

The Boston Red Sox Wednesday, July 11, 2018

*** *The Boston Globe***

So much uncertainty still surrounds Dustin Pedroia

Nick Cafardo

The Red Sox were 63-29 entering Tuesday's game, so to say they have missed Dustin Pedroia might be a stretch. Then again, Red Sox second basemen rank 14th in offense with a .255 average and 22nd in OPS at .656.

Have they survived without Pedroia? Yes. Have they thrived? No.

We have no idea whether Pedroia will be back with the Red Sox this season. He has returned to his Arizona home and will execute his adjusted rehab plan with the personal trainer he worked with in the offseason. Manager Alex Cora said he thought Pedroia would be playing baseball for the team at some time this season, but he emphasized that was just a personal feeling.

Cora said the decision to get Pedroia away from the team was made so he wouldn't feel the distractions and the tug to get on the field sooner than he is able. The rehab program Pedroia went through did not yield the desired results. Cora said because the restoration cartilage surgery Pedroia underwent is relatively new for baseball players, the rehab program is also constantly being tweaked.

"We love him to be around here. For now it's better he go over there and disconnect a little bit from all this and just concentrate on himself. There are going to be some adjustments on the rehab dealing with hammy and core and gluts. I think that's the best thing we can do right now."

Pedroia was talking to Cora on the bench during Monday's 5-0 win over the Rangers.

"He's very important to what we're trying to accomplish here. If everything goes the way [it] should go, whenever he comes back, he comes back."

Cora said the week Pedroia spent in New York with the surgeon helped to make the adjustments they feel necessary to strengthen the areas around the left knee.

"I expect him to play," Cora repeated. "What I've been saying all along and it didn't happen the first time, but we want him to stay healthy and play. We're not going to put a timetable on it and take we'll take it day by day."

Cora said Pedroia learned "good things about it. It's nothing structural. Just some adjustments around the knee that are going to help the knee. He's done his research. He cares and he wants to contribute. He's in a good place now."

Cora said there was a lot of attention directed to Pedroia by the medical staff and Pedroia was wary of taking time away from the players who are playing.

"It's a unique situation because this type of surgery has never happened to baseball players. In basketball you can tell a head coach the player is going to play for 12 minutes and that's it. I think the doctor also learned through the process [about baseball]," Cora said.

"The most important thing is to be healthy. This is not just about contributing this year, but for the rest of his career."

Pedroia, who turns 35 next month and is owed \$40 million from 2019-2021, is basically starting fresh with a new program. He was told that the first year back might be tough, that he may experience occasional soreness as the knee gets tested in real game situations. It's disappointing for Pedroia who wanted to be part of this team because of the talent level.

The Red Sox have survived primarily using Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt at second base. The Sox are giving up range on defense, but both players, in their own right, have contributed. Nunez hasn't quite been the player who impacted Boston's lineup when Dave Dombrowski acquired him from San Francisco near the trading deadline last season. Nunez sparked, if not carried the Red Sox offense, until he hurt his knee late in the season and then was unable to perform in the playoffs.

Holt has returned from concussion issues last season to play well as he's moved around the infield. Holt's best position has always been second base.

The Red Sox also acquired veteran four-time Gold Glover Brandon Phillips, who is 37 years old and currently getting in shape in Lowell. Phillips could be someone added to the mix at some point if neither Nunez nor Holt are effective.

Other players have been linked to the Red Sox in a possible trade scenario, including Minnesota's Brian Dozier, who has not had a great season in his walk year in Minnesota. Yet Dozier is considered one of the best second basemen in the game and could be had relatively cheaply.

The Marlins would deal Starlin Castro. The Reds will talk about Scooter Gennett.

Still, Nunez hasn't killed them defensively, neither has Holt. They have provided Cora with a good enough tandem under the circumstances.

While some fans have put Pedroia in the rear view mirror, a Red Sox team with a healthy Pedroia would have been ideal. The Red Sox would have had their Gold Glove second baseman, who can hit close to .300, and add spark. Cora has lamented the loss all season because he and Pedroia were always close. Cora wanted Pedroia to be part of the leadership of the team, but it just didn't work out that way.

When Dombrowski re-signed Nunez in the offseason, it was for protection in case Pedroia couldn't make it back. It's a good thing he did.

The Red Sox have survived the Pedroia loss and will continue to do so. But it would have been better with him.

Brock Holt is the campaign manager for the #VoteBenny movement

Julian Benbow

Brock Holt didn't find out until Monday that he was in charge of publicity for Andrew Benintendi's All-Star Final Vote campaign, but he threw himself into the role Tuesday.

By the afternoon, he had canvassed social media with #VoteBenny videos. But the finishing touch came when he stepped to the plate. His walk-up music of choice was Elton John's sultry earworm "Bennie and the Jets."

"I'm going to do my best to get the word out," said Holt, who was an All-Star in 2015. "Hopefully we can do our part to help him get in."

Major League Baseball released its first Final Vote update Tuesday. Benintendi was second in the balloting behind Mariners shortstop Jean Segura. Voting closes Wednesday at 4 p.m.

Benintendi helped his case by going 2 for 4 with two doubles and two RBIs in the Sox' 8-4 win.

He got a kick out of the Holt's effort to nudge him into his first All-Star appearance.

"They know I'm not really that kind of guy to hype myself up," Benintendi said. "But it's been kind of funny to watch and see them get into it."

Even without an ace, Alex Cora plays a winning hand

Julian Benbow

The way Alex Cora laid out his expectations for spot starter Hector Velazquez before Tuesday's matchup against the Texas Rangers, the Red Sox manager sounded like he was playing a game of spades and wasn't really sure how many books he had.

"We know he can give us six outs," Cora said. "Maybe nine. Hopefully 12."

It was the baseball equivalent of "two and a possible."

Between a pair of spot starts and 24 relief appearances, the 6-0 record Velazquez took to the mound stood as the longest winning streak in the American League and the second longest in all of baseball.

Cora played his hand carefully, knowing he was going to have to sew together nine innings.

"It's kind of like a bullpen game, honestly," he said.

The challenge of stitching together an 8-4 win Tuesday night was making sure the seams didn't show.

The three innings Velazquez provided were enough to set up a Sox offense that cranked out five-plus runs for the sixth time in seven games.

From there, five more arms quilted together six innings. With Blake Swihart behind the plate, Velazquez, Jalen Beeks, Brandon Workman, Matt Barnes, Joe Kelly, and Ryan Brasier combined to limit the Rangers to seven hits and help the Sox extend their winning streak to eight games.

For the third time this season, the Sox have won eight straight games. They've put together three eight-game winning streaks just two other times, in 1946 and 1978.

"That's a little different, doing a bullpen game," said Sox pitching coach Dana LeVangie said. "You've got to make sure your bullpen's intact or else you can tax them for a long time. So, we make sure that we're not putting, two weeks down the road, our bullpen at risk because we're wearing out our bullpen. So there's a lot of thinking going on."

Much of the responsibility fell on the shoulders of Swihart, who was making just his sixth appearance behind the plate this season.

With Christian Vazquez out six to eight weeks with a fractured right pinky, this was the first step in an increased role for the 26-year-old utilityman.

"We trust him," said Cora. "It's just a matter of numbers. We got Christian, we got Sandy [Leon], but there's a reason he's with us. We trust the guy."

Beyond going 2 for 4 with a double to the Triangle to spark a five-run third inning, Swihart's tallest task was managing all the arms on the mound.

“His first priority is to put every individual pitcher in his comfort zone,” LeVangie said. “So you rank his pitches in order — the pitcher on the mound — and you sort of work in that regard of his best pitch, OK, I’ll attack with this, his best putaway pitch to strike somebody out.

“So it’s more the guy on the mound matters first and then you try to attack the hitters’ weaknesses along the way. It adjusts from each hitter obviously, and it adjusts from each pitcher that comes in. So there’s a lot that goes into it.”

In some ways, Swihart’s challenge was to get from checkpoint to checkpoint. At the same time, he had to consider keep the entire nine-inning picture in mind.

“It’s both,” he said. “Each guy’s so different. And then, each guy has their do’s and don’ts. They have success one way and not the other way, when another guy has that. So as a whole, you take the whole package, take each guy [pitch by pitch] and keep going.”

What made it trickier was the fact that the last time Velazquez started a game was April 14.

“We’ve got to put his safety in mind,” LeVangie said. “He hasn’t pitched a lot of innings in a while. He hasn’t started a game in a while. So we’re going inning by inning and we’re basically telling him he’s a closer every inning he goes out there and don’t worry about how long you’re going, just finish that inning.”

Velazquez got off to a quick start, using nine pitches to get three ground-ball outs in a 1-2-3 first. He hit turbulence in the second. After striking out Adrian Beltre, he left a flat sinker over the plate to Rougned Odor, who launched it 447 feet into the tunnel in right field for a solo homer that gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead.

Things looked shaky when he gave up a double to Ronald Guzman the next at-bat. He got Isiah Kiner-Falefa to ground out to third, but then walked Joey Gallo. Velazquez got out of the inning by getting Delino DeShields to fly to right field.

After giving up a leadoff walk to Shin-Soo Choo in the third, Velazquez muzzled the heart of the Rangers’ order, popping up Elvis Andrus, getting Nomar Mazara to hit a fielder’s choice, and striking out Beltre.

With that, Velazquez’s job was done. He didn’t factor into the decision, but he held the Rangers to one run on two hits and two walks and held on long enough for the Sox offense to get to work.

“He’s done it before,” Cora said prior to the game. “I feel, when he’s a starter, he’s more aggressive in the strike zone than when he’s a reliever.”

The Sox hung up five runs in the third, getting RBI doubles from Jackie Bradley Jr. and Andrew Benintendi, a run-scoring single from Mitch Moreland, and a two-run triple from Xander Bogaerts to jump out to a 5-1 lead.

Beeks took the ball in the fourth, making his second major league appearance. He went 2½ innings, giving up three runs on four hits. He paid for hitting Odor with a 3-and-2 curveball to lead off the fourth when Guzman singled to make it first and third. Odor scored on a double play ball to make it 5-2.

“That’s a tough spot again,” Cora said. “Just like his first outing here, coming out of the bullpen is not easy, but he was able to slow it down a little bit. Velocity was OK, better breaking ball this time around. It was a tough spot, but he did a good job for us.”

Beeks started off the sixth by giving up a single to Odor then a one-out double to Kiner-Falefa to make it second and third with no outs.

Cora called on Workman to keep the damage to a minimum.

Workman gave up a two-run double to Gallo that made it 6-4 but got DeShields to fly out and Choo to ground out to get out of the jam with the lead intact.

“I decided to go with Work right there, because of the breaking ball, and we threw a fastball up and Gallo made us pay,” Cora said. “But besides that, the game went the way we planned it. It was a good all-around effort for everybody.”

With righthand-hitting Andrus and Beltre sandwiching Mazara in the seventh, Cora went with Matt Barnes, who struck out the side with just 14 pitches. Righthanded batters are 9 for 90 against Barnes this season, hitting an even .100.

“Velocity’s way up,” Cora said. “You can see it 98. The breaking ball’s always there, now he’s able to throw the fastball up in the zone and down and away. He’s becoming one of the best relievers in the big leagues. His stuff is outstanding.”

Joe Kelly threw a scoreless eighth, giving him his fourth straight scoreless appearances. Ryan Brasier tied a bow with a hitless ninth.

“A bullpen day,” LeVangie said. “It’s a tough win.

ICYMI, Chris Sale’s last four starts have been historic

Julian Benbow

The last time Red Sox ace Chris Sale was on the mound, pitching coach Dana LeVangie had to double check to make sure he was reading the numbers right.

By the fourth inning of the Sox’s 10-5 win over the Kansas City Royals last week, Sale had already piled up double-digit strikeouts. After six innings, Sale finished with an even dozen.

All the K’s seemed like they came in a blur to LeVangie.

“Somebody mentioned he had 12 strikeouts, I didn’t even think he got that many because it happened so fast,” he said. “It’s like they go by without you even noticing sometimes.”

Over his past four starts, Sale has been sawing through lineups. He’s the first pitcher in major league history to put together four straight starts with 11-plus strikeouts and one or zero walks, according to Elias Sports. In that stretch, Sale has a 1.00 ERA and 47 strikeouts while allowing just 13 hits, and four walks.

It’s the kind of run that made LeVangie flash back to some of baseball’s fiercest flamethrowers.

LeVangie went back to his days as the Sox’ bullpen coach in the late-1990s and early 2000s when Pedro Martinez practically breathed fire from the mound.

“I had a chance to see Pedro pitch, for the most part, every time he pitched here and when Pedro was healthy and at his peak, pretty similar,” LeVangie said. “Electric. The fan base was electric when they were on the mound, just the excitement because there’s a chance to see something special any time they take the mound.”

Sox manager Alex Cora went back even further to 1995, when Randy Johnson struck out 294 batters and pushed the Seattle Mariners to their first postseason appearance in franchise history.

“He’s reminding me a lot of Randy Johnson when he was dominant,” Cora said. “I saw Randy when he played with my brother in 1995. That was amazing to see. It’s kind of like effortless right now. You look up, and it’s like, ‘Oh, he struck out 12, and there’s only one walk.’ He’s throwing 99, and it’s not a grind.

It's not a grind right now. Physically, he's in a great spot. Mechanically, he's right where he wants to be, and he's dominating."

Sale will make his 20th start of the season Wednesday in the Sox's series finale against the Rangers.

While the effortless nature of Sale's performances may be high praise, it has also been the driving force LeVangie said.

"That's a key factor because hitters always sense effort," LeVangie said. "When you're reaching back and trying to touch 100, and there's effort involved and not so much effort when you're throwing your other stuff, hitters are going to sense that, and they pick it up right away, so it is effortless, he's throwing all his pitches in the same delivery and repeating the same delivery."

Over his past four starts, he has thrown his fastball at an average of 97.7 miles per hour and his sinker at 95.2. Before that, his heater was averaging 95.3 miles per hour, and his sinker was at 92.7.

"He made some adjustments in his delivery and got back into his old windup," LeVangie said. "So there was a little bit of a transition period in how he was going about his delivery, and he watched some video, noticed it and he's been clicking ever since.

"It took some time for him to find it on the video and kind of get back to being himself and he's sort of taken off since then. His velocity's been consistent. He adds and subtracts when he wants to anyway. But when he wants to reach back and touch 100, he's able to, and he knows how to go back to it."

Sale's run of four straight starts with double-digit strikeouts is tied with Indians starter Trevor Bauer for the longest streak this season.

"I don't want to take that for granted," LeVangie said. "I thought they were at eight, but it was 12. That's how it goes."

Option defense

Cora's decision to use the outfield combination of Andrew Benintendi in left field, Mookie Betts in center, and J.D. Martinez in right Monday was not only a sign of how comfortable he's become with Martinez in right but how much of a luxury he has with the collection of outfielders at his disposal.

In Betts, Benintendi, and Jackie Bradley Jr., he has three elite center fielders. The ability to have at least two of them in the outfield at all times is almost akin to the Golden State Warriors having multiple playmakers on the floor at any given moment.

He's taken advantage of a uniquely talented outfield with different alignments throughout the season. Last month, with righthander Rick Porcello facing Twins slugger Joe Mauer, Cora took a recommendation from the analytics department and lined Betts in right-center, Bradley in left-center, and Benintendi down the left-field line, essentially leaving right field uncovered. Mauer went 0 for 3, his final out a line drive to right-center.

"You can put them in spots that they're going to cover that area," Cora said. "But at the same time, if there's a high fly ball somewhere, they can make it . . . We just put them in an area and we feel they can cover that and they can make the outstanding play or the five-star play as they call it."

At the same time, it gives Cora options. He can complement any of them with Martinez, Brock Holt, or Blake Swihart and still field a capable outfield unit.

