This all sounds strange. Does this sort of thing really happen?

Not often, but certainly there are instances where trades take days to take from agreement to finality. In 2006, the Red Sox agreed to a nine-player deal with Cleveland that brought Coco Crisp to Boston, but completion of the deal took roughly a week over the medical evaluation of reliever Guillermo Mota. The Red Sox walked away from a trade for Rich Harden at the 2011 trade deadline because of medical concerns. They also had to scrap a three-year, \$39 million deal with Mike Napoli after the 2012 season — renegotiating it as a one-year, \$5 million deal with \$8 million in potential incentives — after discovering a degenerative hip condition.

So, in the case of Graterol, the fact that the review of his medical history has held up a deal — one in which he's the least prominent player — for nearly 48 hours is outside of the normal timetable, but nonetheless within a range of possibilities familiar to all teams.

What it likely won't mean is a derailment of the deal. Major league sources continue to anticipate that at some point the deal will be consummated — just not necessarily in the form of the original agreement.

Jackie Bradley Jr. all business despite trade of Mookie Betts

Peter Abraham

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Baseball is first and foremost a business enterprise, as Red Sox fans were cruelly reminded of this week. But if you watch closely, there are occasional moments that allow you to forget about the bottom line.

It was why I always rooted for the final out of an inning to be a fly ball caught by Mookie Betts or Jackie Bradley Jr.

As soon as one of them had the ball, the other would take off like a wide receiver running a go route. Then came a pass lofting toward the dugout and a catch usually right along the baseline.

Betts, who often works out with football players during the offseason, ran the better routes. And Bradley always seemed to throw the ball to just the right spot so it would land in Betts's glove.

Alert fans at Fenway Park knew what was coming and always applauded when the connection was made. But that happened on the road, too. Even at Yankee Stadium a few times.

For just a few seconds, they were ballplayers having fun, and who couldn't appreciate and enjoy that?

That is all written in the past tense because Betts is on his way to the Los Angeles Dodgers once the trade that was made on Tuesday is finalized. For the first time in six seasons he won't be playing alongside Bradley.

"As a teammate you love him and you respect him. But as we all know, this is all a part of it," Bradley said Thursday after working out at JetBlue Park.

Bradley and Betts played with symmetry that comes only with years of playing together. Red Sox pitchers were bailed out countless times by Bradley playing deep in center or Betts shifting toward the line in right because they knew the other could cover the gap if needed.

There was a trust that built up over time, subtle shifts one way or the other choreographed with just a look.

"It's going to be different," Bradley said. "But like anything else you have to move forward and continue to work and help the team win."

Bradley and Betts were roommates in Instructional League after they were drafted in 2011 and quickly became close friends. They've since been All-Stars, won a World Series, made millions of dollars, and had daughters.

Now they'll play for different teams. It brings to mind the Red Sox trading Fred Lynn in 1981 after he played six seasons alongside his good friend Jim Rice.

Like Betts and Bradley, the business of the game sent them in different directions.

When principal owner John Henry said in September that cutting the payroll was an offseason goal, Bradley knew changes were coming and wondered if he'd get traded. But it wasn't something he dwelled on.

"If it happened, it happened," he said. "There's no reason to sit around and think about it and worry about it. If so, you're letting life pass away. I like to enjoy the offseason and think about my family. The important stuff."

Instead, the Sox played for the cost-cutting championship by trading Betts and David Price to knock an estimated \$75 million off the books over the next three years, \$43 million this season alone.

"I sure hope so," Bradley said when asked if the Sox were still positioned to contend for a playoff spot. "We have a great group of guys, great competitors. We'll go out there and show up."

Bradley, who is in his free agent year, needs a turnaround after hitting .229 with a .728 OPS over the last two seasons. He had tinkered with his swing but not seen consistent results.

"Always confident. I'll continue to work and push forward," Bradley said.

Alex Cora showed plenty of faith in Bradley, dropping him out of the lineup only occasionally. Bradley doesn't know what to expect this season because the Sox still don't have a manager.

"That's different," Bradley said. "It doesn't affect me at all. I still have to go out there and do my thing. We'll let the head guys take care of that. Either way, I still have to get my work in."

Bradley, who turns 30 in April, is one of the team's longest-tenured players. If the Sox are to find a way out of the mess they've been heaved into, the veterans on the roster have to step forward.

"This is a time we have to stick together more than any other time," Bradley said. "There's a lot of noise outside our locker room. That's fine. We know what we have and know what we have in each other.

"We'll continue to focus on that and the things that we can control and go out there and compete . . . We all had an idea of how crazy it was going to get, and it's starting to come into fruition."

Bradley has been in contact with Betts several times since word of the trade leaked.

"He's doing good. I talked to him [Tuesday and Wednesday]. Most of the things we talk about really aren't baseball-related," Bradley said. "It's just checking in on each other."

That's what friends do, and different uniforms won't change that.

"There's a lot of history," Bradley said. "We've been through a lot and I'm sure we're going to go through a lot more, too, in the future. But we're going to have to move on."

Rob Manfred: No Red Sox players will be punished

Julian McWilliams

Last month, baseball commissioner Rob Manfred released a nine-page report, detailing the Astros' illegal sign-stealing during their 2017 World Series-winning season. Alex Cora, who was Houston's bench coach at the time, helped devise the plan, which included the use of a live-feed camera.

Manfred suspended Astros manager A.J. Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow for their roles, and they were soon fired by owner Jim Crane. Manfred said at the time he would withhold Cora's punishment until Major League Baseball completed its sign-stealing investigation of the 2018 World Series-winning Red Sox, of whom Cora was the manager.

With less than a week until spring training opens, that investigation appears to be coming to an end.

"I'm hopeful that I can get Boston done before the camps open," Manfred told reporters after an owners' meeting Thursday in Orlando, Fla., adding that no Red Sox players will be sanctioned.

Astros players had been granted immunity in exchange for truthful testimonies.

"We have the right to discipline players right now. I'm absolutely convinced of that fact," Manfred said. "We made a decision in the Houston investigation that in order for us to get the facts that we needed, somebody had to get immunity."

Manfred added that he will limit the use of live video in the game.

"I think you should assume that before the season starts we will have new guidelines with respect to the use of video equipment," he said. "I think we have too much video available in real time right now."

*** *The Boston Herald***

MLB hopes to complete Red Sox investigation before spring training

Jason Mastrodonato

Pitchers and catchers officially report on Wednesday and the Red Sox still have no manager and aren't sure if anybody on their staff or in their front office will be disciplined by MLB.

But the league expects to complete its investigation into the 2018 Red Sox before camp opens, according to commissioner Rob Manfred.

"I'm hopeful I can get Boston done before the camps open," Manfred said, according to *Newsday's* Erik Boland. "I'd like to have this over. Investigations are funny. You think you know what the timeline is but that's a day to day prediction."

The Sox have already begun interviews for the next manager, interviewing Diamondbacks bench coach Luis Urueta last week, according to an industry source, and have talked to bench coach Ron Roenicke and third base coach Carlos Febles, according to *MassLive.com*.

Chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom has said he'd consider internal candidates, despite the league's investigation into the 2018 team, which allegedly used the video replay room to decode signs and send them to players at bat.

J.D. Martinez said last month he expects the Red Sox to be cleared of any wrongdoing.

"It sucks," Martinez said. "To be honest with you, it sucks. But I'm excited for the investigation to get over with so they could see there was nothing going on here. ... Because I was there. I saw it straight up. Everyone seems to forget that in 2017 and 2016 this team was a really good team. This team won 93 games those two years and then we just got better. I'm really not allowed to comment on it, but we'll see what happens."

Red Sox need to call off Mookie Betts trade and keep him

Tom Keegan

A physical exam, the final step to a trade, is usually a mere formality. In this case, it amounts to a gift for the Red Sox. Now let's see if they have the wisdom and guts to accept it and call off this shameless Mookie Betts salary dump of a trade.

Repeat: Call off your first trade and declare it null and void, Chaim Bloom. Use the mulligan that has presented itself to you.

The trade is on hold, according to Ken Rosenthal of *The Athletic*, because after viewing the medical reports of Twins beefy right-handed pitching prospect Brusdar Graterol, the Red Sox "viewed him more as a reliever than a starter" and therefore "might ask for an additional player and/or money to bridge the gap."

In other words, Graterol is damaged goods. Better idea than asking for another player or more money to go toward David Price's contract: Call the whole thing off. Now. And don't look back. View this as a gift from the heavens and keep Mookie in a Red Sox uniform for as long as possible, preferably for the next 10 years.

The guess here is the Red Sox don't have the stomach to do it. It would infuriate the Dodgers and create the uncomfortable situation of bringing back two players they just traded. Plus, it would require admitting they made a terrible mistake, even without uttering the words. When is the last time the Red Sox ever admitted to making a mistake? Anyone?