"I think it just gives A.C. more flexibility on giving guys breaks and giving guys breaks and days off and maybe DHing guys sometimes," Holt said. "He feels confident that we're not going to lose anything."

Vacation plans

The Sox's rotation after the All-Star break is still up in the air. Cora said he'll wait to decide how many days' rest he wants each pitcher to have.

The picture will likely become clearer Friday, he said. Sale, who will make his last start of the first half Wednesday, could get an extended break.

'He'll pitch Tuesday,' Cora said. "So we'll go from there. We don't want him to have too much time in between. I think the all-star break kind of benefits in this case."

How Drew Pomeranz and Steven Wright may fit in after the break is also still unclear. Pomeranz is scheduled to make another rehab start Saturday and will likely pitch again over the all-star break. Wright's recovery has been a slower process.

"He needs to get back on the mound," Cora said. "But with his uniqueness, if that thing is not spinning and it's good, maybe he doesn't need to have too many rehab starts."

Beeks gets call

Lefthander Jalen Beeks was summoned from Triple A Pawtucket for his second stint in the big leagues this season.

Righthander William Cuevas was optioned to the PawSox.

Beeks made his major league debut in June, giving up six runs in four innings in a loss to the Tigers. He was 5-5 with a 3.05 ERA in 15 starts in Pawtucket and made the International League All-Star team.

Beeks came in for Hector Velazquez to start the fourth inning Tuesday night. Beeks was bounced around a bit in the 8-4 win over the Rangers, giving up four hits and three runs in 2½ innings.

Cora said he'll come out of the bullpen.

Surgery for Diaz

In a star-crossed season for the Red Sox farm system, injuries continued to hammer the organization's top prospects.

On Tuesday, according to a team source, power-hitting third baseman Danny Diaz — a 17-year-old who launched six homers in 26 games in the Dominican Summer League — underwent surgery to repair a broken hamate bone.

A typical timetable for recovery of roughly six weeks would take him almost to the end of the DSL season, creating a likelihood that Diaz will miss the rest of the minor league season.

He should be ready to resume games by the instructional league season.

Fellow DSL standout Antoni Flores, a shortstop who, like Diaz, signed with the Red Sox for a \$1.5 million bonus last summer, hasn't played since June 18.

After Flores hit .347/.439/.510 in 13 games, he seemed like a candidate to move up to the rookie Gulf Coast League. However, after missing the last three weeks, he's expected to miss a few more, though Flores is expected to return to games before the end of the year.

Diaz and Flores represent high-upside players who rank among the top dozen or so Red Sox prospects. They join a host of top Sox prospects — lefthander Jay Groome (out for the year because of Tommy John surgery), first-rounder Triston Casas (out for the year after surgery to repair a torn thumb ligament), corner infielder Michael Chavis (season-opening 80-game suspension for testing positive for a PED), and second-rounder Nick Decker (wrist fracture) — who have missed significant time this year.

Johnson on track

Brian Johnson, who was placed on the disabled list retroactive to June 5 with inflammation in his left hip, went through pitchers fielding practice and will likely throw a bullpen Wednesday. Cora said the 27-year-old lefthander is on schedule to return Sunday . . . Christian Vazquez underwent successful surgery Tuesday at Newton-Wellesley Hospital to put a pin in his fractured right pinky finger. The surgery was performed by Dr. Matt Leibman and the timetable for his recovery is expected to be six to eight weeks . . . Marco Hernandez, 25, had a left shoulder anterior stability revision procedure performed Tuesday at the Vail Medical Center/Steadman Clinic, in Vail, Colo. Dr. Matthew Provencher performed the operation. The infielder will miss the rest of the season.

Dustin Pedroia to return to Arizona to rehab knee

Nick Cafardo

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Cora said the week Pedroia spent in New York with his surgeon helped to make the adjustments they feel necessary to strengthen the areas around the knee.

"I expect him to play," Cora repeated. "What I've been saying all along and it didn't happen the first time, but we want him to stay healthy and play. We're not going to put a timetable on it and take we'll take it day by day."

Despite the second baseman missing all but three games, Cora looks at it as positive news for Pedroia.

"It's nothing structural. Just some adjustments around the knee that are going to help the knee," said Cora. "He's done his research. He cares and he wants to contribute. He's in a good place now."

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Injuries continue to plague Red Sox' top prospects

Alex Speier

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Red Sox recall pitcher Jalen Beeks, option William Cuevas

Owen Pence

The Red Sox on Tuesday recalled lefthanded pitcher Jalen Beeks from Triple A Pawtucket and optioned righthander William Cuevas to the PawSox.

Beeks received the promotion on his 25th birthday and will serve as a long reliever with Hector Velazquez transitioning to the rotation getting the start Tuesday night against Texas at Fenway Park.

Beeks made his major league debut June 7 against Detroit, taking the loss after giving up six runs in four innings. He is 5-5 with a 3.05 ERA in 15 starts for Pawtucket this season, being named to the International League All-Star team. Beeks ranks second in the IL with 110 strikeouts and a 1.08 WHIP. He was selected by Boston in the 12th round of the 2014 draft and was named the 2017 Red Sox Minor League Pitcher of the Year.

Cuevas has appeared in just one game over two stints with Boston this season, allowing a run on two hits in two innings on July 3 at Washington.

Here's how to interpret baseball trade chatter

Nick Cafardo

It's often been described as baseball's Christmas.

The trade deadline can be fun, nerve-racking, and for a team about to rebuild, game-changing. Only a small percentage of the proposed trades you see reported ever happen, but that's because deals are really hard to make.

A smaller-market team giving up the face of its franchise has to hit it right whenever it trades a big-name player. That pressure is on Orioles general manager Dan Duquette in this non-waiver trade season, which goes from now until the end of the month, with the featured player being Baltimore shortstop Manny Machado. This season will be interesting because there are far more teams who want to cash in their stars for prospects in order to begin tanking, or rebuilding as some would rather call it.

The Orioles must hit it big on Machado, closer Zach Britton, relievers Mychal Givens and Brad Brach, and even outfielder Adam Jones, their greatest assets. It's tricky because Machado, Britton, and Jones are free agents at the end of the season. All could be rental players. So, what do you give up for a potential rental?

Duquette has seven or eight teams who have made offers or are about to make offers. When I asked Duquette on Monday if he was close to anything on Machado, he said, "We've been talking and working with several clubs."

You can tell who's ready to deal by how teams have their scouts positioned. In Machado's case, the Orioles are looking for young players, so they have scouts positioned in the organizations of those teams who have expressed interest. The Orioles have been scouting the Cubs, Braves, Phillies, Cardinals, Indians, Dodgers, Diamondbacks, and Brewers — all of whom appear to be interested.

When pitching prospect Justus Sheffield made a start for the Yankees' Triple A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre affiliate over the weekend in Pawtucket, scouts from the Rangers and Mets were on hand. As another scout pointed out, as soon as Sheffield's outing was over, the scouts left the ballpark. It's no secret that Texas is looking to deal veteran lefthander Cole Hamels, and the Yankees are trying to obtain Jacob deGrom from the Mets.

The positioning of scouts is normally the giveaway on trade talk.

Most general managers are at least willing to tell the media that they are looking to trade and usually what they're looking for. In cases where the GM won't go that far, it's an easy guess as to what the team needs. Presidents of baseball operations and/or GMs aren't allowed to talk about players they may be seeking. First of all, it wouldn't make sense from a competitive standpoint to reveal the players you're looking to obtain as you're trying to keep as much information away from your rivals. Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski is a strong believer in this. Just hours before he pulled off the Chris Sale deal he was telling a room full of reporters at the Winter Meetings that he wasn't necessarily looking to do anything big, which is when the radar of every reporter in the room went up.

Second, there are strict tampering rules about discussing another team's players. The executives are certainly free to make offers on those players, but discussing them publicly is a no-no. Some GMs are willing to discuss the names off the record to a reporter.

Scouts talk among themselves. If there's a scout from the Braves watching Sheffield, for instance, and he knows the Rangers and Mets have scouts there watching Sheffield in particular, word gets around and reporters are able to get out to the public that the Rangers and Mets are interested in Sheffield as a piece in a Hamels or deGrom deal.

It also gets tricky in terms of what type of scout is in the stands. Most teams assign scouts up to three organizations to follow. A scout might be making his normal rounds to watch Pawtucket or Portland play. But this time of year, major league scout may also be looking at someone specifically. And many times, with a major player such as Machado or Hamels, a team will dispatch more than one scout to a game so they can get a couple of opinions.

When the Red Sox dispatch Frank Wren or Allard Baird or Tony La Russa or Eddie Bane to a game, it's usually to watch someone specifically. It's not only to make an evaluation of how that position player or pitcher would impact the team, but whether the outlay of prospects is worth it.

GMs and presidents will tell you that a great percentage of these talks never materialize into full-fledged trade talks. Sometimes they are put on hold for another time and get resurrected. If you remember the first Hamels deal by the Phillies, Philadelphia's GM at the time, Ruben Amaro Jr., had his scouts positioned in the Red Sox, Dodgers, and Rangers organizations mostly. Amaro tried tirelessly to obtain a package from the Red Sox and asked for anyone and everyone from a group that included Blake Swihart, Mookie Betts.

Xander Bogaerts, Jackie Bradley Jr., and others. At the time, Red Sox GM Ben Cherington rejected all overtures even though the Sox had interest in Hamels at various times over a two-year period.

According to Amaro, he asked for Cody Bellinger from the Dodgers and was rejected, but he thought the Dodgers were the team that might have pulled something off if the deal with the Rangers wasn't so compelling.

"Hundreds of names were discussed," Amaro recalled. "The work my scouting staff did was incredible. We had mounds of information on every prospect in the organizations of all of those teams. We loved the Red Sox' talent, but years later I discussed with Ben what a great job he did not giving those guys up, and the Dodgers for not giving up Bellinger."

Trade talk usually starts at the GM level and then there's a filtering of responsibilities to the scouts, who watch and make their evaluations. When those evaluations are complete the exchanging of names begins until the deal fails or its completed when compromises are reached.

It can also incorporate special assistants to the GM, coaches, and managers. Sometimes agents are involved if there's a no-trade clause, as there is now with Hamels. There are so many people involved that nowadays it's virtually impossible for organizations to keep things quiet and away from the media and public. But every once in a while it happens.

Last season when the Astros were hunting for a pitcher, it was clear that Justin Verlander was the target based on the frequency with which Astros scouts were in attendance at Verlander starts with the Tigers, while Detroit scouts were frequenting Houston's system. This year, it's obvious the Astros need another reliever, and they've been watching Cincinnati's Raisel Iglesias and Britton quite often. They also have an affinity for White Sox first baseman Jose Abreu. The White Sox have been going over the Astros' system with a fine-tooth comb.

Besides their interest in deGrom, Yankee scouts have been watching Tampa Bay's Blake Snell (a clear long shot) and Detroit's Michael Fullmer to add to their rotation. Between deGrom, Fullmer, J.A. Happ, and Hamels, it appears the Yankees will be able to add a frontline pitcher to their staff. The Yankees were also considering Mike Moustakas as a first base candidate, and lo and behold Moustakas played first base against the Red Sox on Saturday and Sunday with a Yankees scout watching.

In the offseason, however, the Yankees danced with the Pirates for a long while on Gerrit Cole and decided not to pull the trigger. It likely would have cost them Gleyber Torres, and they're sure glad they didn't give him up. Yankees GM Brian Cashman has vowed to walk away from any deal where his comfort level for giving up prospects isn't good. From what we've been able to determine, third baseman Miguel Andujar is in play for the right young pitcher. Sheffield and righthander Chance Adams also could be had for the right pitcher, but Torres is off the table. Period.

So, the trade deadline could be an exercise in how the Orioles can rebuild by trading Machado. Could the Rangers get some of the prospects lost in their first Hamels deal? How far will the Yankees go in obtaining that final piece for their rotation?

The rumors and scenarios are already starting to filter out in the media. Of course we'll try to connect all the dots to find that big surprise.

*** *The Boston Herald***

Red Sox roll to eighth straight in 8-4 win over Texas

Jason Mastrodonato

There was one questionable pitch selection that led to two runs, but it was otherwise an encouraging game for Blake Swihart in just his second start behind the plate this season.

And Swihart got the Red Sox going with a long double in the third inning and finished 2-for-4 in the 8-4 thrashing at Fenway Park of Texas, which proved it may not matter who starts on the mound or behind the plate when the Sox are hitting like this.

It was supposed to be a bullpen game for the Sox. Hector Velazquez got the start, but hadn't thrown more than 25 pitches in two weeks and wasn't expected to go long. So lefty prospect Jalen Beeks was summoned from Triple-A Pawtucket to lengthen the game.

Starting pitching depth is not a friend of the Red Sox, nor has it been in recent years. But even with three starters on the disabled list, even with Swihart shaking off the rust and busting out his catcher's mitt, the Sox made it look easy.

"It felt good to be back there," Swihart said. "Kind of having a bullpen day like that helped me out. Seeing a lot of those guys and trying to get in a rhythm with them."

Swihart's catching skills have been oft-debated. And while he wasn't much of a factor in the team's planning this year, an injury to Christian Vazquez that will keep him out about two months forced Swihart back into duty.

Entering last night, pitchers have a 4.57 ERA when throwing to Swihart over his career, almost a half-run above the major league average of 4.15. But his arm is formidable and he's athletic enough to move back there.

"We trust him," Sox manager Alex Cora said.

Swihart called the shots for Velazquez, who gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead in the second inning but was otherwise efficient over three innings of one-run ball.

It was a grind to get 2 1/3 innings out of Beeks, who gave up three runs and is looking not much different than other Sox pitching prospects have looked in recent years.

But the bullpen otherwise pitched beautifully with Swihart. The only questionable moment came in the sixth, with two men on and Brandon Workman pitching to Joey Gallo. On a 2-1 count, Swihart made a cheeky call for a curveball after three straight fastballs and Gallo swung wildly, evening the count to 2-2. Gallo entered hitting just .080 off curves this year, according to Brooks Baseball.

Swihart called another fastball and Gallo smoked it off the Green Monster for a two-run double.

"I decided to go with Work right there because of the breaking ball," Cora said. "But he threw a fastball up and Gallo made us pay. Besides that, the game went the way we planned it. It was a good all around effort for everybody."

Swihart roped a liner into the triangle to start a rally in the third inning that bounced into the stands for a ground-rule double off Yovani Gallardo. He wasn't on second base very long because Jackie Bradley Jr. then smoked another liner to the gap for an RBI double and the Sox were on the board. Andrew Benintendi added an RBI double, Mitch Moreland collected an RBI single and Xander Bogaerts roped a triple to score two more as the Sox took a 5-1 lead into the fourth.

"It felt good," Swihart said. "Anything I can do to help the team win that's what I want to do. Offensively, if I can help, that's awesome."

Swihart expects to catch twice a week in Vazquez's absence.

“We trust the guy,” Cora said. “It’s just tough to play three catchers. But he stayed with it he’s been working hard, staying on top of the game, preparing like he’s an everyday catcher. He did an outstanding job, blocked a few balls, called the game with conviction. Offensively he got us going with that double. It was good to see.”

Over their eight-game streak the Red Sox have batted .332 with 25 doubles and 10 home runs. They have eight players hitting .333 or better in that span.

The Sox have now scored at least five runs in 55 of their 93 games, more than any other team, and are 48-7 in those games, including a 28-1 record over their last 29.

Ace Chris Sale goes tonight as the Red Sox go for a series sweep.

Red Sox notebook: Dustin Pedroia heads home to continue rehab on knee

Jason Mastrodonato

There’s no sense in sticking around, so Dustin Pedroia is being sent home.

The Red Sox second baseman has been with the team for most of the summer while trying to rehab his balky left knee, but given that his brief return from the disabled list lasted only three games and he’s been unable to gain any momentum in his recovery since, it’s time for a change.

Pedroia will fly home to Arizona to be with his family and continue rehab with the physical therapist who helped him during the offseason, manager Alex Cora announced yesterday.

“We’d love him to be around here, but I think for now, it’s better off for him to go there and disconnect a little bit from all this and just concentrate on himself,” Cora said. “There are going to be a few adjustments on the rehab, a focus on hammy and core and glutes, so I think that’s the best thing we can do right now.”

Last week, Pedroia met with Dr. Riley Williams, who performed the knee surgery last October, and they formulated a new plan focused on strengthening other muscles in his body.

“He’s learned good things about it,” Cora said. “It’s nothing structural. I mentioned it yesterday it’s about making adjustments around the knee and body-wise that are going to help him or help the knee not to get upset.

“And he’s done his research. When we sit down he drops names like huge athletes like Kobe (Bryant) and (Rafael) Nadal and I’m like ‘wow, he’s doing his research.’ Obviously he cares and he wants to contribute so I think he’s in a good place now.”

While it’s clear Pedroia won’t be returning to the Red Sox soon, the manager still believes the 34-year-old will play at some point this year.

“I do,” Cora said. “Personal opinion. I think the most important thing is for him to be healthy. This is not about just contributing this year. This is about him playing for us the rest of his career. That’s the most important thing.”

One reason it’s been such a confusing recovery process is that Pedroia is the first position player to go through this particular knee surgery.

“It’s a unique situation because this type of surgery has never happened to a baseball player,” Cora said. “I think we learned through the process, Pedroia learned through the process, and the doctor also learned through the process.”

Sale not half bad

Chris Sale enters tonight's start needing 14 strikeouts to tie the major league record for most strikeouts in the first half of a season.

Sale has 176 strikeouts, just shy of the 178 he collected in the first half last year. Only six pitchers have ever eclipsed the 180-strikeout mark before the All-Star break, and none since Curt Schilling in 2002.

Bob Feller set the record with 190 strikeouts in the first half in 1946.

"He's reminding me a lot of Randy Johnson when he was dominant," Cora said of Sale. "I saw Randy when he played with my brother in 1995 when they came back. That was amazing to see. It's kind of like effortless right now. You look up and it's like oh, he struck out 12 and there's only one walk. He's throwing 99 (mph) and it's not a grind. It's not a grind right now. Physically he's in a great spot. Mechanically I think he's right where he wants to be and he's dominating." . . .

Cora said he hasn't mapped out who will start the first game out of the break next Friday.

"It's tough, we've got three lefties and we just have to make sure which is the best combination," Cora said. "We thought about putting Rick Porcello in between. We'll see. Because Eduardo Rodriguez and David Price are similar, almost the same thing. Chris is different because he's fastball, slider, changeup and the other guys are fastball, cutters, changeups. We'll sit down and we'll talk about it and see how the schedule goes."

Johnson hip to return

Brian Johnson could return from a hip injury in time to start the final game of the first half on Sunday, Cora said.

The Sox are struggling to find healthy starters right now with Johnson, Drew Pomeranz and Steven Wright on the disabled list. Hector Velazquez started last night for the first time since April 14, and went three innings, allowing one run in the Sox' 8-4 win over the Texas Rangers.

Jalen Beeks (3.05 ERA, 12 strikeouts per nine innings) was recalled from Triple-A Pawtucket to replace William Cuevas and add length behind Velazquez, though he went just 2 1/3 innings while allowing three runs last night. Despite dominating in the minors, he hasn't impressed in two outings in the big leagues (6 1/3 innings, nine runs allowed).

"That's a tough spot again, just like his first outing here," Cora said. "Coming out of the bullpen is not easy. But he was able to slow it down a little bit. Velocity was OK, better breaking ball this time around. It was a tough spot but he did a good job for us."

BJJ stays on roll

Jackie Bradley Jr. had two RBI doubles and is now batting .333 with 12 RBI over his last 13 games. . . .

Andrew Benintendi is batting .367 with runners in scoring position this season. He also stole a base last night, his 17th in 19 tries, and has the best stolen base success rate in the league. . . .

Mookie Betts had two more hits and leads the majors with a .346 average. . . .

Catcher Christian Vazquez had successful surgery to get a pin placed in his fractured right pinky finger and is out 6-8 weeks.

*** *The Providence Journal***

Dustin Pedroia to continue rehab in Arizona

Bill Koch

BOSTON — There were medical updates for a pair of Red Sox middle infielders on Tuesday.

Whether or not one provides a cautionary tale for the other could shape Boston's roster for the remainder of the season and beyond.

Marco Hernandez (left shoulder) underwent his third surgery in 14 months, this one taking place in Colorado. His year is officially over before it began, with Hernandez last seeing action against the Orioles in May 2017. The subluxation he suffered attempting to field a ground ball at third base has never fully healed.

"It was one of those that we thought the whole time he was going to be fine," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "It just didn't work, didn't work, didn't work, and we had to do it."

That brings up Dustin Pedroia. He'll be receiving his fan mail in Arizona for the immediate future, decamping to his college home to continue his rehab from offseason left knee surgery. The former Arizona State star has played exactly three more games than Hernandez in 2018 and landed on the disabled list again June 2 while battling inflammation.

"I expect him to play, yes," Cora said. "Like I've been saying all along — and it didn't happen the first time — when he comes back it's to stay healthy and play."

Cora made that statement early in a press conference that lasted for nearly 20 minutes. When the subject circled back to Pedroia just before the end of the briefing, Cora seemed to take a different tone.

"I do feel we're going to see positive results," Cora said. "I still hope he's going to play with us this season."

There would seem to be a considerable difference between "expect" and "hope." Pedroia spent last week in New York with his surgeon, Dr. Riley Williams III, devising a plan. With cartilage restoration traditionally being reserved for basketball players, Pedroia and Red Sox knuckleballer Steven Wright are akin to test cases on the diamond after both undergoing the procedure in the last 13 months.

And it was here that Cora admitted something Pedroia, Wright and the rest of the Boston brass likely could not. He doesn't know if the 34-year-old Pedroia will play again for the Red Sox this season.

"Obviously, they've been around this process for a longer period of time," Cora said. "I'm in the learning period. That's all I can tell you."

The business of baseball and professional athletics being what it is, the relative cost to Boston if Hernandez and Wright never return is small. Both could be non-tendered and designated for assignment after the season should they not regain full health. But the Red Sox owe Pedroia more than \$30 million on a contract that runs through the 2021 season, and they're already pushing the upper reaches of Major League Baseball's luxury tax threshold.

"The most important thing is for him to be healthy," Cora said. "This is not about just contributing this year. We're talking about him playing for us for the rest of his career. That's the most important thing."

Whether or not Pedroia is active this season — or any subsequent seasons — remains to be seen. That Boston started 62-39 in his absence speaks to how effective Cora has been at moving the Red Sox forward, something he might have to get used to for the immediate future and beyond.

"We're not going to put a timetable on this," Cora said. "We'll take it day by day and go from there."

Red Sox Journal: Beeks, Brasier added to the bullpen

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Jalen Beeks and Ryan Brasier had no complaints about missing Wednesday's Triple-A All-Star Game in Ohio.

Pawtucket's left-handed starting pitcher and right-handed closer were both in the Red Sox bullpen on Tuesday night at Fenway Park, prepared to pitch in behind starter Hector Velazquez against the Rangers.

Beeks was recalled on Tuesday afternoon to replace William Cuevas, who was optioned to the PawSox. Brasier was added to the 40-man roster on Sunday and made his first big-league appearance in five years the following night while mopping up a 5-0 shutout of Texas.

Beeks has thrown 82 2/3 innings through 15 starts with the PawSox this season, and the move to Boston — if an extended one — could purposefully limit his workload for 2018. Beeks also presents the Red Sox with a traditional matchup-based option in relief, holding left-handed hitters to 18 hits and striking out 33 in 25 1/3 innings.

"I think it's a good time for him to reset — we feel as an organization," Boston manager Alex Cora said. "You see the numbers against lefties, too. He's been dominant. He's a strike-thrower."

Brasier's long journey back from the Angels bullpen in 2013 included Tommy John surgery that cost him the 2014 season, a stint in rookie ball with the Athletics in 2015 and a season spent with the Hiroshima Carp of the Japan Central League in 2017. His 1-2-3 ninth inning against Texas was consistent with his performance at Pawtucket this season, as Brasier hasn't allowed an earned run since May 12.

Rotation changes?

Whether or not Chris Sale will start his third straight All-Star Game for the American League remains to be seen.

Sale will start on Wednesday night for the Red Sox, lining him up perfectly for the summer showcase next Tuesday. Cora hasn't determined where Sale will slot into the rotation when Boston resumes action in a three-game series at Detroit a week from Friday.

"We're still working on it," Cora said. "We'll probably see how they end up and how many days off we want each guy to have. We'll have an idea probably Friday."

The availability of Brian Johnson (left hip inflammation) and Drew Pomeranz (left biceps tendinitis) could shuffle the deck for the Red Sox. Johnson was out for pitcher's fielding practice early Tuesday, covering first base on bunts, and is scheduled to throw a bullpen session on Wednesday. Pomeranz is scheduled to make a third rehab start for the PawSox on Saturday.

As for further changes to the rotation, Cora discussed breaking up his left-handers by somehow inserting the right-handed Rick Porcello into the mix. Sale's pitch mix stands on its own, but similarities between David Price and Eduardo Rodriguez could see them spread apart.

"Chris is different from everybody else because he's slider, fastball and changeup," Cora said. "The other guys are fastball, cutter, changeup."

Under the knife

Catcher Christian Vazquez (right pinkie finger) and infielder Marco Hernandez (left shoulder) both underwent surgery on Tuesday.

Vazquez had what Boston called a successful pinning procedure performed on the fractured digit. Johns Hopkins University defines the open reduction and internal fixation surgery as an operation designed to stabilize and heal a broken bone. Vazquez is expected to miss at least 6-8 weeks.

It was the third surgery endured by Hernandez in barely 14 months since suffering a subluxation in May 2017 against the Orioles. The anterior stability revision leaves Hernandez with no timetable for return.

A bullpen game

Velazquez drew his third start of the season on Tuesday, his first since April 14.

The right-hander threw 32 of his 49 pitches for strikes over three innings, allowing two hits and fanning a pair against two walks. This turn in the rotation has previously been held by Johnson, Pomeranz and Steven Wright (left knee inflammation), and a reluctant Cora admitted on Tuesday would be something of a bullpen day for his staff.

“He’s done it before,” Cora said pregame. “I feel when he’s a starter he’s more aggressive in the strike zone than when he’s a reliever.”

*** *MassLive.com***

Big third inning powers Boston Red Sox to eighth straight win Tuesday vs. Rangers

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Powered by a five-run third inning and seven extra-base hits, the Red Sox won their eighth game in a row Tuesday night, defeating the Rangers, 8-4, at Fenway Park.

Andrew Benintendi, Mitch Moreland, Xander Bogaerts and Jackie Bradley Jr. each had two RBI for the Red Sox, who had 12 hits on the night. Benintendi doubled twice and Bogaerts hit a triple and a single.

Boston's big rally came in the third, when they strung together two singles, three doubles and a triple to take a 5-1 lead off Rangers starter Yovani Gallardo. They added insurance runs in three consecutive innings from the fifth to the seventh.

Red Sox starter Hector Velazquez lasted three innings, allowing one earned run on two hits and giving up a long home run to Rougned Odor in the second. Lefty Jalen Beeks took over, allowing three earned runs in 2.1 innings to cause his ERA to rise to 12.79 in two outings this season.

Boston used six pitchers on the night in what amounted to a bullpen game with Velazquez starting. Beeks, Brandon Workman, Matt Barnes, Joe Kelly and Ryan Brasier each got in the game for Boston.

Betts robs Mazara home run in 5th

With the Red Sox leading 5-2 in the fifth, Mookie Betts robbed Nomar Mazara of a two-run home run against the bullpen wall in right field. Mazara's drive, which came off the bat at 99.3 mph, traveled 383 feet before being tracked down by Betts, who leaned over the wall to get it.

Swihart posts third multi-hit game of season

Blake Swihart, who started at catcher for just the second time this season, contributed offensively with a single, double and two runs scored.

Swihart had multiple hits in just two games on the year before Tuesday, on April 14 and May 30. He rose his season average to .202.

Red Sox go for third straight sweep Wednesday

After losing two of three to the Yankees in the Bronx, the Red Sox have torn through three consecutive series. They'll go for their third consecutive three-game sweep Wednesday after taking all three from the Nationals and Royals, respectively.

Chris Sale is on the hill for the Red Sox against the ageless Bartolo Colon.

Brock Holt takes on new role for Boston Red Sox: Andrew Benintendi's All-Star Game campaign manager

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Brock Holt has been called a utilityman throughout his Red Sox career, but he's never before been in the position he's taken on this week: campaign manager.

Holt is the official spokesman for teammate Andrew Benintendi's All-Star Final Vote campaign, having been associated with the outfielder since their days as Boston's "Flow Bros." Holt's responsibilities since Sunday have been robust, including posting Instagram photos of Benintendi sleeping, making an official campaign video Monday, stumping on Benintendi's behalf on NESN and using Elton John's "Bennie and the Jets" as his walk-up song Tuesday.

Brock Holt's viral Instagram campaign for Andrew Benintendi is well underway.
pic.twitter.com/5CQISFq26l

-- Pete Abraham (@PeteAbe) July 9, 2018

"So far, so good," Holt said when asked about campaigning. "I just found out about the role yesterday. They kinda told me that's what I would be. I'm gonna do my best to get the word out. We'll probably have a few more candid photos on Instagram. Hopefully we can do our part to help him get in."

Benintendi, who many considered an All-Star snub when rosters were released Sunday, is currently in second out of five AL Final Vote candidates, trailing only Mariners shortstop Jean Segura. The Red Sox have fully embraced his candidacy, drawing "#VoteBenny" in chalk behind home plate, having each player wear "I'm With Benny" shirts for batting practice Tuesday and having the campaign dominate social media accounts.

"Everybody loves Benny," All-Star outfielder Mookie Betts said. "I think everybody should go out and vote. Let's get him in there."

"I'm a little bit out of the loop because I don't have any of the social media stuff," said fellow All-Star Mitch Moreland. "I've got my shirt on and did some videos yesterday. We need to get him in there. He's earned it."

Other Red Sox players are doing their part to assist Holt with his campaign. After he filmed the first take of the campaign video Monday and was not pleased with it, Holt enlisted the help of Blake Swihart, who filmed the second and final take.

BREAKING NEWS: A message from #VoteBenny Campaign Manager, Brock Holt.
pic.twitter.com/xCJNc5fCuc

-- #VoteBenny (@RedSox) July 10, 2018

"[Blake] was the director of the video and I guess Red Sox Productions put the "Breaking News" and the production together," Holt said. "It turned out good and hopefully it got us a few more votes last night during the game."

With one campaign almost under his belt, what are the chances Holt could turn to politics as a post-playing career option?

"Zero percent," Holt said. "I'm good with my baseball career."

Boston Red Sox injuries: Brian Johnson likely starting Sunday, Drew Pomeranz to make rehab start Saturday

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Hector Velazquez is starting for the Red Sox on Tuesday, which isn't a good sign for the health of the club's rotation. Though he's a key bullpen weapon, Velazquez is probably eighth on Boston's rotation depth chart.

Manager Alex Cora provided updates on three pitchers-- Drew Pomeranz, Steven Wright and Brian Johnson-- who are ahead of Velazquez and could return in the next few weeks for Boston:

-Johnson did pitcher's fielding practice Tuesday and is slated to throw a bullpen Wednesday at Fenway Park. The lefty, who hit the DL with hip inflammation over the weekend, is likely to make his start Sunday in the team's last game before the All-Star break.

-Pomeranz (left biceps tendinitis) will make his third rehab start Saturday for Pawtucket and will probably have one more rehab outing over the All-Star break, per Cora. He could return to the rotation after the break.