First time for everything, and I can't think of a better time than right now.

Such a bold, fan-friendly move finally would put a stop to the mudslide of embarrassing news that has turned this winter into a sloppy mess for the once-proud Red Sox. First they get caught up in a sign-stealing investigation. Then they have to fire their popular manager, Alex Cora, because he was the mastermind

behind the Astros' cheating scheme. Then they show no interest in hiring Dusty Baker as manager. Now they trade the great Mookie Betts and the talented, mercurial, overpaid David Price in exchange for a hotheaded outfielder the Dodgers couldn't wait to get rid of and a pitcher who at the age of 21 already has X-rays that froze the Red Sox into temporary inaction.

Repeat: Get out from under this trade. Now.

The Red Sox are well within their rights to call off the deal. There is precedent for such action. The Brewers once traded center fielder Carlos Gomez to the Mets for pitcher Zack Wheeler and infielder Wilmer Flores. Concerned about the state of Gomez's hip, and maybe even moved by the tears Flores shed over hearing he was being dealt out of New York, the Mets called off the deal.

Bring back Mookie. Pay the luxury tax. See if there is a market for Price, and if nothing can be worked out there, give him the ball every fifth day until he breaks down.

Lucky breaks like this don't come along every day. It's on the Red Sox to take advantage of this one, which would amount to a powerful mea culpa. Let the Dodgers exploit some other team.

Call off the deal, Chaim, frame Graterol's X-ray, mount it on your wall, and wink at it every morning when you report to work.

*** *The Providence Journal***

Red Sox fans are the losers in Betts deal

Kevin McNamara

It must feel real good to be a Boston Red Sox season ticket holder right about now.

The Sox hit their most faithful fans as hard as anyone in baseball with one of the highest average ticket prices in the game. New England baseball fans also get whacked with \$30-to-\$50 parking fees, pay \$12 for an average beer and sit in seats that are too tight for most middle-aged men.

For this, Sox fans are guaranteed to cheer for a franchise that's always all-in, paying top dollar for elite talent and doing what it takes to challenge for chances at a World Series every season.

Well, scratch that. Those were the good old days. Something very different is on display now at Fenway Park and it sure isn't good for the 2020 Red Sox team.

Late Tuesday night, the Sox agreed in principle to trade Mookie Betts, the best homegrown player its challenged minor league system has produced in a decade or two, to the Los Angeles Dodgers. The front office, led by owners John Henry and Tom Werner, apparently decided that Betts would not accept their best offer to avoid free agency after the upcoming season. We do not know what that last/best multiyear contract offer was but Betts is clearly thinking he's a talent worth \$35 million (or so) a year.

The Red Sox apparently weren't keen on keeping Betts through his walk year. Either that or they don't deem the former MVP and four-time Gold Glove outfielder a \$300-million-plus player, someone who one day could see his number hanging in right field alongside Williams, Yaz and Big Papi.

That's a judgment call, so instead of risking losing Betts next winter, the Sox chose to cut the cord now and restock their anemic farm system with a few choice prospects, right? Yes, but make that very few.

The Red Sox's plan is to "replace" Betts with Alex Verdugo, a 24-year-old who was a utility outfielder for the Dodgers a year ago — Verdugo, who hit .294 with 12 home runs and a .342 on-base percentage. Those are somewhat similar numbers to what Andrew Benintendi put up in 2019, a season during which all sorts

of red flags shot up over his future. The Sox also planned to add Brusdar Graterol, a 21-year-old who pitched in 10 games out of the Twins' bullpen last season, owns a high-90s fastball and could pitch at Fenway as early as this season. That part of the trade is being given another look, though, as the Red Sox reportedly are concerned about Graterol's medical review.

The return for Betts was minimized by not only his pending free agency but that this wasn't a Mookie-only move. This was a money move, or a money-saving move. The team with billionaire owners and the high-priced tickets says it needs to pull back on player salaries, at least for now.

In order to do that, the Red Sox convinced the Dodgers to take on more than half of the bloated contract of pitcher David Price. Now Price may be a prickly, overpaid blowhard but he also is probably the team's best starting pitcher right now and is under contract for three more seasons.

But when Henry and Werner hired Chaim Bloom, everyone knew of an edict to shrink payroll well below MLB's \$208-million Competitive Balance Tax threshold. The Sox say they need to do this to avoid the luxury tax, reset their payroll to receive a full revenue-sharing check from MLB and avoid penalties in the amateur draft.

This trade saves the Sox about \$45 million in payroll this season and drops the team's 2020 total to nearly \$190 million. In one fell swoop, Bloom followed the orders of Henry/Werner and also extinguished any of the flickering hopes that the Sox could contend with the Yankees and other well-stocked teams in 2020.

Don't look for any current Red Sox to bless this deal. J.D. Martinez and Chris Sale and Xander Bogaerts want to win now and could not care less about Henry/Werner's millions. Bloom and his bosses have hit the reset button, hoping to take a giant step or two backward before putting another World Series-caliber lineup on the field.

That may be how Bloom operated in Tampa as a lieutenant with the always-financially-struggling Rays, but this is Boston. Fans pay big bucks here to genuflect at Fenway Park every summer but that only goes so far. They also expect a winner for their \$140 box seats and \$40 parking spots and trading Betts and Price marks a business decision that guarantees nothing in on-field success.

*** *MassLive.com***

Will Bobby Dalbec slug his way onto Boston Red Sox's 2020 Opening Day roster? Will Rule 5 pick Jonathan Arauz win a spot? Here's 10 young players to watch in camp

Christopher Smith

Red Sox spring training camp opens Tuesday with no Mookie Betts and no David Price. The two stars are headed to LA in a three-team trade between the Red Sox, Dodgers and Twins.

Plenty of new faces will be in the clubhouse. The Red Sox added five relievers — Austin Brice, Matt Hall, Chris Mazza, Josh Osich and Jeffrey Springs — this offseason via waiver claims or minor trades.

The two newcomers, Alex Verdugo and Brusdar Graterol, who the Red Sox are expected to receive for Betts and Price also will be in camp as long as the deal goes through. The Red Sox reportedly aren't completely satisfied with the medical records for Graterol, but the deal still is expected to be completed.

There also will be several prospects in camp who could help out in 2020 or '21. Here are 10 young players to watch closely.

Ten young players to watch:

1. Jonathan Arauz, SS/2B/3B: The Rule 5 Draft pick will try to earn a spot on the Opening Day. The 21-year-old Panama native batted only .249 with a .319 on-base percentage, .388 slugging percentage, .707 OPS, 11 homers, 22 doubles, two triples and 55 RBIs in 115 games at High A and Double A in the Astros' system last year. A Rule 5 Draft selection must stick on the 25-man roster for the entire season (barring an injury) or be offered back to his previous club.
2. Bobby Dalbec, 1B/3B: The 24-year-old right-handed slugger has serious power. He has bashed 59 home runs, 54 doubles and five triples the past two years in the minors (264 games). He plays both first and third base and has a chance to earn a spot on Boston's Opening Day roster. Baseball America ranks him No. 75 on its top 100 list and touts him as having the best infield arm and most power in the Red Sox system. He could platoon at first base with Mitch Moreland.
3. Tanner Houck, SP: The 23-year-old righty, a 2017 first-round pick, is one of Boston's top depth starters entering camp as a non-roster invitee. He could end up competing for the No. 5 spot in the rotation. Trading David Price to the Dodgers creates an open rotation spot unless the Red Sox fill it with a free agent. Houck has made adjustments to both his delivery and pitch mix since the Red Sox selected him out of Mizzou.
4. Yoan Aybar, LHP: The 22-year-old reliever converted from a position player to a pitcher in 2018. The Red Sox added him to the 40-man roster in November despite a 4.61 ERA and 1.36 WHIP in 44 outings (56 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings) for Low-A Greenville and High-A Salem during 2019. What do the Red Sox see in him? His fastball reaches the upper-90s, he averaged 11.1 strikeouts per nine innings last year and he held opponents to a .176 batting average against. He ran into trouble because of control. He issued 41 walks in 56 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings.
5. Bryan Mata, RHP: Baseball America ranks the 20-year-old from Venezuela the top pitcher in the Red Sox's system. His fastball ranges from 95-98 mph and he added a slider last season. He has a solid changeup, too. He showed much better command during 2019, averaging 3.6 walks per nine innings compared to 7.3 in 2018. He struck out 111 in 105 innings. He'll be in big league spring training as a non-roster invitee. He's likely begin the year at Double-A Portland. He has the chance to be a member of Boston's 2021 rotation.
6. Kyle Hart, LHP: The 27-year-old has gone from a 19th-round pick who signed for only \$5,000 in 2016 to one of the Red Sox's top depth starters entering 2020. Boston added him to the 40-man roster in November. He'll likely be in the mix with Houck to start games in 2020 with Price gone. Hart recorded a 3.52 ERA, 1.17 WHIP and .233 batting average against in 27 outings (24 starts) for Double-A Portland and Triple-A Pawtucket during 2019. He doesn't throw hard but his slider has led to impressive minor league stats.
7. Jarren Duran: Baseball America ranks the speedy center fielder Boston's No. 4 prospect. The 23-year-old left-handed hitter batted .387 with a .456 on-base percentage, .543 slugging percentage, .998 OPS, four homers, 13 doubles, three triples, 19 RBIs, 18 steals and 49 runs in 50 games for High-A Salem last year. He then earned a promotion to Portland where he slashed .250/.309/.634 with one homer, 11 doubles, five triples, 19 RBIs, 28 steals and 41 runs in 82 games.
8. Marcus Wilson: The Red Sox acquired the 23-year-old from Arizona for Blake Swihart last year. They added him to the 40-man roster in November. He's Boston's top outfield depth option with Duran and he has some power. He's a former second-round pick initially struggled for Portland after the trade, then the Red Sox demoted him to High-A Salem where he slashed .342/.413/.603/1.016 with eight homers, 12 doubles and one triple and 29 RBIs in 45 games. He returned to Portland where he posted a .250/.325/.486/.811 line, seven homers, 13 doubles and 20 RBIs in 43 games.
9. C.J. Chatham, SS/2B: The Red Sox added the shortstop/second baseman to the 40-man roster in November. The 25-year-old is a slick fielder with the ability to bat for average. The former second round pick out of Florida Atlantic likely will make his big league debut in 2020. He said he's versatile and can play anywhere.