-Wright's recovery (knee inflammation) has been slower than anticipated, per Cora.

"He needs to get back on the mound," Cora said. "With his uniqueness-- if that thing is spinning and it's good, maybe he doesn't need too many rehab starts."

Boston Red Sox facing bullpen game with Hector Velazquez starting Tuesday

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Hector Velazquez won't be a traditional starter for the Red Sox on Tuesday night vs. Texas. It'll be more like a bullpen game for Boston.

Manager Alex Cora said Velazquez could go anywhere between two and four innings, depending on pitch count.

"We know he can give us six outs," Cora said. "Maybe nine. Hopefully 12. He matches up well with them as far as keeping the ball down and changing speeds. He'll start today and we'll make some adjustments throughout the game. It's kind of a bullpen game, honestly. Hopefully he can keep his pitch count down and maybe give us 12 outs."

Velazquez gone three or more innings in just one outing since April 27, pitching three innings against Seattle on June 27. His two April starts saw him go five and 5.2 innings, respectively, but he was stretched out as a starter back then and had a longer leash.

Lefty Jalen Beeks re-joined the Red Sox on Tuesday, giving the club someone who could piggyback Velazquez and go multiple innings.

Boston Red Sox injuries: Marco Hernandez undergoes shoulder surgery, out for season

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox infielder Marco Hernandez underwent a left shoulder anterior stability revision procedure in Colorado on Tuesday, the Red Sox announced. Hernandez will miss the rest of the season.

Hernandez made only 21 appearances for Boston in 2017 before undergoing his first of what is now three shoulder surgeries. He was considered an option to contribute for the Sox during spring training but was not healthy and has not appeared in any type of game so far this year.

Hernandez, who will be 26 in September, owns a .284/.328/.349 line in 61 games for Boston over the past two seasons, seeing time at second base, shortstop and third. If healthy, he could vow for a utility role with the club during spring training in 2019.

Dustin Pedroia injury: Boston Red Sox second baseman to rehab in Arizona, may return this season

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia will head home to Arizona to continue rehabbing his knee, manager Alex Cora said Tuesday. Cora said he personally believes Pedroia will return this season.

Pedroia spent all of last week in New York City meeting with the doctor who performed his knee surgery last fall. After a battery of tests, the pair made adjustments to Pedroia's rehab plan before deciding it was best to send him to Arizona.

"We'd love him to be around here, but I think for now it's better for him to go there, disconnect from all this and just concentrate on himself," Cora said. "There are gonna be a few adjustments on the rehab, talking about hamstring, core and glutes. I think that's the best thing we can do right now."

Cora said there's no timetable for Pedroia's return, instead noting the Red Sox would take it day-by-day. Pedroia will not resume baseball activities once in Arizona, instead working with physical therapists to improve his knee and the areas around it.

"He's learned good things about it," Cora said. "It's nothing structural. It's about making adjustments around the knee and body-wise that will help the knee not get upset. He's done his research. He drops names of huge athletes like Kobe and Nadal. Obviously he cares and he wants to contribute. I think he's in a good place."

With Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt performing well for the first-place Red Sox, there's no need to rush Pedroia back.

"I think the most important thing is for him to be healthy," Cora said. "This isn't just about contributing this year. It's about the rest of his career."

All-Star Game Final Vote 2018: Boston Red Sox outfielder Andrew Benintendi trails Jean Segura in voting update

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox outfielder Andrew Benintendi is second behind Mariners infielder Jean Segura in All-Star Game Final Vote balloting. Voting closes Wednesday at 4 p.m. ET.

1B @JAguilarmke of the @Brewers and SS @Jeansegura02 of the @Mariners are your current leaders of the 2018 @CampingWorld All-Star #FinalVote. Voting ends on Wednesday at 4:00 p.m. ET. Vote now at <https://t.co/B3DJWKS3f0> pic.twitter.com/KegJWTvutF

-- MLB Communications (@MLB_PR) July 10, 2018

Yankees slugger Giancarlo Stanton is third in the voting.

Benintendi's campaign, which is being run by campaign manager Brock Holt, features the slogan #VoteBenny on social media. If he surpasses Segura and is added to the All-Star roster, Benintendi will be the sixth member of the Red Sox to make the team, joining pitchers Chris Sale and Craig Kimbrel, outfielder Mookie Betts, designated hitter J.D. Martinez and first baseman Mitch Moreland.

*** *The Lawrence Eagle Tribune***

Blake Swihart makes catching start count

Chris Mason

BOSTON — Given his second start at catcher this season, Blake Swihart made an impact.

The 26-year-old backstopped the Red Sox to an 8-4 win over the Rangers, and impressed with his bat.

Despite sporadic playing time — this was Swihart's first start at any position since June 22 — the catcher croaked a ball into the Triangle in his first at-bat. It went for a ground-rule double, and would have been a home run in almost any other ballpark. He added a single in the sixth.

With Christian Vazquez (broken finger) on the disabled list for the next six to eight weeks, the Red Sox will see more of Swihart moving forward.

"We trust him. It's just a matter of numbers. We've got Christian, we've got Sandy (Leon). There's a reason he's with us," Alex Cora said. "We trust the guy. It's just a matter of that it's tough to play three catchers. But he stayed with it he's been working hard with (Chad Epperson), with Jason (Varitek). Staying on top of the game, preparing like he's an everyday catcher. He did an outstanding job, blocked a few balls, called the game with conviction."

With a not-stretched-out Hector Velazquez getting a spot start, Swihart got plenty of exposure to the Sox staff. He caught six different pitchers in the win.

"It felt good to be back there," Swihart said. "Kind of having a bullpen day like that helped me out. Seeing a lot of those guys and trying to get in a rhythm with them.

"Each guy is so different. Each guy has their dos and don't. They have success one way and not the other way. As a whole, you take the whole package. It's tough to explain. You just take each guy day by day and keep going."

Offensively, Swihart finished the night 2 for 4, scoring a pair of runs. He isn't certain of the plan moving forward, but knows it'll be more catching than he was getting before Vazquez went on the DL.

"I'm not too sure. Probably a couple of times a week," Swihart said. "I guess we'll play it by ear."

Five Red Sox Takes: Matt Barnes has been lights out lately

Chris Mason

BOSTON — The Red Sox had a spot starter on the mound, green catcher behind the plate, and still rolled over the Texas Rangers for their eighth straight win.

Boston's bats went off in an 8-4 victory, and the game was never really in doubt following a five-run rally in the third inning.

Here are five takes from a beautiful night at Fenway Park:

1. The hits keep coming

The Red Sox didn't homer, but they tagged Texas pitching for 12 hits, including five for extra-bases.

Everybody in the Sox lineup reached base, and all but Rafael Devers had at least one hit. From top to bottom, it was one of the most complete offensive efforts of the season.

2. Barnes has been lights out

It's flown under the radar, but Matt Barnes has been terrific in relief for almost a month now. He was dominant in the seventh last night, striking out all three Rangers he faced.

Since a blown save in Seattle, Barnes has strung nine straight scoreless appearances together. Over that span, he's struck out 16 batters, allowing only two hits in nine innings.

Barnes' Achilles heel has been walks, but he's only issued two free passes since June 17. It's not a coincidence that the shutout streak has followed.

3. Blake brings his bat

Blake Swihart hasn't started a game since June 22, but somehow he didn't miss a beat at the plate.

In his first at-bat, Swihart skied a ball into the triangle for a ground-rule double. Then, the catcher showed off his wheels in the sixth. After beating out an infield single, Swihart scored from second on a double to left, beating a bang-bang play at the plate.

It was an impressive showing from a young player that hasn't seen many plate appearances.

4. Help wanted: Lefty in the 'pen

With two on, Jalen Beeks laboring, and Rangers slugger Joey Gallo coming to the plate in the sixth, Alex Cora was forced to turn to his bullpen. With no left-on-left specialist, he opted for Brandon Workman.

Gallo isn't hitting well for average against either side this season, but the power-threat had done a bit more damage against righties. True to form, he smoked a double off Workman, plating two Rangers.

It may be time to give lefty Robby Scott another big league shot. He's been excellent in Pawtucket this season.

5. Hector just gets it done

Hector Velazquez continues to do well with whatever is asked of him.

Pressed into spot starting duty with Brian Johnson, Steven Wright and Drew Pomeranz on the disabled list, Velazquez wasn't stretched out, but still gave the Red Sox three innings of one-run ball. He's been the unsung hero of the 2018 team.

With Dustin Pedroia heading back to Arizona, what's Dave Dombrowski to do?

Chris Mason

BOSTON — Plan A at second base has officially fallen through.

By the All-Star break, the Red Sox hoped that Dustin Pedroia would be fully integrated into a starting role, with Eduardo Nunez or Brock Holt spelling him when need be.

That won't be happening anytime soon.

"Pedey is going to go to Arizona," Alex Cora said. "He's going to do his rehab over there, the (physical therapist) that helped him out throughout the offseason. We'd love him to be around here, but I think for now, it's better off from him to go there and disconnect a little bit from all this and just concentrate on himself."

After a three-game return, Pedroia hasn't played baseball in over a month. He won't be doing any baseball activities back in Arizona and there is no timetable for a return.

"The most important thing is for him to be healthy," Cora said. "This is not about just contributing this year. This is about him playing for us the rest of his career. That's the most important thing."

As the first position player to ever undergo this cartilage restoration surgery in his knee, Pedroia entered uncharted waters. He can't be relied upon for a return.

So what's Dave Dombrowski to do? The president of baseball operations has options.

1. Keep the Nunez/Holt platoon

Thus far, the Red Sox have been OK without Pedroia at second. Boston does boast the best record in baseball, after all.

Nunez and Holt have been middling offensively.

Sox second basemen own a .693 OPS, good for 15th in the majors, but when Nunez slumps, the bottom of the batting order is particularly punch-less. Depth may be an issue against steeper competition.

This is also banking on the fact that Nunez — who has a knee issue of his own — stays healthy. He's gotten the lion's share of work in the first half, starting 61 games to Holt's 27, and looked less than 100 percent at times.

As Nunez has managed the injury, range has been an issue in the field; his -11 defensive runs saved (DRS) is the second worst at the position.

2. Bank on an internal boost

The Red Sox took a flyer on Brandon Phillips, a 37-year-old former All Star who is currently with the Lowell Spinners. Phillips has gone 3 for 12 with a homer in his first few at-bats in the Red Sox system and was once a Gold Glover.

They also have Tzu-Wei Lin in Pawtucket, who if nothing else, can play sound defense. He's been solid for the PawSox at the plate too, hitting .308 with an OPS of .819.

Though with the AL East on the line in September, how much confidence does either option instill?

3. Strike a deal

This would seem to be the wisest course of action, but the farm system isn't flush. Whether the Red Sox have the assets to swing a major deal without saying farewell to the future is a real question.

Still, there figure to be plenty of sellers at the deadline, and players like Cincinnati's Scooter Gennett, Colorado's D.J LeMaheiu or old friend Jed Lowrie would provide immediate upgrades.

Gennett, just voted to his first All-Star Game, is hitting .322 with 14 homers and 58 RBIs for a Reds team that's going nowhere. He'd be pricey though. After this season, Gennett has one more year of arbitration before he reaches free agency.

If the Rockies fall off in the next three weeks, LeMaheiu is a guy to keep an eye on.

A two-time Gold Glover, LeMaheiu is in the final year of his contract. He'd be a solid addition as a rental, but as it stands, Colorado is still chasing a playoff spot.

Lowrie has been the second-best second baseman according to WAR — he trails only reigning MVP Jose Altuve — and is in the last year of his deal, too.

The A's are overachieving at 51-40, but are still six games back of a Wild Card spot. That's how top-heavy the best teams in the AL are.

If Dombrowski wants to swing a deal, the second basemen are out there. With his best-laid plans behind him, it's an intriguing possibility as the deadline approaches.

*** *The Worcester Telegram & Gazette***

Red Sox: Blake Swihart, Sandy Leon latest in Boston line of switch-hitting catchers

Bill Ballou

BOSTON — Tuesday night's starting catcher for the Red Sox, Blake Swihart, is in the finest tradition of Boston's long line of receivers.

Swihart is a switch hitter, just like his catching partner Sandy Leon. Just like 14 other Sox catchers before him.

Aside from pitchers, which really doesn't count in tracking switch hitters since most of them can't hit from either side of the plate, more catchers have been switch hitters for Boston than any other position.

Having both catchers as switch hitters is unusual in Sox annals but not unprecedented. In 1974, a year Carlton Fisk missed most of due to injury, Boston employed five catchers. Fisk played 50 games and Bob Montgomery 79. Future announcing great Tim McCarver got into eight as well.

Two of the five used in '74 were switch hitters in Tim Blackwell and Bob Didier. They were never on the roster at the same time, though, as Didier was up in April and Blackwell arrived in Boston in midsummer.

The Red Sox' best switch hitting catcher is Jason Varitek, and he was around for so long, from 1997 through retirement after the 2011 season, that he had several switch-hitting catchers as teammates.

The first was Mandy Romero in 1998. Romero was a September call-up from the minor leagues, a 40-man roster player but not a 25-man roster player, and he and Varitek split time behind the plate as the '98 season ended and Boston prepared for the playoffs.

Romero's career offensive contributions for Boston as a switch hitter were a .231 average with no home runs and one RBI. Next up was Marcus Jensen in 2001, but he was never on the active roster simultaneously with Varitek. Jensen was a one-game wonder, acquired in June after Varitek suffered a season-ending injury.

Jensen was Scott Hatteberg's backup until Boston could find a more permanent solution, which turned out to be Doug Mirabelli. Jensen was 1 for 4 in his lone Sox appearance, a 4-2 loss to the Marlins on June 13.

Varitek had a more permanent switch-hitting partner in 2006, but not much more, as the Sox acquired Josh Bard to be Tim Wakefield's personal knuckleball catcher, replacing Mirabelli.

We all know what happened. Bard lasted six starts, the Sox panicked and traded him and Cla Meredith to the Padres on May 1, Mirabelli making his return via police escort.

From Logan Airport, not San Diego.

As Varitek neared the end of his career and had his workload behind the plate reduced, Boston brought in Victor Martinez midway through the 2009 season in a trade with the Indians. While Varitek caught the majority of Boston's games for the '09 season in total, he and Martinez split the catching duties after the trade.

Martinez played half the time at first base, half the time at catcher. The next year, though, Martinez superseded Varitek as the Red Sox' No. 1 catcher, and at the conclusion of the 2010 campaign, Martinez became a free agent and signed with the Tigers.

That cleared the way for another switch-hitting catcher to join Varitek on the roster, Jarrod Saltalamacchia. He did the bulk of the catching while Varitek's career was winding down then was the team's No. 1 catcher in both 2012 and 2013.

In the 2013 playoffs, though, with Boston on the way to a World Series title, Saltalamacchia was supplanted as the starting catcher by David Ross and subsequently left as a free agent.

This is actually the second time around for Swihart and Leon as switch-hitting partners behind the plate. Swihart made his major league debut in 2015 as Boston's catcher of the future, and Leon, purchased from the Nationals, came to the Red Sox that year as well.

Injuries and the emergence of Christian Vazquez have derailed Swihart's catching career, but with Vazquez out for possibly as long as two months with a finger injury, Swihart has a chance to return to where he was on the depth chart in 2015.

For him, that would be a switch.

Red Sox: Boston rolls past Texas Rangers for eighth straight win

Bill Ballou

BOSTON — It never seems to stop, does it?

The Red Sox keep winning, winning and winning, no matter who is on the mound, who is behind the plate, or who is on the disabled list.

They beat the Texas Rangers again Tuesday night, 8-4, and have won eight in a row, 13 of their last 15, 15 of their last 18. The New York Yankees lost to the Baltimore Orioles and Boston has increased its lead in the American League East to 3½ games, its most comfortable margin since April 26.

The Sox are 64-29. That projects to 111 victories, which would be one of the greatest seasons in major league history by any team. Even if they go a mediocre 36-33 for their last 69 games, they will still win 100 games for the first time since 1946.

Enjoy it, fans. This is historic.

Who was on the mound anyway?

Red Sox righty Hector Velazquez started and went three innings. Jalen Beeks, Brandon Workman, Matt Barnes, Joe Kelly and Ryan Brasier followed. Barnes got the win in an official scorer's decision to improve to 3-2.

Who was behind the plate?

Blake Swihart, making his second start of the season, and he was 2 for 4 with a double and two runs.

Who is on the disabled list?

Who isn't?

"The game went the way we planned it," said Alex Cora, and if this manager thing doesn't work out long term, how about providing advice for 401(k)s?

The Red Sox had 12 hits, seven of them for extra bases. Oddly, none of them departed the ballpark. Boston had six doubles including two apiece by Andrew Benintendi and Jackie Bradley Jr., as well as a triple by Xander Bogaerts.

Swihart, a talkshow target for much of the season, has begun to show why the Red Sox have always regarded him highly. His average is up to .200 — no big deal even in today's all-or-nothing baseball — but it was .147 on June 21.

"He did an outstanding job, blocked a few balls, called the game with conviction," Cora said of his catcher. "Offensively, he got us going with that double. It was good to see."

Velazquez did a nice job for Boston. He worked the first three innings and allowed only one run, Rounked Odor's home run to right field with one out in the second. And while it seems unfair that Velazquez was the only Sox pitcher not eligible to get the win, three of his four wins in relief this year have been for two-inning efforts.

Beeks would have gotten the win had he pitched better, but he didn't. In fact, if not for three defensive gems behind him — one by Bogaerts, a homer-rob by Mookie Betts off Nomar Mazara in the fifth and a diving grab by Bradley in the sixth, Beeks would likely have coughed up the lead.

Barnes faced three batters in the seventh and struck out all three. It was a 7-4 game then, a save situation, so he got the win.

Rangers starter Yovani Gallardo faced seven batters and got seven outs before the Red Sox figured him out and scored five runs in their half of the third inning. With one out, Swihart hit a double to the triangle that bounced into the seats behind the Boston bullpen. Otherwise, it would have been a triple, but that fact was rendered moot when Bradley doubled to center field, as well.

Betts fanned for the second out of the inning but that provided only temporary respite for Gallardo because Benintendi followed with yet another double in the general direction of center field.

That drove in Bradley to make it 3-1, then J.D. Martinez singled Benintendi over to third. Mitch Moreland's base hit to right increased Boston's lead to 4-1. Bogaerts tripled to center, scoring Moreland, and the Red Sox lead was 5-1 and, really, never in doubt from that point on.

"Lineup wise, everybody's doing an outstanding job," Cora said. "Not only Mookie and J.D.; Xander's doing an outstanding job, and you saw Jackie today going the other way; Swihart, too."

"It's a pretty good lineup from top to bottom."

Right now, that lineup has them on top, no matter who is in it.

*** *The Pawtucket Times***

WREN FEST: New PawSox OF Kyle Wren becomes third member of family to join Red Sox organization

Brendan McGair

PAWTUCKET – There was no “Wren’ing Around” when new PawSox outfielder Kyle Wren was set to be drafted by the Atlanta Braves in 2013. At the time, his dad Frank held the role of Braves general manager.

“Before the draft, my dad asked if I would have been okay with being drafted by him. All the stuff that comes along with that ... the pressure,” Kyle Wren recalled. “I told him yeah, I was fine. I put up the kind of numbers that justified me being drafted if it happened to be by them. Plus, I grew up a Braves fan.”

A similar conversation between father and son took place just before Kyle Wren signed a minor-league deal with Boston last week. Just like in 2013, Kyle told his dad Frank, who is currently Senior Vice President/Player Personnel with the Red Sox, that there’s no reason to entertain any thoughts pertaining to favoritism or preferential treatment.

“I talk to my dad every day. Obviously, he said the opportunity was there to play in Pawtucket. Besides that, he pretty much stayed out of it,” Kyle Wren said. “It came down to where I thought the best opportunity would be. I thought it would be (with the PawSox).

“I was straight up honest and told my dad that I think Boston is going to be the spot I want to go to. He agreed,” Wren added. “Then he said, ‘I know you were okay being drafted by Atlanta and it’s going to be the same thing here, same stuff.’ I told him it doesn’t bother me.”

Kyle Wren didn’t become the second member of his family to latch on with the Red Sox. He became the third after younger brother Jordan was a 10th-round pick of Boston in 2017 and is presently with Low-A Greenville.

“We’re getting the band back together,” Jordan Wren wrote on his personal Twitter page after his brother’s signing with Boston became official.

“I guess you could say it’s a family reunion. (Jordan) probably has a chip on his shoulder to try and get up (to Pawtucket), but he was really supportive,” Kyle Wren said while sitting in the PawSox dugout recently. “I definitely come from a baseball family and had the privilege of growing up around the game.”

When Frank Wren was the assistant general manager of the Florida Marlins during the 1990s, young Kyle and his twin brother Colby would either watch games from their dad’s box or seats close to the Florida dugout. There were also times when Frank would have his boys accompany him on minor-league scouting trips.

The chance to be around a professional environment at a young age became an invaluable tool when it came time for Kyle Wren to make the leap from college baseball at Georgia Tech to the pros.

“I was able to learn the ins and outs when it comes to playing the game the right way,” Kyle Wren said, referencing his dad’s 40-plus years of experience in Major League Baseball. “I think that’s the kind of stuff where maybe I have an advantage over some guys because I’ve spent my whole life around the game.”

The Red Sox were one of several teams to reach out to Kyle Wren after he asked and was granted a release by Triple-A Colorado Springs on June 26. Wren actually approached Milwaukee Brewers management about the idea of seeking opportunities elsewhere two weeks before the move became official.

Wren was minor-league property of the Brewers since the 2015 season. He was traded by Atlanta, the team that selected him in the eighth round, to Milwaukee not long after his dad was relieved of his GM duties with the Braves.

"It was a situation where I had performed well for three years but had never been given a shot in the major leagues. Those last three to four weeks with Colorado Springs, I wasn't even really playing," Wren said. "It was frustrating but I tried to go out there with the same face every day ... work hard and be the same guy. But I wasn't going to just let it happen. I was going to fight for my opportunity and if they didn't want to give me those at-bats ... that's why I asked for my release. I want to play. It was no indictment on them."

Kyle Wren is off to a slow start with the PawSox – in three games he's hitless in 11 at-bats with eight strikeouts. When things are going well, he's a hitter who makes consistent contact, witnessed by his lifetime .294 average in 626 minor-league games. He can play all three outfield positions and posted a solid .751 OPS in 328 career games with Colorado Springs. He knows that he has to increase his power numbers and felt that last year's output of a career-best five round trippers was a good sign.

When he's not making the scouting rounds for the Red Sox, Frank Wren is based in Atlanta. The PawSox are scheduled to visit Gwinnett on July 20-22, a trip that Kyle Wren is looking forward to for several obvious reasons.

"I know a lot of guys on the Gwinnett roster, having played with them when we were younger," Kyle Wren. "Plus, it'll be a chance for my dad to see me play in person. That should be neat."

*** *RedSox.com***

Swihart propels red-hot Sox to 8th straight win

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- In game No. 93 of the season for the Red Sox, Blake Swihart finally had the night he'd been searching for.

Whether it was belting a rally-starting RBI double to the deepest part of Fenway Park, hauling around from first to score on a gapper or catching all nine innings in a game the Red Sox had to piece together pitching-wise, Swihart (2-for-4, two runs) was ever-present while helping his team to an 8-4 victory over the Rangers on Tuesday.

"My legs will be tired probably tomorrow from running and stuff," said Swihart. "It felt good. My swings felt good. Just keep on going."

Meanwhile, the 64-29 Sox continue to roll in this final week before the All-Star break, extending their winning streak to eight games and a 3 1/2-game lead over the Yankees in the American League East.

There were many contributors for Boston in this one, including Andrew Benintendi, who helped his Final Vote candidacy with a pair of RBI doubles. Jackie Bradley Jr. added two doubles and two RBIs from the No. 9 spot in the order. Mookie Betts had a two-hit, two-run performance. Mitch Moreland had two more RBIs.

"Lineup-wise, everybody is doing an outstanding job," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "It's not only Mookie or J.D. [Martinez], Xander [Bogaerts] is doing an outstanding job. You saw Jackie today going the other way and Swihart. Like I said yesterday or the day before, it's becoming fun."

But nobody enjoyed the night as much as Swihart, who has been used sparingly this season due to roster construction. With Christian Vazquez undergoing surgery on his right pinkie finger Tuesday and expected to miss six to eight weeks, Swihart is finally going to get some reps behind the plate as a backup to Sandy Leon. This was just the second game Swihart started at catcher this season.

"We trust him," said Cora. "It's just a matter of numbers. We've got Christian, we've got Sandy. There's a reason he's with us. We trust the guy. It's just a matter of that it's tough to play three catchers, but he stayed with it. He's been working hard with [catching instructors Chad Epperson] and Jason [Varitek].

"He's been staying on top of the game, preparing like he's an everyday catcher. He did an outstanding job, blocked a few balls, called the game with conviction. Offensively, he got us going with that double. It was good to see."

Swihart helped guide the pitching staff for what was essentially a bullpen game. Starter Hector Velazquez, who is not stretched out, handed it over to the bullpen after throwing 49 pitches and allowing one run over three innings.

The bullpen took it home for the final six

"It felt good to be back there," said Swihart. "Kind of having a bullpen day like that helped me out, just seeing a lot of those guys and trying to get in a rhythm with them."

Texas led briefly in this one when Rougned Odor smashed a solo homer to right in the second, but Swihart's double in the third ignited a five-run rally and the game was mostly controlled by the Red Sox from there.

Rangers right-hander Yovani Gallardo bore the brunt of a Boston offense that was bashing the ball from gap to gap in that third inning.

The big capper in the frame was provided by Bogaerts, who skied a two-run triple off the glove of center fielder Delino DeShields to make it 5-1, Boston.

"Gallardo did a good job the first few innings and then all of a sudden, Blake hits one in the triangle and Jackie hits a double and the line kept moving," said Cora. "That's what it's all about from top to bottom, just be relentless, and they've been doing that the last few weeks."

Of the six hits in the inning, four were for extra bases and five were hit with an exit velocity of 101 mph or more.

"A lot of big hits from a lot of guys tonight so it was a good win," Benintendi said.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

The Rangers chipped it back to a two-run deficit at 6-4 when Joey Gallo smashed a two-run double to center in the sixth. But in the bottom of the inning, the Red Sox came right back. After Swihart reached on an infield hit, Bradley unloaded on a first-pitch fastball (96.4 mph) from Ricardo Rodriguez and roped it to the gap in left-center. Swihart reminded everyone of how athletic he is for a catcher by motoring all the way around from first to score. According to Statcast™, Swihart scored in 10.61 seconds and had a 27.5-mph sprint speed.

SOUND SMART

The Red Sox are in the midst of their third winning streak this season of eight games or more. The last Boston team to have as many as three winning streaks of eight game or more was the 1978 squad, which finished 99-64. The Sox are 35 games above .500 for the first time since Oct. 2, 2004.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

It seems that a game doesn't go by without either Betts or Bradley making a standout play. In this game, they both did. In the fifth, Betts raced back to the Boston bullpen, timed a short leap perfectly and snagged a fly ball from Nomar Mazara that would have been a two-run home run.

An inning later, it was Bradley's turn. Ronald Guzman belted a liner to center, and Bradley came in for a sensational, tumbling catch. Bradley had to go 50 feet in 3.4 seconds for a 33 percent catch probability. It was a four-star catch, giving Bradley seven for the season. Only DeShields has more with eight.

"Great play by Markus. I just wanted to kind of get over there, not necessarily to back him up or anything, but just to communicate to him, let him know he has some room," said Bradley. "Kind of let him know that he can make his jump whenever. He was able to get back there. You saw him put his hand out to try to feel for it. Communication helps. On my ball, I saw a liner. Hit it hard enough to where I could run in and get to it."

UP NEXT

The Red Sox send ace Chris Sale to the mound for Wednesday night's finale of this three-game series against the Rangers. Sale has been on fire over the last month, going 4-1 with a 1.10 ERA in his last six starts. It will be an intriguing matchup, as the Rangers counter with ageless veteran Bartolo Colon (5-6, 4.65 ERA). Colon has made 17 career appearances at Fenway Park, going 7-6 with a 3.74 ERA. This is the first time the righty has pitched in Boston since April 23, 2013, when he fired seven scoreless innings for the Athletics en route to victory. First pitch is scheduled for 7:10 p.m. ET.

Benintendi helps Final Vote cause with 2 RBIs

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Andrew Benintendi might have the most low-key personality on the Red Sox. So when it comes to campaign mechanisms for the American League's Final Vote, which could make him the sixth All-Star, Benintendi has just one -- and it is made of lumber.

The left fielder rifled a pair of RBI doubles to help lead the Red Sox to an 8-4 victory over the Rangers on Tuesday night at Fenway Park.

The performance came just hours after Benintendi learned he was in second place on the ballot, trailing only Seattle's Jean Segura.

The results will be announced tonight on MLB Network.

"They know I'm not really that kind of a guy to hype myself up," Benintendi said. "It's been kind of funny to watch and to see them get into it."

Fans can cast votes for the final player on each league's roster -- on computers, tablets and smartphones -- exclusively online as part of the 2018 Camping World MLB Final Vote, as well as via the MLB At Bat and MLB Ballpark mobile apps, until today at 4 p.m. ET.

Johnny Damon (2002), Jason Varitek ('03) and Hideki Okajima ('07) are previous Red Sox players who became All-Stars via the Final Vote.

Benintendi's recent stat lines should speak plenty loud enough.

In the last five games, Benintendi is 12-for-19 (.632) with nine runs, five doubles, a homer and four RBIs.

"I feel pretty good," said Benintendi. "I think before that Kansas City series, I was scuffling a little bit for a week and a half to two weeks, so to finally get back to feeling good is big for me."

In Tuesday's game, Benintendi's first RBI double was in the midst of a five-run rally for the Red Sox. The second one was in the seventh, and it drove in Mookie Betts for an insurance run.

"More importantly, we won the game, so that's what mattered," Benintendi said. "A lot of big hits from a lot of guys tonight, so it was a good win."

For the season, Benintendi is slashing .298/.383/.523 with 25 doubles, five triples, 14 homers and 57 RBIs. This to go along with 17 stolen bases in 18 attempts. Benintendi has also played strong defense in left field.

Despite how deserving he would be to join Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez, Mitch Moreland, Chris Sale and Craig Kimbrel at the All-Star Game, Benintendi isn't spending much time thinking about the possibility.

"Whatever happens, it's out of my hands," Benintendi said. "Whatever happens happens."

But when Benintendi comes to the plate these days, hits are what seem to be happening.

On Tuesday, July 17, while watching the 2018 All-Star Game presented by Mastercard live on FOX, fans can submit their choices for the Ted Williams Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet with the 2018 All-Star Game MLB.com MVP Vote.

The 89th Midsummer Classic, at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C., will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage.

For more information about MLB All-Star Week and to purchase tickets, visit AllStarGame.com and follow @MLB and @AllStarGame on social media.

Pedroia to continue rehab program in Arizona

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Ailing Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia will take his rehab to Arizona for the foreseeable future.

It has been a tough few weeks for Pedroia, who thought he was fully recovered from extensive offseason surgery on his left knee, only to be shelved with inflammation after just three games.

Pedroia last played for the Red Sox on May 29, and there is no clear timetable on when he will suit up again. Manager Alex Cora still thinks the 34-year-old veteran will return at some point this season.