10. Roldani Baldwin, C: A broken ankle sidelined the 23-year-old Dominican Republic native for all but eight games in 2019. He has showed a strong throwing arm and some offensive potential at points during his minor league career. The non-roster invitee stroked 50 extra-base hits (35 doubles, 14 homers, one triple) in 95 games for Low-A Greenville during 2017.

Mookie Betts, David Price trade: Boston Red Sox ‘making progress’ on reworking deal but talks with Twins, Dodgers ‘going slowly’ (reports)

Chris Cotillo

The blockbuster trade sending Mookie Betts and David Price to the Dodgers is still “more likely to happen than not” but some involved are suggesting it’s “not a certainty,” according to reports from MLB.com’s Mark Feinsand and MLB Network’s Jon Heyman. According to Feinsand, the Red Sox, Dodgers and Twins are “making progress” on a revised deal after Boston was not satisfied with the medical records of pitcher Brusdar Graterol.

Talk between the Twins and Red Sox are “going slowly,” according to The Athletic’s Ken Rosenthal, who reports that the Dodgers may acquire a prospect from another club to help bridge the gap.

Boston, Los Angeles and Minnesota agreed to a three-way deal that would send Betts and Price to the Dodgers, outfielder Alex Verdugo and Graterol to the Red Sox and righty Kenta Maeda to the Twins on Tuesday night, but the deal still hasn’t been formalized more than 48 hours later. The reason, as Rosenthal reported Wednesday, was Boston’s assessment of the 21-year-old Graterol, who they now project to be more of a reliever than a starter.

The Red Sox are looking for more compensation as a result of Graterol’s medicals, either in the form of an additional player or further financial help. It’s unclear if that would come from the Twins, who are sending them Graterol, or the Dodgers, who are sending Verdugo and paying about half of the \$96 million remaining on Price’s contract through 2022.

With pitchers and catchers due to report to spring training next week, the pressure is on for the clubs to finalize the much-publicized deal. The Dodgers have even more at stake than the other clubs, as they have another pending deal (sending outfielder Joc Pederson and pitcher Ross Stripling to the Angels for infielder Luis Rengifo) that is reportedly dependent on the finalization of the three-teamer.

At this point, it appears the teams are motivated to work out their differences to ensure a deal gets done. With all of the moving parts, it appears there’s at least a remote chance that the blockbuster falls apart.

Mookie Betts trade: Boston Red Sox’s Jackie Bradley Jr. says, ‘A player ... willing to bet on himself, then I have nothing but the utmost respect for that’

Christopher Smith

The Mookie Betts trade is not yet official. The Red Sox reportedly aren’t completely satisfied with the medical records for pitcher Brusdar Graterol. But team officials remain confident a deal will get completed, The Athletic’s Ken Rosenthal reported.

The three-team deal between the Red Sox, Dodgers and Twins is expected to send both Betts and David Price to Los Angeles. Outfielder Alex Verdugo and Graterol, a 21-year-old pitcher are expected to land in Boston.

Red Sox center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. reacted to the pending trade in Fort Myers on Thursday. He spoke with reporters, including WBZ’s Jonny Miller who sent MassLive.com the recording.

“Yeah, a lot of stuff going on,” Bradley said. “I think you all had an idea. ... Some of it’s starting to come into fruition.”

He didn't give any opinion on the Red Sox dealing Betts.

"I have no thoughts on it," Bradley said. "It is what it is. Obviously as a teammate you love him and you respect him. But as we all know, it's a part of it. And things happen."

Bradley said playing in an outfield without Betts in 2020 will be different. The two players worked their way through the minor league system together.

"But like everything else, you've got to move forward," Bradley said. "Continue to work and help your team win."

Bradley knew this was a possibility.

"There's always a chance," Bradley said. "You just never know what's going to happen and you've just got to be ready regardless."

Bradley has spoken with Betts since the Red Sox, Dodgers and Twins agreed to the trade Tuesday.

"He's doing good," Bradley said. "I talked to him yesterday and the day before. The day I was in Disney. But yeah, most of the things we talk about aren't really baseball related. So it's just checking in with each other and kind of seeing where each other's at."

Betts will earn \$27 million in 2020, then is eligible for free agency after the season. He strongly indicated for the past few years he planned to test the free agent market instead of signing a contract extension.

"Yeah, you respect it," Bradley said.

"And he has every right to exercise his right," Bradley added. "And it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. A lot of people will ask, 'What if it was you? What if you were in his shoes?' Well, it doesn't matter. ... So you've just got to respect it. A player who believes in himself and is willing to bet on himself, then I have nothing but the utmost respect for that."

Boston Red Sox sign stealing investigation: MLB commissioner Rob Manfred 'hopeful' to complete it before spring training begins (report)

Christopher Smith

Red Sox pitchers and catchers officially report to spring training Tuesday. At that point, MLB hopes to be finished with its investigation into the 2018 Red Sox for allegedly using their video replay room to decode signs.

"I'm hopeful I can get Boston done before the camps open," commissioner Rob Manfred said, according to Newsday Yankees reporter Erik Boland. "I'd like to have this over. Investigations are funny. You think you know what the timeline is but that's a day to day prediction."

J.D. Martinez said in January he believes Major League Baseball's investigation will clear the organization.

"It sucks. To be honest with you, it does suck," Martinez said. "But you know what? I'm excited for the investigation to get over with. Just so they can see that there was nothing going on here."

Rafael Devers also said the Red Sox didn't cheat.

Boston dismissed manager Alex Cora in January after MLB investigators concluded Cora was one of the ringleaders in the Astros' 2017 sign stealing scheme.

* **RedSox.com**

Key questions for Red Sox after Betts trade

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Though Red Sox fans had plenty of warning through the barrage of recent trade rumors that Mookie Betts would be gone before Spring Training, the finality of it still feels like a gut punch.

Looking forward, as the Red Sox, Dodgers and Twins finish the logistics of a trade that will send Betts and David Price to Los Angeles, now is a good time to digest all the ramifications of the deal that is expected to bring 23-year-old outfielder Alex Verdugo and 21-year-old righty Brusdar Graterol to Boston. There is a possibility the deal could be adjusted, however, according to a report from MLB Network insider Ken Rosenthal Wednesday night, because of Graterol's medical records. A source told MLB.com's Mark Feinsand that the teams involved in the three-way trade are "working through some things" and are hopeful that it will be completed on Thursday, but it's not a certainty, as medicals are holding up the deal.

TRADE BREAKDOWN

RED SOX GET: OF Alex Verdugo (from LAD), RHP Brusdar Graterol (MLB Pipeline's No. 83 prospect, from MIN)

DODGERS GET: OF Mookie Betts, LHP David Price, cash (all from BOS)

TWINS GET: RHP Kenta Maeda (from LAD)

How do the Red Sox replace Betts in the lineup?

No one player can fill the production void left by Betts in all facets of the game. They'll have to do it collectively. But in Verdugo, the Red Sox hope they have a key contributor not just for 2020, but for several years to come. He is a left-handed hitter with the ability to spray the ball to the gaps, something that would work in his favor at doubles-happy Fenway Park.

It's unclear who will replace Betts in the leadoff spot. Verdugo is an obvious candidate, but he batted first just twice for the Dodgers last season and went 0-for-7. The Sox tried Andrew Benintendi there during the early portion of last season, but it didn't go well (.256 average in 48 games). Then again, that might have been a byproduct of Benintendi not feeling like himself for most of the year. Questions of lineup composition are particularly hard to answer when we don't know yet who Boston's next manager will be.

The Red Sox should still score plenty of runs, given that J.D. Martinez, Xander Bogaerts and Rafael Devers are all forces with the bat. Benintendi had a down year in 2019, but he is fully capable of bouncing back. Catcher Christian Vázquez emerged into a solid offensive player at a position that tends to lack firepower. Infielder Michael Chavis could take a step forward in his second season and slugging prospect Bobby Dalbec could be knocking on the door.

How will the outfield align?

The Red Sox have three starting outfielders in Benintendi, Jackie Bradley Jr. and Verdugo who are flexible enough to move around. Bradley plays center and right. Benintendi can play left and center. And Verdugo comfortably plays all three spots. The guess here is that Benintendi stays in left, Bradley remains in center and Verdugo takes the spot vacated by Betts in right. The newcomer has one of the most important components of playing Fenway's challenging right field -- a strong arm. Boston's starting outfield now consists of three lefty hitters. It will be interesting to see if chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom will try to acquire a righty for the bench. Martinez, a big righty bat, also plays the outfield at times.

Who slots into a Price-less rotation?

Without Price, the Red Sox still have a potentially strong top three in Chris Sale, Eduardo Rodriguez and Nathan Eovaldi, as well as a free-agent acquisition with experience in lefty Martin Pérez. But how will the Sox fill the fifth spot? Bloom could always make a trade or sign a free agent. But don't be surprised if the

Red Sox go with an opener. Nobody has more experience at overseeing the implementation of openers than Bloom. Another interesting question is this: Could the Sox reverse course and have ultra-talented lefty Darwinson Hernandez move back to the rotation? Late last season, Boston decided he could be of more immediate help as a reliever.

Can Graterol provide instant impact?

In trading Betts, it was vital for Bloom to get a Top 100 prospect, and that's what he is expected to get in Graterol. The right-hander's fastball sits in the high 90s, and if he can overcome his lack of experience (10 MLB appearances) with a quick transition, the Sox could have a key weapon in their bullpen.

Now that the Sox are back under the luxury tax ...

We heard all winter how it was a goal -- not a mandate -- of Red Sox ownership to get below the Competitive Balance Tax threshold of \$208 million. That goal will be reached once the Price/Betts trade is official. In fact, with Boston believed to be close to a \$190 million payroll after the trade, Bloom could have some wiggle room to upgrade the roster before Opening Day. There's also a chance the Sox will keep that money in hand for July trade acquisitions.

However, the reason ownership wanted to get under the tax for the first time in three years is to re-establish a competitive advantage going forward. Assuming the Red Sox stay under the threshold in 2020, they can reset the penalty rate to the minimum, which could create close to \$50 million in payroll flexibility in '21 and beyond. In other words, the Sox could again be big players on the free-agent market by next winter and be set up for a nice run of success over the next few years.

With Betts not staying long term, who might be?

The biggest individual winner with Betts leaving the Red Sox could be Devers, the 23-year-old with the big left-handed bat. Devers, who loves Boston and views Bogaerts as his big brother, could be in position to sign a long-term extension that would keep him at Fenway for a long time. As things stand, Devers is eligible for free agency after the 2023 season. The Sox would be thrilled to push that back for many years, and Devers likely would be as well. Benintendi, assuming he bounces back, is another candidate to sign an extension. Bradley is a free agent after '20, and it will be interesting to see if Boston makes an effort to retain him next winter.

Can the Red Sox win in 2020 without Mookie and Price?

Winning the division looks like a stretch for a team that just lost its best all-around player and a key starting pitcher. But Bloom has found ways to stay in contention with a much lower payroll than he has now. If the Red Sox stay healthy and Bloom adds some more pieces by July 31, a Wild Card run is hardly out of the question in the American League. And once you get to October, anything can happen. For inspiration, the Sox can draw on what the Nationals did last season after losing Bryce Harper to the Phillies. The biggest key for Boston to have a chance to contend is Sale. Quite simply, he needs to again become a dominant ace who makes all of his starts count.

Don't count the Red Sox out yet ... here's why

Andrew Simon

It looks like the Red Sox will not have Mookie Betts in 2020, and that hurts.

It hurts them on the field, because Betts is one of the best players in the sport -- an irreplaceable star in the prime of his career. No doubt it also hurts the hearts of many in Red Sox Nation who understandably wanted their homegrown MVP and World Series champion to remain in Boston for at least one more season.

Any discussion of the 2020 Red Sox has to begin there. Leadership in Boston believes the reported three-team trade with the Dodgers and Twins will benefit the organization in the long term, and that's a debatable point. What isn't debatable: The Sox did not improve their chances this year by shipping off a guy who trails only Mike Trout in WAR over the past five seasons (not to mention losing David Price).

But that's not the same thing as saying that the Red Sox can't get better results than they did in 2019, when their 108-victory, championship-winning run in '18 gave way to a disappointing 84-78 finish that left them outside the playoff picture. That task has grown significantly more difficult, to be sure. This is still a good team, however, one with a chance to compete

As MLB.com's Anthony Castrovine pointed out prior to the Betts trade, the team WAR projections at FanGraphs -- converted to win totals -- had the Red Sox projected to gain 12 wins, putting them at 96-66. That would drop to 92-70 after the trade, factoring in both the players lost and gained, with Boston still ranking sixth in MLB and fifth in the AL in total WAR.

Even given the usual caveats with projections, that feels awfully aggressive under the circumstances. As analyst and ZiPS projections developer Dan Szymborski put it in his transaction analysis at FanGraphs, "Boston looks like an 86-89-win team on paper right now and while those types of teams make the playoffs all the time, they do need some luck."

Even 92 wins would far from guarantee a return to October. Every American League playoff team won at least 96 games last year, and all five of those clubs (Astros, A's, Rays, Twins and Yankees) look strong again. The Angels should continue to get better assuming their related trade goes through, the White Sox have aggressively improved and the Blue Jays and Rangers have taken some positive steps.

Boston was already looking at a steep hill, and now it's steeper. But there are ways for the club to climb it anyway. Here are six reasons why the Mookie-less Sox still have a chance to fight their way back to the postseason in 2020. (Though first they will need to find a new manager).

1) Last year was better than it looked

As mentioned, the 2019 Red Sox were 84-78, but they had a +73 run differential, and their estimated BaseRuns record, based on their underlying offensive and defensive performance, was 89-73. That difference of five wins was one of the largest in MLB and suggests the club was better than its results but suffered from factors such as poor sequencing of hits and hits allowed. Now more than ever, the Sox need that dynamic to flip in 2020.

2) The cupboard is hardly bare

Even without Betts and Price, the Red Sox have two top-20 projected position players on the left side of their infield (Xander Bogaerts and Rafael Devers), a DH who mashes (J.D. Martinez), an intriguing young outfielder (more on him below), an ace starting pitcher (Chris Sale) and another who received Cy Young Award votes in 2019 (Eduardo Rodríguez). That's still an enviable core. Those six players are projected for a combined 25 WAR, stacking up favorably with the top sixes of fellow AL contenders such as Tampa Bay, Minnesota, Cleveland and Oakland. There are depth concerns here, but that elite talent goes a long way -- if those stars can stay healthy.

3) Sale's ceiling remains high

The Red Sox need their ace back. The bad news is that elbow issues limited the left-hander to 147 1/3 innings in 2019, and seven games with at least five earned runs ballooned his final ERA to a stunning 4.40. But Sale also mixed in plenty of dominant outings, striking out at least a dozen batters six times. He still misses bats better than almost anyone, and even in 2019, his 35.6% K-rate was the highest of any starter besides Gerrit Cole. The elbow and velocity dip are concerns, but this is still a potentially elite pitcher, health permitting. Even 180 innings of the Sale the Sox saw in 2017-18 (13.8 WAR) would provide a massive lift.

4) Alex Verdugo is no afterthought

The 23-year-old, expected to head from Los Angeles to Boston in the trade, is in a tough spot. He's not going to make anyone forget Betts -- but he shouldn't be overlooked. This is a player who has pedigree (he was a top 50 prospect before last season) and already proved he can translate that to big league performance. Verdugo hit .294/.342/.475 last year in his first extended taste of the Majors. He has to show he can hold up for a full season, but if so, the projections see a 3-plus WAR player in 2020. Verdugo's

contact-oriented bat and rocket arm seem like good fits for Fenway Park, which would make Sox fans feel at least a bit better.