"I expect him to play," said Cora. "Like I've been saying all along, and it didn't happen the first time, when he comes back, just stay healthy and play. We're not going to put a timetable on this. We'll take it day by day and go from there."

However, as Cora points out, Pedroia's recovery is about far more than 2018.

"This is not about just contributing this year," Cora said. "This is about him playing for us the rest of his career. That's the most important thing."

To help pave the way for a full recovery, Pedroia will be working on strengthening all the areas that surround his knee. And all parties involved felt that he'd be in the best position to do that near his offseason home in Arizona.

"We'd love him to be around here, but I think for now, it's better off from him to go there and disconnect a little bit from all this and just concentrate on himself," Cora said. "There are going to be a few adjustments on the rehab, hammy and core and glutes, so I think that's the best thing we can do right now."

"He's very important for what we're trying to accomplish here, but I think it's time now for him to concentrate on that. And if everything goes the way it should go, then whenever he comes back, he comes back."

The Red Sox have been going with Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt at second base all season. In addition, the club signed 16-year-veteran Brandon Phillips to a Minor League deal last week. In three games with Class A Short Season Lowell, Phillips is 3-for-12 with one homer and three RBIs.

Beeks to help from left side

Jalen Beeks, who has been used exclusively as a starter for Triple-A Pawtucket this season, was recalled by the Red Sox on Tuesday to serve as a lefty out of the bullpen.

To make room for Beeks, the Red Sox optioned righty William Cuevas to Pawtucket.

Rated Boston's No. 15 prospect by MLB Pipeline, Beeks started once for the Red Sox, taking a 7-2 loss to the Tigers on June 7.

Beeks joins a Boston bullpen that doesn't have any other lefties at the moment.

"He's been pitching a lot down there," said Cora. "I think it's a good time for him to reset, we feel, as an organization. We see the numbers against lefties, too. He's been dominant. He's a strike thrower, so he'll be coming out of the bullpen."

Another setback for Hernandez

It has been a tough year for Marco Hernandez, who suffered a subluxation of his left shoulder last May, and has had numerous complications in his recovery. On Tuesday, the Red Sox announced the infielder underwent left shoulder anterior stability revision procedure and won't play at all in 2018.

It is the third surgery Hernandez has had since suffering the injury.

*** *WEEI.com***

Former Red Sox No. 7 overall draft pick Trey Ball discusses adjustment of moving to bullpen

Vincent Gallo

HARTFORD -- Trey Ball sat in the dugout and stared out at Dunkin Donuts Park through the shades of his sunglasses, the sound of a siren's wail through Hartford slightly drowning out the confining pregame Christmas-in-July tunes.

He lightly scratched his goatee as he searched for the precise quote that has stuck with him throughout his career. Ball doesn't recall where exactly he got it from. But the words of wisdom still resonate within him alongside his determination.

"Talent only gets you so far, but the work you put in is what advances that," Ball said. "That's something that's really come into focus as of late, and in the last couple of years. [I] have the talent to get here but now [I] have to put the work in and continue to work hard. I've always felt that I've worked really hard at what I do, it's just that sometimes you need to make changes. The number one thought has to be 'I have to do this for this, for this reason.' That's been a big thing throughout my professional career."

As fans enjoy Christmas songs during the summer months and other light-hearted gimmicks, the bullpens of minor league parks throughout the East Coast have been Ball's testing grounds for his pitch delivery.

It's been five years since the Red Sox picked Ball with the No. 7 pick of the 2013 draft. He has yet to have made it to the big league diamond, but the 24-year-old hasn't lost hope. After posting a 5.27 ERA in 24 starts last season, the decision was made for him to move to the bullpen.

Ball started the year off strong by pitching 6 2/3 innings of shutout ball over three appearances while averaging a strikeout per inning. Following those three games, the lefty surrendered 19 runs in his next 10 games, spiking his ERA to 6.66. It's been within the most recent 10-game stretch where Ball is tapping into the consistency he enjoyed early in the season.

Aside from a rough five run outing (3 1/3 innings) against Reading, Ball has only given up six runs through the nine other appearances (17 2/3 innings).

"He really struggled early on. He wasn't having a very good year. He's turned it around nicely in a pretty impressive manner," said Paul Abbott, Sea Dogs pitching coach. "He just needs to be able to control himself out there and when he gets going on a good roll he tries to get more and he's doing a really good job with staying within himself. The goal is to sustain this [relief] role."

Abbott noted that Ball has never backed down from going at batters with his mechanics. The key to his recent success however, has been picking his spots in being assertive.

"He's always been aggressive, the issue was he'd get overaggressive and his head would get in the way, and take away from the quality of his pitches," Abbott explained. "So we've been working on controlling that effort to where he's aggressive in different timing where he can sync his lower half up with his upper half and that's why we're seeing a big difference right now. You want guys to be max effort looking throwers ... some just have bad mechanics [but with Ball] you're seeing a guy who's got really smooth mechanics, and he's [recently] been able to repeat [the success]."

Ball is happy about the recent steps he's taken.

"It's been a good adjustment," he said. "I've obviously had my bumps in the road this season so far but I feel like the work I've been putting in and the work I've been doing with my sides, building off good outings, learning from the mistakes I make in bad outings, I feel like that's been a good thing as of late."

When Ball was drafted, scouts cited his slider/cutter as his strongest and most consistent pitch that he'd need to build his arsenal around at the professional level. Abbott believes Ball's slider is what has helped him pitch more effectively, and correlates its emergence with the lefty's move to the bullpen.

"It comes into play more as a reliever because he's not going to have to go through the lineup more than once at the most so it actually has stepped up to probably be his primary secondary pitch," said Abbott. "It's gotten up to where it's 87-90 mph ... he's commanded it very well. [It's been] a swing and miss pitch he's had in his back pocket."

Ball has relished being able to reset quickly and between less games while working in relief. Along with the strength of his pitches, he believes the move from the starting role helped his mentality, and will go a long way in fully establishing his confidence.

"That's the difference in being on the reliever side," Ball said. "When I have a rough outing, if it's a couple of innings [where I give] up a couple of runs, I tell myself 'hey, you're gonna be out there in two or three days' you don't have to wait on that whole five days and mull over it, you get back out there and compete and work hard. That's a different mindset from coming in as a starter, being able to say that I'll be getting out there sooner, I have to put my work in and recover those numbers."

Zach Britton, not Manny Machado, is the Oriole in Red Sox' crosshairs

Rob Bradford

In the middle of the Red Sox' 8-4 win over the Rangers Tuesday night the rumors started swirling: the Red Sox were dipping their toes in the Manny Machado Sweepstakes.

An inquiry to a major league source with knowledge of the situation on the matter resulted in a response reiterating that the Red Sox have always liked Machado.

That's where the momentum stopped.

The Red Sox aren't going to be acquiring Machado, although they would probably like to get an idea of how realistic it is the Yankees might make a major play for the shortstop. This is the vibe coming from the Sox side of things. Making the kind of run that would necessitate getting Machado for the final few months of the 2018 season isn't in the cards for Dave Dombrowski and his club.

First of all, the Red Sox don't really need him right now. (In case you missed it, they are now 35 games over .500.) And the price for the player figures to be something that would make an already depleted farm system significantly more uncomfortable, with the Orioles needing desperately to hit on this deal. Kansas City held on to its guys (Eric Hosmer, Mike Moustakas, Lorenzo Cain) last non-waiver trade and paid the price. Detroit's haul for the rental that was J.D. Martinez now seems pretty modest.

Dan Duquette can't suffer such a fate.

There is another player on that Orioles team, however, that Red Sox fans should absolutely be eyeing every time he pitches. Zach Britton is clearly on the Red Sox' end-of-July short list.

Acquiring Britton isn't going to break the Red Sox' minor-league talent pool bank, with the reliever heading into free agency after this season. Since coming back from injury June 12, the lefty has gotten progressively closer to the difference-maker that would seemingly fit nicely in the back of the Sox' bullpen. He has allowed just two hits while striking out four in his last five outings, including scoreless innings against the Yankees the last two days.

MASNSports.com reported Tuesday night that there seems to be "definite interest" from the Red Sox regarding Britton, a notion that lines up with what has been coming from multiple sources over the past few weeks.

Pitching for the second time in as many days, Britton topped out at 96 mph against the Yankees. The day before he could be found with the same velocity, carrying such movement on his fastball that all of the reliever's 15 pitches were heaters.

To repeat: The Baltimore reliever, not the shortstop, is the guy Red Sox fans should be focused on.

Mookie Betts has a good idea when it comes to fixing HR Derby mess

Rob Bradford

The Home Run Derby is in trouble.

More and more players are saying, 'Thanks, but no thanks,' when it comes to participating in the All-Star event, including the big league's home run leader (J.D. Martinez), Yankees sluggers Aaron Judge and Giancarlo Stanton, and some more of the game's most dynamic talents (Mookie Betts, Mike Trout).

So, is it time to rethink the viability of the contest, which has been part of the festivities since 1985? Betts thinks so.

"Do something else, or take it out. Don't even do it," Betts said when asked about the HR Derby. The American League All-Starter added, "Anything you do too much, people are going to get tired of it."

So, what to do? Betts has what seems to be a good suggestion, one which is born from his experience in a baseball tournament as 12-year-old.

Bring on the skills competition. It's a strategy the NBA took when the dunk competition started getting stale ("I think the other stuff, like the bigs and littles, that's more fun," said Betts regarding the NBA All-Star Weekend.) Now it's time for baseball to follow suit.

Betts explained that there is absolutely a blueprint for such an endeavor, pointing to the youth baseball tournament put on at the Baseball Hall of Fame each year.

"I think if you look at Cooperstown, they do a really good job," he said.

Some of the pieces included in the competition are timing runners and something called "Around the Horn," where an entire team is asked to execute a series of throws to the bases and from the outfield. Betts did it as a 12-year-old ("We won it," he said), and thinks it could work with the game's greatest players. As he points out, if nothing else it's something different at a time it would seem we need something different.

"I kind of think that's the route you're going to have to go," he said.

Cooperstown Dreams Park Skills Competition around-the-horn-plus finals - Rochester Rage

The entire notion of having a skills competition opens the door for all kinds of ideas, such as another Betts thought of.

"Something like a throwing from the outfield contest. Some type of throwing contest," he said. "Trying to throw into a barrel or infielders have to take a ground ball to your left, ground ball to your right, slow roller and they have to throw into a screen with a box. That might be something."

The Home Run Derby isn't totally without its merits, as Red Sox manager Alex Cora pointed out before his team's game Monday night. But when you have more and more and more players choosing not to join the fun, it's a problem.

"It's great, man. Just sit there and watch it with family. That'll be great," Cora said. "It wasn't going to mess up my swing. I wasn't going to get tired. It should be fine, regardless of who is in there. I know people want to see J.D. but if you guys watch J.D. taking batting practice, it's not fun because he's working on his craft. Mookie, same deal. Judge, Stanton, I read they're not doing it. They have their reasons. There are going to be a few guys there. They have their reasons."

If there was a skills competition, like the one proposed by Betts, maybe fewer would have reasons to participate in the Monday fun. Just a thought.

Pedroia headed to Arizona to rehab knee

Rob Bradford

Dustin Pedroia is not going to be returning to the Red Sox anytime soon.

That was the message given by manager Alex Cora prior to Tuesday night's game against the Rangers, passing along that the second baseman will start the new phase of his knee rehabilitation in Arizona. Pedroia will be working at the same facility he rehabbed his knee at throughout the offseason.

The goal, according to Cora, is to not only strengthen the knee, but the muscles around that area. Even an evaluation of Pedroia's running motion will be scrutinized in an attempt to get the 34-year-old back to a place where he can contribute again.

"We'd love him to be around here, but I think, for now, it's better off from him to go there and disconnect a little bit from all this and just concentrate on himself," Cora said. "There are going to be a few adjustments on the rehab, hammy and core and glutes so I think that's the best thing we can do right now. Like I said, you guy saw me talking with him yesterday during the game, he's very important for what we're trying to accomplish here but I think it's time now for him to concentrate on that and if everything goes the way it should go, then whenever he comes back he comes back."

Cora did say the Red Sox expect Pedroia to return this season.

"Like I've been saying all along and it didn't happen the first time, when he comes back, just stay healthy and play," Cora said. "We're not going to put a timetable on this. We'll take it day by day and go from there."

The new strategy comes after Pedroia's visit with Dr. Riley Williams in New York last week, during which time he a revamped plan of attack could be hatched.

"He's learned good things about it," Cora said. "Like I said, it's nothing structural, I think I mentioned yesterday it's about making adjustments around the need and body wise that are going to help him or help the knee not to get upset. And he's done his research. When we sit down he drops names like huge athletes like Kobe (Bryant) and (Rafael) Nadal and I'm like 'Wow'. He's doing his research. Obviously, he cares and he wants to contribute so I think he's in a good place now. He goes with the family to Arizona, he's around the family, he can take the kids to school and all that and take care of his business. Here it's a little bit harder, we still have to get 25 guys ready to play on a daily basis, and he doesn't like to be in the middle of that, that's him. That's the teammate he is. So we'll do it that way and hopefully everything works out and he'll be back with us."

Pedroia has played in just three games this season, not seeing action since May 29.

Red Sox announce surgery updates on Christian Vazquez, Marco Hernandez

John Tomase

The Red Sox announced a pair of successful surgeries on Tuesday, including catcher Christian Vazquez.

According to the team, Vazquez underwent a successful pinning procedure on his broken right pinky at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. Dr. Matt Leibman performed the surgery, which is expected to sideline Vazquez for six to eight weeks.

Vazquez broke his finger on Saturday night while sliding into second as part of a delayed steal against the Royals.

The team also announced that infielder Marco Hernandez, who has been sidelined since spring training, underwent a successful left shoulder anterior stability revision at The Vail Medical Center/Steadman Clinic, in Colorado. The surgery was performed by Dr. Matthew Provencher.

Hernandez will be sidelined for the rest of the season.

*** *NBCSportsBoston.com***

Has Machado's status as a Boston villain been forgotten?

Evan Drellich

BOSTON -- Shouldn't Red Sox fans be slightly more revolted by the farfetched idea of Manny Machado in a Red Sox uniform?

Fans do seem pretty dismissive of the idea of Machado landing in Boston. But not because of Machado's history with the Sox. Fans, surprisingly, seem in tune with more rational reasoning, such as the Sox' thin farm system.

Machado is a great player. Great players change jerseys, and fans root for the laundry. Most Sox fans would not turn Machado away if the Sox somehow got a deal done. (They won't.)

But when the curtains have gone up at Fenway in the last 15 months, Machado has played the villain better than most. Shouldn't there be a segment of Sox Nation that can't stand the idea of seeing this great player defect?

There was Machado's expletive-laden rant of 2017, where he said he lost respect for everyone in the Red Sox organization. But really, the event that precipitated it all -- the slide that hurt Dustin Pedroia's left knee last year -- may go down as the turning point of Pedroia's career.

Machado-to-the-Sox rumors cropped up Tuesday, the same day that Alex Cora announced Pedroia would continue his rehab in Arizona. It seems an appropriate time to recall the damage Machado did sliding into Pedroia last season, regardless of Machado's intent. (Machado said he intended no harm.)

Pedroia did so much to downplay the moment, to defuse a tense situation, that Machado's real impact on a star Red Sox player's career may have been brushed aside.

"I never felt anything [before] but that slide it felt weird like a pop and that was cartilage tearing off my tibia so once that happened there was no forgiving, it was just bone on bone and it was pretty tough," Pedroia told The Athletic's Jen McCaffrey in May.

Wrote McCaffrey: While the hole in the cartilage had likely always been there, the controversial slide from Baltimore's Manny Machado while Pedroia was covering second base last April was a dividing line. That slide tore cartilage off the tibia and created the separate injury and the need for microfracture surgery.

Maybe the slide's place in Sox history will become clearer over time. Pedroia's future is completely unknown at this point. Machado isn't the sole reason Pedroia's knee is in jeopardy -- but since when did fans care about such nuance?