5) Andrew Benintendi has more to offer

It wasn't Boston's biggest problem last season, but Benintendi backsliding to league-average offensive numbers (a park-adjusted 100 wRC+) was a disappointment. The seventh overall pick in the 2015 Draft looked like a blossoming star in 2018, when he slashed .290/.366/.465 (122 wRC+) and posted 4.4 WAR. Benintendi needs to find a way to reverse last season's concerning strikeout spike, but as a 25-year-old with significant success already on his resume, a step forward following that step backward is hardly far-fetched.

6) Remember Nathan Eovaldi?

The 2019 season was a mess for Eovaldi. An elbow injury required surgery and held him out for most of the first half. He returned in the bullpen, then moved to the rotation and never really found his rhythm in what turned out to be a replacement-level season. But there's a reason the Red Sox signed him to a four-year, \$68 million deal last winter. Eovaldi was a crucial contributor after the Sox acquired him in 2018, both down the stretch and in the postseason (2.83 combined ERA). And even in '19, he suffered from one of the largest gaps between his expected numbers (per Statcast) and actual numbers of any pitcher who faced at least 300 batters, suggesting some bad luck. With high-90s heat in hand, Eovaldi, who only turns 30 on Feb. 13, could play a key role in the 2020 rotation -- and he'll have to, with Price now heading to L.A.

None of these are sure things. The Red Sox face other questions, too, including at the back of the rotation, in the bullpen and at second base. Perhaps they will still add some reinforcements around the margins, including a right-handed-hitting outfielder to complement lefties Benintendi, Verdugo and Jackie Bradley Jr. And there's the manager situation and MLB investigation.

This was already going to be a challenging season at Fenway, and giving up a generational player ratchets up the degree of difficulty. Nonetheless, Betts leaves a talented, if flawed, roster behind. If some things that went wrong in 2019 go right in '20, the Sox still have a chance at October.

*** *ESPN.com***

MLB may rule on Red Sox's alleged sign stealing by start of camp

ORLANDO, Fla. -- Major League Baseball intends to impose new limits on what live video is available to teams, and commissioner Rob Manfred hopes to complete his investigation into alleged electronic sign stealing by the Boston Red Sox before spring training camps open next week.

"I think you should assume that before the season starts we will have new guidelines with respect to the use of video equipment," Manfred said Thursday after an owners meeting. "I think we have too much video available in real time right now."

After former Houston pitcher Mike Fiers told The Athletic in November that the Astros used a video camera to steal the signs of opposing catchers in 2017 and 2018, Manfred last month suspended Houston manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow for one season, fined the Astros \$5 million and stripped them of their first- and second-round drafts picks in 2020 and 2021.

Hinch and Luhnow were fired the same day, and the scandal led to the departures of Boston manager Alex Cora, Houston's bench coach during its 2017 title run, and New York Mets manager Carlos Beltran, an Astros player that season.

MLB is investigating a separate allegation that the Red Sox broke sign-stealing rules in 2018, when Cora led Boston to the championship in his first season as manager.

"I'm hopeful that I can get Boston done before the camps open," said Manfred. Workouts start Wednesday.

Manfred did not punish any Houston players and said no Red Sox players will be sanctioned. But he left open the possibility of discipline for future violations.

"We have the right to discipline players right now. I'm absolutely convinced of that fact," he said. "We made a decision in the Houston investigation that in order for us to get the facts that we needed, somebody had to get immunity."

He was not disappointed by the failure of current Astros players to apologize.

"I think the jury's still out on exactly what the Houston players are going to say," he said, pointing toward spring training as the possible time and place for contrition.

Baseball has looked at earpieces as a way to avoid the use of signs but determined it would be impractical. While football uses earpieces, helmets are much larger than baseball caps.

"It's much harder to design an earpiece that would be comfortable for players to wear in lieu of signs," he said, adding, "it's hard to be as fast as hand signals."

Astros owner Jim Crane did not attend the meetings. He is playing in the Pebble Beach Pro-Am golf tournament along with pitcher Justin Verlander this weekend.

On other matters:

METS SALE: Manfred said that talks have ended over the proposed sale of a controlling share of the Mets from the families of Fred Wilpon and Saul Katz to hedge fund manager Steven Cohen.

The Mets said Thursday night in a statement they intend to find another buyer, although it's unclear if a future transaction would involve a controlling share of the franchise.

"The transaction between Sterling (Partners) and Steve Cohen was a highly complicated one," the team said. "Despite the efforts of the parties over the past several months, it became apparent that the transaction as contemplated would have been too difficult to execute."

COMPUTERIZED PLATE UMPIRES: Manfred said the automated balls-and-strikes system will have to be negotiated with the players' union before it is used in the major leagues. MLB is using the system at nine ballparks of the Class A Florida State League this year and will test it during big league spring training without using it in exhibition games.

"It's fair to assume that we're going to continue to test at increasingly significant levels of play to make sure we've got it right before we bring it to the major leagues," he said.

OLYMPICS: Manfred said MLB was discussing whether to make some 40-man roster players available for the Americas Olympic qualifying tournament in Arizona from March 22 to 26.

"The timing's a little difficult there," he said.

Using a team with no 40-man players and few top prospects, the U.S. was three outs from qualifying at the Premier12 tournament last November but wasted a ninth-inning lead to Mexico and lost in 10 innings.

"We are going to make every effort to field as competitive a team as possible," Manfred said.

MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL: Owners were given an update on MLB's proposal to eliminate 42 minor league affiliates in negotiations for a Professional Baseball Agreement with the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the governing body of the minors. Talks are set to resume Feb. 20. The current deal expires after this season.

"There is unanimous support among the owners for the objectives and the strategy that we're pursuing with respect to this negotiation, in particular our objectives of modernizing minor league baseball, improving the working conditions of the players who play there," Manfred said. "I'm hopeful that the minor league negotiating committee is able to get a consensus among its constituents, a consensus that's strong enough that they can make us finally a written proposal that's supported by their membership."

GAMBLING: MLB may alter its regulations on team owners and casino gambling in a manner that could affect the Ilitch family. Different members of the family control the Detroit Tigers and a casino.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL: Los Angeles Dodgers chairman Mark Walter and Tigers chairman Christopher Ilitch were appointed to the executive council following the end of the four-year terms of Chicago Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts and Tampa Bay Rays principal owner Stu Sternberg. The council also includes Crane; San Diego's Ron Fowler (whose terms expire in 2021); Milwaukee's Mark Attanasio; Jerry Reinsdorf of the Chicago White Sox (2022); Boston's John Henry; and Colorado's Dick Monfort (2023).

BROADCASTERS WORKING AS TEAM EMPLOYEES: The dual roles of former Boston pitcher Pedro Martinez and ex-Olympic softball player Jessica Mendoza as team employees and broadcasters is a concern, Manfred said.

Martinez is a Red Sox special assistant and an analyst for TBS. Mendoza is a New York Mets baseball operations adviser and an ESPN broadcaster.

Both criticized Fiers for revealing the Astros' sign-stealing scam to The Athletic.

"I'm a transparency guy," Manfred said Thursday. "That someone should be kind of singled out because they saw something that was wrong and decided to talk about it, I don't agree with that."

Manfred concluded Martinez's and Mendoza's comments were made in their roles as journalists.

"I'm not all that comfortable with it. I'm really not," he said of their dual roles. "It's a topic that remains under discussion internally. It caused a lot of complications, not just on this particular incident or comments, but in general."

*** *WEEI.com***

Latest on Red Sox' mega-deal with Dodgers and what hold up is

Ryan Hannable

The Red Sox' mega-trade with the Dodgers and Twins was reported as done Tuesday night, but it's now Friday and it hasn't been officially announced by the teams.

Boston agreed to send Mookie Betts, David Price and cash to the Dodgers for outfielder Alex Verdugo and Brusdar Graterol, who was one of the Twins' top pitching prospects last season.

So, what's the hold up?

It is the medicals with Graterol, a 21-year-old right-hander. He's known for his velocity, as his fastball was clocked at over 100 mph last season, but following the review of his medical records he's being looked at as more of a reliever than a starter.

On Thursday night, MLB Network's Jon Heyman reported some involved speculated the deal wasn't a lock to get done anymore, but that doesn't appear to be the case after all. Shortly after that report, Ken Rosenthal

of The Athletic said talks between the clubs are going slowly and an option could be the Dodgers getting a top prospect from another team to bridge the gap with the Sox.

Then Friday morning, Heyman followed up and said all three teams are motivated to get the deal done and the Red Sox are looking to get a second prospect in addition to Graterol.

By all accounts, a deal will eventually be completed, it's just a matter of when everything gets figured out.

The Red Sox open spring training in Fort Myers next Wednesday, so it's likely a press conference following the deal will not take place in Boston, rather Florida some time next week.

Also, the team still does not have a manager and MLB is expected to release its findings into the investigation of the 2018 team perhaps as early as next week.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

How the Red Sox clubhouse will be a better place without David Price in it

John Tomase

David Price lorded over the Red Sox clubhouse like a raven.

Whereas most players find a pregame place to hide — be it the trainer's room, batting cage, or manager's office — Price spent more time at his locker than anyone, often facing out with a crossword.

Tucked in a nook behind couches on a short wall beyond the traveling secretary, he occupied prime real estate reserved for elder statesmen before him like Bret Saberhagen, Pedro Martinez, Josh Beckett, and Jonathan Papelbon.

The vantage point afforded Price a view of virtually the entire clubhouse, and he put it to good use, monitoring whatever interactions he wished. Even the simple act of interviewing a player became fraught, with both reporter and subject aware of Price's gaze.

The result was a tension that hung over the clubhouse during a difficult 2019 season, which helps explain why the trade that sent Price and former MVP Mookie Betts to the Dodgers on Tuesday didn't just save the Red Sox \$48 million. It should also significantly improve a culture that shifts away from the dour Price and towards the more outwardly positive Xander Bogaerts.

Deep down, Red Sox marketing people must be doing cartwheels.

Price's teammates will probably disagree, because they swore by him. But that doesn't make them right, just as a different generation of hurlers erred in following the lead of Beckett during the lost beer and fried chicken season of 2011.

Price's impact on a young team can't be overstated. He failed to hide his disdain for "Manager John" Farrell, which contributed to the skipper losing his players. Early in his tenure, he routinely hosted youngsters like Andrew Benintendi, Eduardo Rodriguez, and Robbie Ross at his locker, filling their minds with what he would call wisdom and others feared was poison. He certainly had Betts' ear. As one of the lone veterans overseeing a very young team, he held considerable sway as the Red Sox developed an us-against-them mentality.

He considered himself a great teammate, but his actions frequently made life miserable for everyone else in uniform. Jumping Hall of Famer Dennis Eckersley on a team flight will always be disgraceful, and Price didn't do anyone any favors by dredging it back up for a news cycle last season after being alerted to a benign comment in a feature story.

Part of the problem is that Price exuded a vibe of wishing to be anywhere but Boston.

He felt unfairly criticized by fans and media, and he's a classic case study in the pitfalls of chasing the money. Multiple rivals believe he would've spurned Boston had he received \$200 million from anyone else, even if the money was deferred to infinity, but the Cardinals couldn't get there, and so Price reluctantly signed here.

Price's history with Boston media: In his own words

It was then pretty much all downhill, from complaints about disinterest in his charity endeavors to stubbornly refusing to embrace the Fenway fans — "I love my teammates and coaches," was a frequent, pointed response — to screaming at a reporter in Yankee Stadium because he felt like being a bully to using the moment of his biggest success to snarl, "I hold all the cards now."

That last quote came after Price beat the Dodgers in the clinching Game 5 of the 2018 World Series, and it ended a lifetime of postseason futility. Price should've been named MVP, and the Red Sox don't win that title without him, to be fair.

It was also telling that when the players gathered to celebrate in the tiny visiting clubhouse at Dodger Stadium, their first order of business was loudly declaring that outsiders should GTFO, a tone-deaf note of defiance in the midst of the champagne-soaked reverie that chagrined MLB officials wanted beamed coast-to-coast.

Price had helped foster that cocoon mentality during a 108-win season, so it should come as no surprise that when 2019 presented challenges like a 3-8 season-opening road trip, no reservoirs of positivity existed to fight the gloom.

Now that Price is being outfitted for Dodgers blue, though, he can leave Boston behind. I suspect he's happy to be rid of us, and at the risk of speaking for fans, I'd venture that the feeling is mutual.

Here's hoping the next inhabitant of his locker puts it to better use.

Everyone knew Brusdar Graterol was damaged goods — everyone except the Red Sox, apparently

John Tomase

So let's get this straight: the 265-pound reliever who has already undergone Tommy John surgery and missed two months last year with a bad shoulder is damaged goods?

Who could've seen this coming?

The Red Sox are reportedly holding up the three-team mega-trade with the Dodgers because of concerns over Twins right-hander Brusdar Graterol. The Red Sox acquired the flame-throwing fire hydrant with the expectation that he would compete for a spot in their starting rotation, at least until they got a look at his medicals.

Now they consider him more likely a reliever, and thus hope to amend the trade to include either another player or more money, per Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic.

Unlike a prior case of the team receiving diminished returns in the form of left-hander Drew Pomeranz, this one feels entirely avoidable. When the Padres sent Pomeranz to Boston at the 2016 trade deadline, after all, they willfully withheld information related to a sore elbow. MLB ended up suspending Padres GM A.J. Preller as a result.

This time around, Graterol's issues were clear to anyone with an internet connection.

He underwent Tommy John surgery in 2016 and didn't pitch again for 15 months. He dominated in nine starts at Double A last year (5-0, 1.89) before a mid-May shoulder impingement sidelined him until late July. When the Twins summoned him to the big leagues in September, they shifted him to the bullpen. He made 10 appearances and did not pitch on back-to-back days. (In his second appearance, incidentally, he threw a scoreless inning against the Red Sox, retiring Betts to end the frame).

As recently as two weeks ago, the Twins made no secret of their plan to pitch Graterol in relief to protect his arm. Consider this, from the Minneapolis Star-Tribune:

The Twins are leery of putting too much stress on that elbow, particularly because Graterol uses an unusual whipping motion to produce his amazing velocity.

So (pitching coach Wes) Johnson wants to tutor Graterol an inning at a time.

"We feel that because it is such a violent delivery, if we can clean up some arm stuff, that's kind of like step one," Johnson said. "Shorter stints, make sure he's throwing the right way, and let him get comfortable up here. Right now, I don't think it would be fair to throw him out there for extended innings."

This does not sound like a pitcher the Red Sox should've been counting on to fill a spot in their rotation, particularly since the Twins traded him — despite consistent 100 mph velocity — for middling 31-year-old starter Kenta Maeda. If the Twins thought the explosive Graterol could start, they would've kept him. They certainly wouldn't have traded him for a slightly above average starter.

It appears the Red Sox had hoped for an outcome the available information deemed unrealistic, and now they want to be compensated for their lack of foresight.

The sooner we put this offseason behind us, the better.

*** *The Athletic***

Baseball is big business, but the sport shouldn't feel like the sole domain of businessmen

Marc Carig

Connie Mack, the Hall of Fame manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, was also the club's proprietor. It helps to explain his legendary job security— he managed the A's for 50 years. It was his only business. This also meant that he lived a boom-and-bust existence. In the good times, he was assembling some of the best teams in baseball history. In the bad times, he was selling off those pieces just to stay afloat, in hopes of rebuilding a dynasty. Mack had little choice.

John Henry is not Connie Mack.

This comes to mind now that Mookie Betts is in the process of being wrapped up and shipped to the Dodgers in the kind of trade that should never, ever happen. The financial reasons for it are clear. The Red Sox want to escape the punishment of the luxury tax, Betts is a year from free agency and attempts at an extension have proven fruitless. In the plainest language possible, the Red Sox simply didn't anticipate meeting Betts' price. This is a choice. It is a choice because whether or not Betts gets paid, there are two indisputable truths moving forward. Henry will still be the very rich owner of the Boston Red Sox and he will still be raking in plenty of money. Any suggestion to the contrary is a farce.

To be clear, baseball is big business. It has been for a long time. It will be moving forward. There's nothing wrong with making a buck. Players are performers, and the owners are producers. Performers are compensated for their talents with money. This isn't a charitable endeavor on either side. Nor is it a public trust, despite the mass mythologizing to the contrary. But the sport shouldn't feel like it is the sole domain of businessmen. There should be room for what used to be called sportsmen.

The word itself feels as antiquated as the concept that it once described. These days, it shows up in brochures for things like fishing tackle and hunting waders. There was a time when the word represented something far more abstract but far more meaningful. It was about competition for competition's sake, and with a sense of fairness, even if in baseball that idea was always malleable. Steal signs? Go for it, but there's a line that shouldn't be crossed. Even if baseball's version has always been imperfect, the idea of the sportsmen should survive — even if the gender-loaded word does not.

There is no turning back the clock. That's partly because most of the good old days weren't actually that good. There is no more convincing illusion than nostalgia, and that's especially true with baseball. There were bad owners in Mack's day and there are bad owners now. There was a reserve clause, and when that weapon didn't work to suppress salaries enough, owners sometimes traded great players over minuscule disputes. Even as the sport has evolved, some of the owners have kept their old tricks.

The game's growth should have guarded against precisely the kind of thing we just saw in Boston. Baseball teams are now megacorporations. They are mostly part of an owner's larger lucrative holdings — unlike the mom and pop operation that Mack ran so long ago. Teams should now be insulated from draconian actions like parting ways with the best players in the game to, say, finance Broadway plays. Winning is no longer even a prerequisite to make money, as it was earlier in the game's history. Yet, owners choose to operate as if business survival is on the line. So many of them barely make an active effort to win that when a few of them step out of character, it qualifies as major news. The Reds did what? Wait, the White Sox signed who? The Twins?!?