Machado did something that negatively impacted a major Red Sox player. Then he cursed out the Red Sox after Chris Sale threw at him. Ho hum?

The talk is all moot anyway, for reasons most fans understand.

There's nothing unusual about the Sox checking in on Machado, seeing where his price point stands. And the Sox have checked in, per multiple reports on Tuesday.

Baseball sources that spoke to NBC Sports Boston downplayed the idea the Sox are really pursuing him, however.

It's just logic: Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts have the left side of the infield locked down. The Sox' farm is thin and they have other needs, namely a reliever. A rival general manager this week suggested the Red Sox appear set in terms of position players. They have the best offense in the majors to this point, if the average number of runs scored per game is a fair indicator.

The timing of reports of the Sox' interest leaking out seems highly favorable to the Orioles, given reports have also surfaced that the Yankees want Machado. An old-fashioned Yankees-Sox bidding war may be Baltimore's goal. Or at least, the facade of one.

Machado might fit well in a Yankees uniform. In Boston, there's reason to root against the guy already.

J.D. Martinez's approach to his job is a hit with Steve Pearce . . . and other Sox, too

Evan Drellich

BOSTON — The five runs the Red Sox scored on Monday were divvied up between a pair of players who homered. Steve Pearce, the newcomer, ripped a two-run shot, and J.D. Martinez sealed the 5-0 victory with a three-run home run.

Before both left Fenway on Monday night, they stood in the Red Sox clubhouse and looked at a phone. They were watching video.

Not of Pearce's homer. Not of Martinez's either.

"Oh, we weren't looking at me," Pearce said. "We were looking at like other hitters. We're talking about swing paths and swing planes. That's the stuff we were talking about more than changing mechanics or batting stance or stuff like that. It was more like, 'Everybody has a swing path.'

"He started showing me Mike Trout: how they do this, this is what makes them who they are. And so it's funny when he's showing me, I'm like, 'Replay that, I'm not seeing what you're seeing.' He has that down to a science."

Pearce and Martinez have been Sox teammates for less than two weeks. They were briefly teammates six years ago as well, in Houston, but Pearce's month-long stay with the Astros didn't even include a full month with Martinez. The Astros added Pearce July 28, 2012, and on Aug. 9, 2012, Martinez was optioned to the minors.

Their rapport, then, is relatively new, but Pearce is a believer.

"He might tell me to go up there and hit with one foot in the air and I'd probably do it, 'cause that's how much I trust the guy and respect his knowledge," Pearce said. "That's like the rumor around baseball: this guy knows hitting. ... And just being around him, it just, it blows my mind. He's answering questions that I've had for my whole life. Just by looking at my swing.

"Wow, this guy, I mean ... he's just professional at what he does, man."

Pearce is 11-for-24 (.458) since joining the Sox, and Martinez didn't want to interrupt that good mojo. So Pearce, who is aligned with Martinez in a desire to always understand his swing regardless of the result, engaged him.

"He didn't want to approach me just because I'm having success right now, don't want to change anything," Pearce said. "I ended up going to him, I'm asking him for advice because of what he was able to do.

"I love talking hitting. Most players love talking hitting, but ... he's next level. Why my swing works, why it doesn't work. My strengths, my weaknesses. [He'll say] 'And so like, your swing doesn't allow you to do this, but you can do this really well, that's what makes you, you.'"

Martinez, who has taken Mookie Betts and others under his wing, has recommended some drills to Pearce. The infielder said he hasn't taken anything into game action yet.

In a way, what Martinez is teaching is vocabulary.

"I don't care how well I'm doing," Pearce said. "I want to feel how well I'm doing as opposed to just do it."

Hence, a clubhouse conversation after a game in which both players homered.

"So if I'm going wrong, I can know what to fix, as opposed to like right now," Pearce said. "I'm a feel [guy]. When that feel goes — ultimately that always happens to everybody — I want to be able to get back the right way."

*** NESN.com**

Red Sox Wrap: Boston Beats Rangers 8-4, Extends Winning Streak To Eight

Logan Mullen

The Boston Red Sox aren't slowing down.

Boston earned its eighth straight victory Tuesday night, beating the Texas Rangers 8-4 in the middle contest of a three-game set at Fenway Park.

Offense long has been the Red Sox's calling card, and that was clear Tuesday as the team combined for 12 hits (seven extra-base hits), with all but one batter registering at least one base knock.

With the win, the Red Sox climb to 64-29, while the Rangers fall to 40-53.

Here's how it all went down:

GAME IN A WORD

Offense.

On a night where manager Alex Cora had to get creative with his use of pitchers, the Red Sox offense gave the squad a comfortable advantage throughout the night.

ON THE BUMP

— Hector Velazquez got the start for the Red Sox as they utilized a bullpen game of sorts Tuesday. The righty allowed one run on two hits with a pair of strikeouts and as many walks over three innings.

After a 1-2-3 first inning, things went south in the second. Velazquez surrendered a solo home run to Rowned Odor, who blasted a moonshot over the right field wall to make it 1-0. Ronald Guzman followed that up with a double, but Velazquez got out of the inning without further damage despite later walking a batter.

The 29-year-old issued a leadoff walk in the third before retiring the next three batters to end the inning and his night.

— Jalen Beeks entered in the fourth and had a chaotic outing.

The southpaw began by hitting Odor, then allowing a single to Guzman that moved Odor to third. And though he got the next batter, Isiah Kiner-Falefa, to ground into a double play, it scored Odor to cut Boston's lead to 5-2. After walking Joey Gallo, Beeks got Delino DeShields Jr. to ground into a force out.

Beeks allowed a single in an otherwise clean fifth, but got back into trouble in the sixth. The 25-year-old gave up a single, followed by a one-out double to Kiner-Falefa to put both runners in scoring position, which ended Beeks' night.

— Brandon Workman relieved Beeks and immediately allowed both runners to score on a double from Gallo to make it 6-4, with both runs getting charged to Beeks. Workman responded by getting the next two batters out to end the inning.

— Matt Barnes took over in the seventh and struck out the side in order.

— Joe Kelly pitched a 1-2-3 eighth inning.

— Ryan Brasier entered in the ninth and allowed a walk in a hitless, scoreless frame.

IN THE BATTER'S BOX

— Down 1-0, the Sox offense went on a tear in the third inning, tagging Rangers starter Yovani Gallardo for five runs.

Blake Swihart smacked a bases-empty, one-out double and Jackie Bradley Jr. followed with an RBI double to make it 1-1. After a Mookie Betts strikeout, Andrew Benintendi hit a double of his own to plate Bradley and give the Sox the advantage. J.D. Martinez then singled to put runners on the corners, and Mitch Moreland followed by singling to bring Benintendi in and make it 3-1. That's when the biggest splash of all came, with Xander Bogaerts scoring both runners with a triple, upping the score to 5-1.

— Boston added to its lead in the fifth, as Moreland's sacrifice fly with runners on the corners drove in a run to give the Sox a 6-2 advantage.

— After the Rangers put a pair of runs on the board in the sixth to cut the lead to a pair, the Red Sox responded with an insurance run. After an infield single from Swihart, Bradley blasted a double to center, scoring the catcher from first. Bradley was thrown out at third trying to leg out an extra base, which ended the inning.

— Betts, Benintendi, Swihart and Bradley all had two-hit games.

— Martinez, Moreland, Bogaerts and Brock Holt had one hit apiece.

— Rafael Devers went hitless.

TWEET OF THE DAY

Just another day at the office for Mookie.

UP NEXT The Red Sox and Rangers will meet for the series finale of the three-game set Wednesday evening. Chris Sale will get the ball for Boston and will be opposed by Bartolo Colon. First pitch from Fenway Park is scheduled for 7:10 p.m. ET.

*** *BostonSportsJournal.com***

Could Mets again be Red Sox' trade partners?

Sean McAdam

A year ago, the Red Sox filled their most pressing need by swinging a deal with the New York Mets, obtaining reliever Addison Reed in exchange for three pitching prospects from the lower minors.

Reed pitched well for the Sox, appearing in 29 games with a 3.33 ERA and providing them with an experienced high-leverage arm before leaving for a multi-year deal last winter with the Minnesota Twins.

Now, with the Sox again in the market for bullpen reinforcements, the Mets might again represent a good match for the Sox in trade discussions. Already, there's enough interest expressed that the Mets have instructed some scouts to follow some of the Sox' affiliates to compile some names of would-be targets should talks advance closer to the trade deadline.

The Mets, in the middle of a disastrous season, are open for business on the trade front, with plenty to offer. The big attraction will be a trio of starters — Jacob deGrom, Noah Syndergaard and Zack Wheeler. deGrom and Syndergaard will fetch huge packages, and the Sox aren't nearly positioned to bid for either. Even Wheeler, a back-end starter with a long history of injuries, may be too expensive a target for the Sox, whose rotation has been a strength much of the year.

But the Mets have relievers to deal, too. Closer Jeurys Familia, 28, is available and so too is lefty Jerry Blevins, 34.

The Sox are set at the closer's spot, but Familia could be a nice option in the eighth inning for the Sox. According to a source familiar with the Mets' thinking, there is already extensive interest in Familia, which will only drive up the asking price. Familia, who is headed for free agency, has a 4-4 record and a 3.11 ERA with 16 saves in 20 opportunities.

Some relievers have a difficult time going from closing to eighth-inning responsibilities — Eric Gagne, obtained by the Red Sox at the deadline in 2007 is but one obvious example — but Familia served as set-up man Jenrry Mejia in 2014, so that shouldn't be an issue.

Another potential matchup could be Blevins, who has been a disappointment for the Mets in 2018. Blevins had been a durable and dependable lefty for the Mets in 2016 and 2017, appearing in 148 games over two seasons and compiling an ERA of 2.87. But this season, he's struggled with his control — averaging 5.2 walks per nine innings — and has compiled a 4.43 ERA in 36 games.

He's been more effective of late, however, having been scored upon just once in his last eight appearances, during which he's pitched to a 2.57 ERA. If he continues to trend upward, he could be a useful veteran lefty for the Sox in the late innings, who might be convinced that a change of scenery and the adrenaline of pitching for a contender could result in better effectiveness.

The Sox have gone most of this season without a veteran lefty in their bullpen, often using Joe Kelly as their matchup guy for tough lefthanded hitters. It's possible that the Sox could utilize Drew Pomeranz in relief when he returns to the roster. Pomeranz won 17 games as a starter last season, but over his career, has enjoyed success in the bullpen, where his fastball plays up in shorter stints.

Boston's minor league system has been thinned out by a host of deals over the last three years, along with the graduations from the minors to the big leagues of Andrew Benintendi and Rafael Devers.

Finding a suitable package of prospects to make a deal with the Mets could be an issue, though less so with Blevins, whose value has been reduced.

“There's not a lot there,” said one N.L. talent evaluator. “A lot of those guys at (Single-A) Salem have been disappointing this season and that's hurt them.”

From a financial standpoint, neither Familia nor Blevins would be cost-prohibitive. Familia is earning \$7.925 million, which translates to about \$2.6 million at the deadline. Blevins, meanwhile, is making \$6.5 million, which would mean about \$2.2 million for the final third of the season.

The Mets are eager to move as much salary as possible, so it's unlikely that they would take any money back in a deal involving either pitcher. The Red Sox are focused on attempting to stay under the final

luxury tax threshold of \$237 million — at which point they would incur additional tax penalties, along with losing 10 spots in next June’s amateur draft.

The Sox have stated their “preference” is to stay under the final threshold, but have signaled a willingness to go over for the right roster addition.

However, in obtaining Steve Pearce from the Blue Jays last month, the Sox insisted that the Jays take just over half of Pearce’s remaining salary to give themselves some wiggle room toward another deadline acquisition. By most estimates, the Sox are currently approximately \$3 million under the \$237 threshold, allowing them to one more move without incurring further penalties.

BSJ Game Report: Red Sox 8, Rangers 4 – Red Sox continue to pound opponents silly

Sean McAdam

HEADLINES

Two-out hits key: In the Red Sox’ big five-run third inning, most of the damage came after two were out. The Sox had scored a run on consecutive doubles from Blake Swihart and Jackie Bradley Jr. to tie the game, but after Mookie Betts fanned, the Sox re-started things offensively against Texas starter Yovani Gallardo. First came a double from Andrew Benintendi, then a single from J.D. Martinez, followed by a single from Mitch Moreland, and finally, a huge two-run double by Xander Bogaerts. In all, six different hitters produced hits in that inning. “And a lot of it after two outs,” noted Bogaerts. “You just keep battling. It’s fun being a part of (that kind of offense). You don’t know who’s going to be the player of the game on a given night, because it can be anyone in this lineup.”

Swihart plays a big role: Getting only the second start of the season behind the plate, catcher Blake Swihart had his work cut out for him on what was essentially a bullpen day. He had to catch six different pitchers and did so with aplomb, no easy feat for someone who hasn’t been behind the plate much this season. “It felt good to be back there,” said Swihart. “You try to get into a rhythm with them. I haven’t seen most of those guys and I was just trying to be on the same page. I think it will help me out in the long run.” Swihart also helped out at the plate, with two hits — a double to triangle in the third and a single off the pitcher’s glove in the sixth. “My swing has felt good,” he said. It shows: Swihart is 7-for-17 in his last 10 games.

Outfield has its share of highlight plays: The Red Sox outfield defense has been so strong this season, it’s easy to take it for granted. But on this night, it showed up and played a big role. In the fifth, Mookie Betts, back in his customary right field after playing center on Monday, drifted back to the home bullpen wall and timed his leap perfectly to take away what surely would have been a two-run homer by Nomar Mazara. “Great play by Marcus,” said Jackie Bradley Jr. of Betts. “I just wanted to kind of get over there — not necessarily to back him up or anything, but just to communicate to him, let him know he has some room and let him know that he can make his jump whenever.” After that, Bradley had a nice catch of his own, coming in to make a sliding grab on a sinking liner to take a hit away from Jose Guzman in the sixth.

TURNING POINT

After the Rangers showed some life and scored twice in the top of the sixth off Jalen Beeks, the Red Sox responded with a big two-out double from Jackie Bradley to re-take a three-run lead.

TWO UP

Jackie Bradley Jr.: Bradley rapped out two hits — both doubles — and knocked in two runs, providing the Red Sox with some thump from the bottom third of the order.

Hector Velazquez: Tossed in for a spot start for the first time since in three months, Velazquez didn’t go deep, but he did give the Sox three solid innings, allowing just one run.

TWO DOWN

Jalen Beeks: The rookie made his second major league appearance — this one out of the bullpen — and while it represented an improvement of his start earlier this year, he was still hit hard for three runs in just 2.1 innings.

Rafael Devers: Whatever offensive momentum Devers seemed to build on the last road trip has dissipated. He was hitless again Tuesday night, going 0-for-3 and is now 0-for-9 dating back to Sunday.

QUOTE OF NOTE

“He’s swinging his way to it, if you ask me.” Xander Bogaerts on Benintendi’s chances of making the All-Star team.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

The Red Sox now have had three winning streaks of eight or more games this season, for the first time since 1978, when they had four.

Boston has won 11 of its last 13 against Texas, including the last five straight.

The Sox are now 35 games over .500 for the first time since the final weekend of the 2004 season.

Andrew Benintendi has at least one double in each of his last four games.

The Sox are 18-1 when Jackie Bradley Jr. drives in at least one run.

Xander Bogaerts is hitting .354 with runners in scoring position.

UP NEXT

The Red Sox and Rangers close out their series and meet for the last time Wednesday at 7:10 p.m., with LHP Chris Sale (9-4, 2.36) facing ageless RHP Bartolo Colon (5-6, 4.65).