What's more surprising is that the folks who shouldn't care about a billionaire's finances have learned to lose sleep over it. Part of fandom is suspending reality. But in baseball, it has become a strange badge of honor to discuss and dissect the ins and outs of the luxury tax thresholds. The game's scientific revolution, which has done far more good than bad, has also had another odd consequence: the creation of fans who see the game through the lens of a general manager. Many run to the ballpark to escape life's most frustrating problems, like doing more with less. Now, there's a subset of people who flock toward it.

Somehow this became the prevailing thought within the game. It's not uncommon to scoff at a team — heaven forbid — signing a good a baseball player and paying him actual money for the privilege. When a big-league player lollygags to first base on a routine grounder, it's an affront to all things sacred about the sport. But when an owner empowers a big-league general manager to intentionally build a team that would finish last in the International League, it's a tribute to long-term strategy?

No one buys a movie ticket only to fret about what the producers paid to hire the performers on screen. In baseball, that hand-wringing has become its own little pastime. And those who write the checks have taken cover in such foolishness.

Those who fancy themselves as GMs see the Red Sox situation and believe that moving Betts was an inescapable fate. They speak of the previous administration's reckless spending, with only a passing mention that the franchise also won the World Series. The owners have no choice. They had to scale back. Given the financial rules of the game, they aren't entirely wrong. But they've become so obsessed with obeying the rules that the existence of those rules hasn't been scrutinized enough.

There's something fundamentally wrong with the system when it leads to an outcome as soulless as trading away such a gifted player. It comes not long after commissioner Rob Manfred brought in a guest speaker to speak to general managers at their annual meeting. The gist of the message, according to Sports Illustrated: "The need to humanize the game more."

Baseball can be enjoyed through all kinds of lenses. It's part of its charm. There's the aesthetic beauty of an outfielder chasing down a ball in the gap, or a runner taking the extra base. There's the intellectual high-wire act of a pitcher and catcher working together to take apart a lineup. There's the game played in the executive suites, where if you're not leveraging analytics, you are a fool. But none of it means anything without competition for competition's sake. There must be room for the sportsmen, too. While the word

should be updated — sportsperson? — the concept should remain timeless. It's an ideal that's still worth striving for.

*** *The New York Post***

Rob Manfred 'uncomfortable' with dual roles of Jessica Mendoza, Pedro Martinez

Ken Davidoff

ORLANDO — When are Pedro Martinez and Jessica Mendoza speaking as baseball team officials, and when are they speaking as members of the media? And how exactly aren't they speaking on behalf of both employers all of the time?

Rob Manfred, after some initial bobbing and weaving, acknowledged that he's essentially as confused as the rest of us.

Martinez, a Red Sox special assistant who also works for the MLB Network, and Mendoza, a Mets baseball operations adviser who also works for ESPN, both recently criticized A's pitcher Mike Fiers for publicly accusing the 2017 Astros, for whom he pitched, of illegally stealing signs from opponents. Fiers' comments, published by The Athletic, played a vital role in spurring Manfred's investigation that ultimately convicted the Astros of the crime.

"People are entitled to their own views on topics," the baseball commissioner said at the conclusion of the Major League Baseball owners' meetings. "Me personally, I'm a transparency guy. I think that healthy organizations tend to run to the transparent. The idea that someone should be kind of singled out because they saw something that was wrong and decided to talk about it, I don't agree with that."

Asked if he reached out to Martinez, Mendoza or the teams for which they work to express his disappointment, Manfred replied, "In what mode they were speaking, whether they were speaking as journalists or club employees, I think we were satisfied that their comments were being made in their role as journalists. And anybody that we have a relationship with, we don't really try to control what they say in that role as media person. So the short answer is no, we do not reach out."

Asked whether he was comfortable with such people cherry-picking their "mode," as opposed to the common sense of always representing everyone who pays them, Manfred said, "Let me give you a short answer on that one: No. I'm not all that comfortable with it. I'm really not. But it's a topic that remains under discussion internally. As you know, it causes a lot of complications, not just on this particular incident or comments, but in general."

The Mets also employ MLB Network analyst Al Leiter as a baseball operations adviser.

Rob Manfred hints at new video rules with Red Sox decision imminent

Ken Davidoff

ORLANDO, Fla. — The bell tolls wicked hahd for the 2018 Red Sox.

As he wrapped up the Major League Baseball owners' meeting on Thursday, commissioner Rob Manfred declared that he hoped to release imminently his office's findings on allegations that the '18 Sawx, who won 108 regular-season games and proceeded to win the World Series, illegally stole opponents' signs via electronic means.

"I'm hopeful that I can get Boston done before the camps open," Manfred said. "I'd like to have this over. Investigations are funny. You think you know what the timeline is, but that's a day-to-day prediction."

Boston's first pitchers-and-catchers workout is scheduled for Wednesday in Fort Myers.

The commissioner confirmed a report by Duke Castiglione of WCVB-TV in Boston, that Red Sox players have been granted immunity, just as occurred with Manfred's recently completed investigation of the 2017 Astros. That means that no players, again, will be disciplined. Alex Cora, who managed Boston to the title in his first year on the job, is sure to be penalized heavily, as Manfred already implicated him for his leading role (while he worked as Houston's bench coach) in the '17 Astros scheme. Cora and the Red Sox parted ways on Jan. 14, the day after Manfred released his report on the Astros.

"We have the right to discipline players right now [for stealing signs]. I'm absolutely convinced of that fact," Manfred said. "We made a decision in the Houston investigation that, in order for us to get the facts that we needed, somebody had to get immunity. That is not a novel thought. It happens all the time in law enforcement when, quite frankly, the police have a lot more power than we do over people. I see that as a specific statement we made in the context of that investigation in order to help us get to the bottom of what went on.

"We thought carefully about who we were going to immunize. And at the end of the day, we felt that, consistent with what I said in the [Astros] decision, that management people — the GM, the field managers — should be most responsible for enforcing the rules."

Manfred suspended Astros president of baseball operations Jeff Luhnow and manager A.J. Hinch for a year each, and Houston owner Jim Crane — who didn't attend these meetings, generating much chatter among his fellow lords of the manor — immediately fired both men.

Since the Astros relied on real-time video to cheat and the Red Sox investigation centers on the same alleged crime, Manfred said, "I think you should assume that before the season starts, we will have new guidelines with respect to the use of video equipment."

The commissioner added, "I think we have too much video available in real time right now." Rules could limit who is allowed in the video room that originally came to be for instant-replay review, or what can be watched.

In other news:

Regarding the news that the banned-for-life Pete Rose has applied for reinstatement in light of no 2017 Astros players being punished for stealing signs, Manfred said, "I haven't read the application for reinstatement. For I'm sure reasons that have more to do with you folks than me, they decided to send it during the owners' meeting. So I haven't even had a chance to read it. So I can't really give you a reaction."

The commissioner added: "I think that the process that baseball's generally adhered to is, if you're on that [banned] list, you have the right periodically to apply for reinstatement. I got another application. I'll deal with it."

As MLB's testy negotiations with Minor League Baseball continue, with their agreement set to expire at year's end, Manfred didn't back down on his proposal to eliminate 42 teams from affiliated ball. To the contrary, four members of baseball's Labor Policy Committee — Brewers principal owner Mark Attanasio, Rangers managing partner Ray Davis, Padres executive chairman Ron Fowler and Rockies CEO Dick Monfort — joined Manfred in the news conference as a show of solidarity.

"There is unanimous support among the owners for the objectives and the strategy that we're pursuing with respect to this negotiation in particular," Manfred said. "Our objectives are modernizing minor league baseball, improving the working conditions for the players who play there. I'm hopeful that the minor league negotiating committee is able to get a consensus among its constituents, a consensus that's strong enough that they can make us, finally, a written proposal that's supported by their members."

*** *Associated Press***

Red Sox head into spring minus Betts, Price, manager

BOSTON (AP) — Well, that escalated quickly.

In the 15 months since winning the World Series, the Boston Red Sox have traded away MVP winner Mookie Betts and onetime ace David Price, lost manager Alex Cora in a cheating scandal and fired the baseball boss who put together the greatest team in franchise history.

With less than a week before pitchers and catchers were scheduled to report to spring training, the Red Sox agreed to the terms of a deal that will send Betts and Price to the Los Angeles Dodgers and bring outfielder Alex Verdugo and Twins pitching prospect Brusdar Graterol to Boston. They'll be among the new faces in the dugout; the manager, who had not been hired when the equipment truck left Fenway Park on Monday, could be another.

It was a stunning and sudden sacrifice of the upcoming season for a team that won a franchise-record 108 games and its fourth World Series in 15 years in 2018. And it came at the altar of baseball's collective bargaining tax, which convinced one of the richest teams in the sport to cut its payroll beneath the \$208 million threshold in order to save money.

Now the Red Sox have a new opening in right field, which will probably be filled by Verdugo, and a spot in the rotation, which will probably not be filled by Graterol. Little else is up for grabs in the lineup, but without Betts and Prince on the roster, neither is the AL East title.

"They'll be back. If they're not going to be here this year, they'll be back," Yankees owner Hal Steinbrenner said from the owners' meetings. "I guess it didn't surprise me just because there was so much talk about it. Can't really speak to the decision-making process, but it would have had to be a difficult one and a complicated one."

NEW LOOK

Verdugo batted .294 with 12 homers and 44 RBIs in 106 games for the Dodgers before a back injury ended his season in early August. He will join Jackie Bradley Jr. and Andrew Benintendi in an outfield that had been one of Boston's biggest strengths.

Price's spot will more likely be filled by lefthander Martin Pérez, who joins fellow lefties Chris Sale and Eduardo Rodriguez and righty Nathan Eovaldi in the rotation. The fifth spot is up for grabs; it could be Darwinson Hernandez and it could be an opener.

Kevin Plawecki comes in as a back up catcher.

Oh, and someone will try to be the third straight Red Sox manager to win the World Series in his first season on the Boston bench.

ROOKIES TO WATCH

Graterol is a top 100 prospect who hit 102 mph during a September callup last season, when he had a 4.66 ERA. Bobby Dalbec, who hit .239 with 27 homers and 73 RBIs in Double- and Triple-A last year, could make roster as an extra bat and backup at the corner infield.

THEY'RE SET

The lineup is largely the same one from last year — and the 2018 champions: catcher Christian Vazquez, first baseman Mitch Moreland, shortstop Xander Bogaerts, third baseman Rafael Devers, and Bradley Jr. and Benintendi returning to the outfield.

THEY'RE NOT

The Red Sox need to replace Dustin Pedroia — this time, perhaps, for good. The 2008 AL MVP has played just nine games over the past two seasons, and he had another setback in his rehab this offseason that could be the end of his career.

They also need a closer, with Brandon Workman (10-1, 1.88 ERA, 16 saves, 73 games) handling most of the ninth-inning chores last season.

ON DECK

The Red Sox open the regular season in Toronto on March 26. After four games against the Blue Jays, they head to Baltimore for three before the home opener against the White Sox on April 2.

MLB mulls live video limits, may rule on Red Sox next week

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Major League Baseball intends to impose new limits on what live video is available to teams, and Commissioner Rob Manfred hopes to complete his investigation into alleged electronic sign stealing by the Boston Red Sox before spring training camps open next week.

"I think you should assume that before the season starts we will have new guidelines with respect to the use of video equipment," Manfred said Thursday after an owners meeting. "I think we have too much video available in real time right now."

After former Houston pitcher Mike Fiers told The Athletic in November that the Astros used a video camera to steal the signs of opposing catchers in 2017 and 2018, Manfred last month suspended Houston manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow for one season, fined the Astros \$5 million and stripped them of their first- and second-round drafts picks in 2020 and 2021.

Hinch and Luhnow were fired the same day, and the scandal led to the departures of Boston manager Alex Cora, Houston's bench coach during its 2017 title run, and New York Mets manager Carlos Beltrán, an Astros player that season.

MLB is investigating a separate allegation the Red Sox broke sign-stealing rules in 2018, when Cora led Boston to the championship in his first season as manager.

"I'm hopeful that I can get Boston done before the camps open," said Manfred, with workouts to start Wednesday.

Manfred did not punish any Houston players and said no Red Sox players will be sanctioned. But he left open the possibility of discipline for future violations.

"We have the right to discipline players right now. I'm absolutely convinced of that fact," he said. "We made a decision in the Houston investigation that in order for us to get the facts that we needed, somebody had to get immunity."

He was not disappointed by the reluctance of current Astros players to apologize.

"I think the jury's still out on exactly what the Houston players are going to say," he said, pointing toward spring training as the possible time and place for contrition.

Baseball has looked at earpieces as a way to avoid the use of signs but determined it would be impractical. While football uses earpieces, helmets are much larger than baseball caps.

"It's much harder to design an earpiece that would be comfortable for players to wear in lieu of signs," he said, adding, "it's hard to be as fast as hand signals."

Giants president of baseball operations Farhan Zaidi, the Dodgers GM when Los Angeles lost to Houston, said he isn't sure how much the sign-stealing scheme even helped.

"I think it's natural for teams to sort of look for every advantage," Zaidi said, speaking in San Francisco. "That's what obviously was the motivating factor. I think it's been made a lot more clear going forward where the lines are and I think for anybody in this game you just want to feel like the playing field is level going forward, and I think we're going to have that next year (2020)."

Astros owner Jim Crane did not attend the meetings. He is playing in the Pebble Beach Pro-Am golf tournament along with pitcher Justin Verlander this weekend.

On other matters:

METS SALE

Manfred says talks have ended over the proposed sale of a controlling share of the New York Mets from the families of Fred Wilpon and Saul Katz to hedge fund manager Steven Cohen.

The Mets said Thursday night in a statement they intend to find another buyer, although it's unclear if a future transaction would involve a controlling share of the franchise.

"The transaction between Sterling and Steve Cohen was a highly complicated one," the team said. "Despite the efforts of the parties over the past several months, it became apparent that the transaction as contemplated would have been too difficult to execute."

COMPUTERIZED PLATE UMPIRES

Manfred said the automated balls and strikes system will have to be negotiated with the players' union before it is used in the major leagues. MLB is using the system at nine ballparks of the Class A Florida State League this year and will test it during big league spring training without using it in exhibition games.

"It's fair to assume that we're going to continue to test at increasingly significant levels of play to make sure we've got it right before we bring it to the major leagues," he said.

OLYMPICS

Manfred said MLB was discussing whether to make some 40-man roster players available for the Americas Olympic qualifying tournament in Arizona from March 22-26.

"The timing's a little difficult there," he said.

Using a team with no 40-man players and few top prospects, the U.S. was three outs from qualifying at the Premier12 tournament last November but wasted a ninth-inning lead against Mexico and lost in 10 innings.

"We are going to make every effort to field as competitive a team as possible," Manfred.

MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Owners were given an update on MLB's proposal to eliminate 42 minor league affiliates in negotiations for a Professional Baseball Agreement with the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the governing body of the minors. Talks are set to resume Feb. 20. The current deal expires after this season.

"There is unanimous support among the owners for the objectives and the strategy that we're pursuing with respect to this negotiation, in particular our objectives of modernizing minor league baseball, improving the working conditions of the players who play there," Manfred said. "I'm hopeful that the minor league negotiating committee is able to get a consensus among its constituents, a consensus that's strong enough that they can make us finally a written proposal that's supported by their membership."

GAMBLING

MLB may alter its regulations on team owners and casino gambling in a manner that could affect the Ilitch family. Different members of the family control the Detroit Tigers and a casino.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Los Angeles Dodgers chairman Mark Walter and Detroit Tigers chairman Christopher Ilitch were appointed to the executive council following the end of the four-year terms of Chicago Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts and Tampa Bay Rays principal owner Stu Sternberg. The council also includes Crane; San Diego's Ron Fowler (whose terms expire in 2021); Milwaukee's Mark Attanasio; Jerry Reinsdorf of the Chicago White Sox (2022); Boston's John Henry; and Colorado's Dick Monfort (2023).

Manfred concerned with team/media roles of Martinez, Mendoza

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The dual roles of former Boston pitcher Pedro Martinez and ex-Olympic softball player Jessica Mendoza as team employees and broadcasters have drawn the concern of baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred.

Martinez is a Red Sox special assistant and an analyst for TBS. Mendoza is a New York Mets baseball operations adviser and an ESPN broadcaster.

Both criticized pitcher Mike Fiers for revealing the Houston Astros' sign-stealing scam to The Athletic. Fiers, now with Oakland, sparked an investigation that led to the departures of 10% of the major league managers: Houston's AJ Hinch, Boston's Alex Cora and the Mets' Carlos Beltrán.

"I'm a transparency guy," Manfred said Thursday after an owners meeting. "That someone should be kind of singled out because they saw something that was wrong and decided to talk about it, I don't agree with that."

Martinez, a Hall of Famer, told Boston radio station WEEI "whatever happens in the clubhouse stays in the clubhouse, and Fiers broke the rules."

Mendoza was a gold medalist for the U.S. at the 2004 Olympics.

"To go public, yeah, it didn't sit well with me," she said of Fiers on an ESPN broadcast. "Honestly, it made me sad for the sport that that's how this all got found out."

Manfred concluded their comments were made in their roles as journalists.

"I'm not all that comfortable with it. I'm really not," he said of their dual roles. "It's a topic that remains under discussion internally. It caused a lot of complications, not just on this particular incident or comments, but in general."