Final: Red Sox 8, Rangers 4 – Winning streak continues with contributions at top and bottom of lineup

Sean McAdam

Even on a night when the Red Sox had to cobble together a start from two pitchers, they continued to steamroll their opposition. Thanks to a five-run third inning, the Red Sox sailed to their eighth straight win, 8-4 over the Texas Rangers.

Four different Red Sox hitters knocked in two runs each in a balanced, 12-hit attack. Mookie Betts and Andrew Benintendi combined for four hits, two RBI and three runs scored at the top of the lineup, and at the bottom, Blake Swihart and Jackie Bradley Jr. gave them the same output.

Hector Velazquez, filling in for the injured Brian Johnson, gave the Sox three innings of one-run ball, and was followed by rookie lefty Jalen Beeks, who allowed three runs in 2.1 innings.

IN-GAME OBSERVATIONS

9:38 Matt Barnes is on a great run. He hasn’t allowed a run over his last nine appearances and he’s struck out the last five hitters he’s faced, dating back to an inning of work in Kansas City on Sunday.

9:00 That’s it for Beeks, who last 2.1 innings and gives up some hard-hit balls, allowing four hits. He’s responsible for two runners, with Workman coming in. Beeks still needs to work on his command before he can pitch successfully at this level.

8:39 Spectacular catch by Mookie Betts, who leaps up to take a two-run homer away from Nomar Mazara — and then nearly doubles up Elvis Andrus at first. Incredibly, those catches are becoming almost routine in right field for Betts.

8:08 Nice last-minute campaign by Andrew Benintendi, who's on the ballot as one of the Final Five in the American League. He drilled a double to deep center to score a run, making him 11-for-16 with five walks in his last five games. Yowza.

8:00 That's probably the hardest-hit ball from Blake Swihart all season — a rocket of a ball into the triangle for a one-out ground rule double in the third.

7:56 Best guess is that three innings will be it for Velazquez, who has thrown 49 pitches, the most he's thrown since he threw 52 in relief against Seattle. Jalen Beeks, called up from Pawtucket earlier in the day, has been warming for a while and looks ready to handle the fourth.

7:28 Hector Velazquez sailed through the first four hitters of the night, but paid the price when he left a sinker up for Roughned Odor. The free-swinging infielder swatted the pitch into the right field seats to give the Rangers a 1-0 lead.

WHO: Red Sox vs. Texas Rangers

WHEN: 7:10 p.m.

WHERE: Fenway Park

WHAT'S UP: The streaking Red Sox have won seven straight and 14-3 in their last 17. They also have their biggest lead over the Yankees — 2.5 games — since April 30, when they led by three. Red Sox starters have allowed two runs or fewer in 23 of their last 33, while the offense is ranked in first in runs per game (5.37), OPS (.798) and extra-base hits (342). The Rangers are 2-3 in their first five games of a 10-game trip and are just 1-4 against the Red Sox this season.

STARTING PITCHERS: RHP Hector Velazquez (6-0, 2.76) vs. RHP Yovani Gallardo (3-0, 5.87).

TV/RADIO: NESN/MLB; WEEI 93.7 FM

LIVE BOX: MLB Gameday

LINEUPS

RED SOX

Betts RF
Benintendi LF
Martinez DH
Moreland 1B
Bogaerts SS
Holt 2B
Devers 3B
Swihart C
Bradley CF

RANGERS

Choo DH
Andrus SS
Mazara RF
Beltre 3B
Odor 2B
Guzman 1B
Kiner-Falefa C
Gallo LF
Deshaields CF

NEWS AND NOTES

Dustin Pedroia will travel to Arizona to continue the rehab work on his surgically-repaired left knee. Pedroia spent last week in New York under the watchful eye of Dr. Riley Williams III, who performed the procedure last fall and Williams and his staff recommended some changes to his program to help strengthen the area around the knee. There's still no timetable for Pedroia to resume baseball activities, but manager Alex Cora maintains his belief that Pedroia will return to play at some point this season. Earlier in the day, the Sox recalled LHP Jalen Beeks from Pawtucket. Beeks will be available to provide some length behind starter Hector Velazquez tonight, and will likely remain with the club through the homestand. Beeks has pitched 82.2 innings for Pawtucket and with the workload piling up, the Sox thought it would be a good time to slow him down and have him pitch in relief for a bit. This could also be an opportunity to determine if Beeks can help them as a reliever over the final couple of months. The plan for Velazquez tonight: aim to get three innings, and hope for four. Cora said the Sox have yet to set their pitching rotation coming out of the break, but hinted that Chris Sale won't pitch until the third game of the first series, Sunday July 22 in Detroit. Sale's last start of the first half will come Wednesday night. He'll be off the final four games of the first half, then, conceivably, not pitch a regular game for another 11 days. Of course, Sale is expected to pitch — and perhaps even start — in the All-Star Game, but only for an inning or two.

*** *The Athletic***

Dustin Pedroia heading home to Arizona, his season in jeopardy

Chad Jennings

Go all the way back to the last game of last season. It was October 9, Dustin Pedroia made the final out of the division series, and every postgame question focused on what would happen regarding his ailing knee. Pedroia stood in the familiar environs of Fenway Park's home clubhouse, and for the first time in a long time, admitted that he had no idea.

"I'm going to go talk to the doctors about that," he said. "Obviously, we had to try and find a way to do what we did so I could be out there (playing), but if you were to get it fixed, the recovery is a long time. So, I have a lot of things to weigh in with the doctors and figure it out."

Eight months later, it's the same story. More doctors. More uncertainty.

On Tuesday, the Red Sox announced that Pedroia is going home. He's going to join his family in Arizona where he can continue the physical therapy and rehabilitation exercises necessarily to build strength and stability in his surgically repaired left knee. There will be no baseball activities. There's no rehab assignment on the horizon.

"We'd love him to be around here," manager Alex Cora said. "But I think, for now, it's better off for him to go there and disconnect a little bit from all this and just concentrate on himself."

Pedroia is not expected to comment on the situation until after Tuesday's game; regardless, there was little immediate need for a fresh quote to fill in the blanks of frustration and disappointment. Those elements have been obvious for a long time now. They were obvious in October, when the 2008 MVP limped to the end of the line. They were obvious in February, when he arrived in spring training tethered to an extensive rehab program. They were obvious on June 3, when Pedroia went back on the disabled list after playing just three games.

"The part that stinks is, I went through so much during (the rehab process) and testing it and playing three games," Pedroia said on that day. "I mean, the way I was moving, you guys all saw (it was better than last season). And then to follow everything and have that feeling in that spot, it stinks. It's tough to deal with."

Cora said he still expects Pedroia, 34, to play again this season, but time is not on his side. After more than a month of inactivity, Pedroia would presumably need something resembling a full spring training build-up, and that typically takes a month to a month and a half. There are fewer than three months left in the season, and Pedroia's not even cleared for batting practice at the moment.

"We're not going to put a timetable on this," Cora said.

It's all so frustratingly familiar.

Pedroia had two procedures at the end of last season. He had microfracture surgery at the bottom of his knee, and he had cartilage replacement at the top. Microfracture is notoriously difficult to come back from, while cartilage replacement is relatively new in baseball circles. The doctor who performed Pedroia's surgery, Dr. Riley Williams III, explained to *The Athletic* last month why a recovery timetable is so difficult to pin down.

"I'm dealing with, typically, debilitated athletes who are not functioning at their best when I get them," Dr. Williams said. "So, it's a variable return, meaning: I'll put in the graft, and they feel great, but once they start loading it like they need to load it, all the other deficiencies or strains start to show. And that's the hard thing for me to message to them. I'm like, 'I don't know. I don't know how long it's going to take you to get fit enough to play and perform like you want to play.' And that's why it's a bit of a black box."

Last week, Pedroia returned to Dr. Williams for a follow-up exam in New York. The Red Sox have described the visit as good news – the surgery itself seems to have done its job – but Pedroia's rehab protocol was adjusted to address those other lingering knee issues. Cora specifically named hamstrings, core muscles and glutes as becoming points of focus while Pedroia's in Arizona.

"It's nothing structural," Cora said. "I think I mentioned (previously) it's about making adjustments around the knee and body-wise that are going to help him, or help the knee not to get upset."

Go back again, this time to early May when Pedroia was seeing some light at the end of the tunnel. He was doing rehab work and baseball drills with players nearly a decade younger, trying to get himself ready for a big league return that would – it turned out – last less than a week.

"I knew going in there were going to be some tough times," Pedroia said.

The tough times continue.

*** *The New York Post***

Red Sox join the Yankees in Manny Machado interest

Dan Martin

BALTIMORE — The Yankees don't need to be sold on how good Manny Machado is.

Nevertheless, the All-Star shortstop put on quite a show Tuesday, blasting a pair of game-tying homers in a 6-5 Orioles win at Camden Yards.

The outburst came a day after renewed discussions between the two teams about Machado became public — and on the same night reports surfaced the Red Sox had also "checked in" on the star.

Baltimore owner Peter Angelos has been hesitant in the past to make big trades within the AL East, but the Orioles and Red Sox have struck deals before.

Orioles manager Buck Showalter, who managed the Yankees from 1992-95, said he wouldn't be stunned to see Machado end up in The Bronx.

"No, not really," Showalter said. "Nothing surprises me in today's baseball world. ... If [a trade] happens to be with that team that we're playing tonight, then so be it. I'll leave that in their hands. I have a lot of confidence they will do what's best for the organization."

The added attention doesn't appear to be bothering Machado.

"There's gonna be eyes everywhere," Machado said. "I just go out and play baseball. ... We've got to ride with the team we have and try to enjoy the season."

Machado hit a 444-foot blast off Masahiro Tanaka to lead off the bottom of the fifth and added another to right field off Chad Green that glanced off Aaron Judge's glove for a two-run homer to knot the game in the seventh.

"He hurt us tonight," Aaron Boone said.

The Yankees walked Machado intentionally with one out in the ninth to load the bases for Mark Trumbo, who whiffed. The Orioles then won it on Jonathan Schoop's single that was misplayed by Greg Bird.

The loss dropped the Yankees 3½ games behind Boston in the division.

General manager Brian Cashman told The Post's Joel Sherman on Tuesday that he considers third base "a strength" for the Yankees and pointed to Miguel Andujar, Brandon Drury, and even Gleyber Torres, as reasons why. He also reiterated his focus remained on bolstering starting pitching.

That hardly takes the Yankees out of the Machado sweepstakes, though, with the 26-year-old heading out of Baltimore by the end of the month.

Didi Gregorius understands the reality of the situation. He was asked about the links between the Yankees and Machado during spring training and knows they have resurfaced as the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline approaches.

"If they made the move, we'll see what happens," Gregorius said. "I don't think about it. It's not hard to put out of your mind because things are always going to pop up at some point."

Typically, though, those things don't include one of the best players in the game being on the trade market with an expressed desire to remain playing your position.

If the Yankees do land Machado, they could almost certainly convince him to shift to third base for the rest of the year. Whether he would agree to stay there beyond this season once he becomes a free agent seems less likely, especially since he was adamant Monday he "is a shortstop."

Gregorius won't be a free agent until the 2020 season.

As for Andujar, his surprising rookie season hardly presents an impossible roadblock to the addition of Machado.

Andujar has slowed down offensively in the past month. Though he walked, singled and scored Tuesday, he entered the game 20-for-94 with five doubles, four homers and just three walks to go with 18 strikeouts. It's a 25-game stretch in which his OPS is just .639. That's hardly a sign the Yankees need an upgrade at the position, but it shows that while very promising, Andujar is not on Machado's level.

For now, Machado is making the most of his final days in Baltimore, which is easier after a dramatic win over the Yankees.

"I don't remember the last time we had a walk-off," Machado said.

*** *Associated Press***

Red Sox beat Rangers 8-4 for 8th straight win

BOSTON -- Andrew Benintendi bolstered his All-Star credentials, then happily left it up to the fans to decide.

Benintendi hit two doubles and drove in two runs in his final game before fan votes are tallied, and the Boston Red Sox beat the Texas Rangers 8-4 on Tuesday night to extend their winning streak to eight games.

"More importantly, we won the game," Benintendi said. "We had a lot of big hits from a lot of guys tonight."

Eight players had hits for Boston and Benintendi was one of four with two -- his fifth straight game with multiple hits. He also walked and stole a base while helping the Red Sox improve on the best record in the majors with their eighth straight win.

Jackie Bradley Jr. hit a pair of RBI doubles and Xander Bogaerts hit a two-run triple as Boston scored five runs in the third and won for the 15th time in 18 games.

"We're having fun. It's pretty good a lineup right now from top to bottom," Boston manager Alex Cora said.

Matt Barnes (3-2) got the win with one inning of relief, striking out the side in the seventh after the Rangers had pulled within 6-4 with two runs in the sixth. He was the fourth of five relievers the Red Sox rode to another victory after getting three solid innings from Hector Velazquez, who was making his first start since April and wasn't expected to go much longer Tuesday after spending the previous two months in the bullpen.

Rougned Odor homered and Joey Gallo hit a two-run double for the Rangers, who have lost four of five.

Texas also ran into some tough defense, including a diving grab by Bradley on a sinking line drive and a catch by Mookie Betts at the right-field wall to rob Nomar Mazara of a home run.

"That's this ballpark. You know that coming in," Texas manager Jeff Banister said. "You've got a very athletic guy in right field -- this is his home ballpark -- and he knows how to play it."

Yovani Gallardo (3-1) made it through the first two innings without allowing a baserunner, but ran into trouble in the third.

After entering the inning with a 1-0 lead, Gallardo faced the entire Boston lineup in the third as the Red Sox tagged him for six hits -- three of them doubles -- and five runs.

Blake Swihart and Bradley started the rally on back-to-back doubles with one out. Gallardo struck out Mookie Betts for the second out, but Benintendi doubled in a run, Martinez singled and Xander Bogaerts hit a triple over the head of Delino DeShields in the center-field triangle to drive in two more and put the Red Sox up 5-1.

Velazquez allowed one run on two hits over the first three innings. Jalen Beeks, recalled from Triple-A Pawtucket earlier Tuesday, pitched the next 2 1/3, allowing three runs on four hits, before he was pulled for Brandon Workman with one out in the sixth and runners at second and third.

Odor, whose homer in the second cleared the Texas bullpen and landed deep in the tunnel in right, singled and Isiah Kiner-Falefa doubled before Workman came on to face Gallo, whose double to center scored two to pull the Rangers to 6-4.

Barnes took over in the seventh, Joe Kelly pitched the eighth and Ryan Brasier finished it off with a scoreless ninth.

LAST CALL

The (hash)VoteBenny campaign, written in chalk behind home plate as the Red Sox lobbied for a sixth All-Star for next week's game, officially will close on Wednesday afternoon. Benintendi said he's enjoyed the support of his teammates, but will be happy to return from the All-Star break no matter where he spends next week.

"They know I'm not really that kind of guy to hype myself up, but it's been kind of funny to watch and see them get into it," Benintendi said. "Whatever happens. It's out of my hands."

NOW CATCHING

Swihart started at catcher, where the Red Sox are down a man for up to two months as Christian Vazquez recovers from a broken finger. He said facing six different pitchers Tuesday will likely help him adjust defensively and he's happy to have more opportunities to join the potent lineup at the plate.

"It kind of helped me out, just seeing a lot fo those guys and trying to get a rhythm," said Swihart, who went 2-for-4 and scored a run. "My legs will be tired probably tomorrow from running and stuff."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Red Sox: Vazquez (broken finger) and IF Marco Hernandez (left shoulder) both had surgery Tuesday. Hernandez will miss the rest of the season and Vazquez is out 6 to 8 weeks, the Red Sox said.

UP NEXT

Rangers: RHP Bartolo Colon (5-6, 4.65 ERA) gets another chance at passing Dennis Martinez as the winningest Latin-American pitcher in major league history. Colon and Martinez are tied with 245 career victories.

Red Sox: LHP Chris Sale (9-4, 2.36) has struck out 11 or more in each of his last four starts.