

## ***The Boston Red Sox Thursday, July 12, 2018***

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

**Chris Sale was feeling it, and the Red Sox won their ninth straight**

Peter Abraham

The Texas Rangers had runners on first and third with no outs in the sixth inning on Wednesday night with Adrian Beltre coming to the plate. Chris Sale was being challenged for the first time.

How he met that challenge provided some of the best entertainment at Fenway Park all season.

Sale struck out the estimable Beltre on five pitches, the last a high fastball he just couldn't resist. Rougned Odor followed with a sharply hit ball back to the mound.

Sale snared the one-hopper and fired to shortstop Xander Bogaerts to start a double play.

As the capacity crowd roared, Sale pumped his fist and shouted a few words into his glove he admitted later he didn't want his mom to see on television.

"He was fired up," Bogaerts said. "That throw to me had something on it."

The Sox were on their way to a 4-2 victory, their ninth in a row. Sale threw seven shutout innings and struck out 12 in his final start before the All-Star break.

The 65-29 Sox have the best record in baseball and in Sale they have the most fearsome starter. Sale leads the majors with 188 strikeouts and has an 0.94 earned run average in his last seven starts.

Sale has struck out 11 or more with no more than one walk in five consecutive starts, the longest such streak in major league history. He also has worked 51 consecutive innings without allowing a home run.

"He told me after the game, 'That felt good tonight,' " manager Alex Cora said. "It was a little bit different out there. It was a fun crowd. They got into it."

The reaction of the fans had pitching coach Dana LeVangie remembering those days when every start Pedro Martinez made at Fenway was an event.

"The energy in the ballpark," LeVangie said. "You never know what you might miss if you're not watching."

Like Martinez so willingly did when he pitched, Sale takes it all in.

"You feel that. I feel that," he said. "I feel like I try and use that as much as I can in my favor. I like pitching here and I appreciate the fans coming out and bringing the energy with them."

Now comes some rest. Sale is a candidate to start the All-Star Game Tuesday or pitch an inning at some point.

Beyond that, he will get at least eight days in a row off and probably a few more once the Sox set their rotation.

The plan is to have a rested and recharged Sale ready for the final 10 weeks of the season.

“You don’t just want to sit on your butt for eight days. But you try to be smart,” Sale said.

Sale left the mound with a 4-0 lead and Fenway buzzing. Then it became tense. On a night Joe Kelly and Matt Barnes weren’t available, Heath Hembree allowed two runs on three hits.

Craig Kimbrel came in with the bases loaded and two outs and walked Robinson Chirinos to force in a run before striking out Joey Gallo to end the threat.

“I hate to put him in that corner,” Cora said of Kimbrel. “It just happened so quick . . . I want to give him margin for error.”

Kimbrel struck out the side in the ninth on 13 pitches for his 28th save, the third with four outs.

Sox pitchers struck out 18, their most in a nine-inning game since May 25, 2017. That was against the Rangers, naturally.

The Sox are 36 games over .500 for the first time since Oct. 1, 1978. If you don’t know what happened after that, don’t ask.

Players on the Red Sox roster had 62 career plate appearances against 45-year-old Texas starter Bartolo Colon coming into the game. That was one fewer than their coaching staff.

For four innings, Colon hung in there against Sale, as the Sox were hitless in eight at-bats with runners in scoring position against him. The only run he allowed was the product of two errors in the second inning.

The top of the Sox order, as it so often has this season, finally got the offense going in the fifth.

Mookie Betts and Andrew Benintendi had one-out singles to left field.

J.D. Martinez followed with a double down the line in left and both runners scored. Martinez now has 79 RBIs in the 88 games he has played.

With two outs, Bogaerts hit a ball softly to left-center that should have been caught. Gallo, the left fielder, had a play but was cut off by center fielder Delino DeShields.

As the ball rolled away, Bogaerts had an RBI triple. After going 73 games without a triple, Bogaerts has had them on consecutive nights.

Colon (5-7) went six innings and allowed four runs (three earned) on nine hits.

### **Red Sox relievers staying fresh with help from the farm**

Peter Abraham

The Red Sox called up lefthander Jalen Beeks on Tuesday, pitched him for 2½ innings in relief, then sent him back to Triple A Pawtucket on Wednesday, putting lefthander Robby Scott on the roster in his place.

It was the sixth transaction this month that involved one of their Triple A pitchers and it’s a pace manager Alex Cora is comfortable with.

With Brian Johnson, Drew Pomeranz and Steven Wright on the disabled list, the Sox are actively manipulating the roster to keep fresh arms in the bullpen.

Through Wednesday night's 4-2 win over the Rangers, Beeks, Scott, Ryan Brasier, William Cuevas, Justin Haley, Bobby Poyner, Marcus Walden, and Brandon Workman have given the Sox 44 appearances and 58⅔ innings.

All eight are in option seasons, meaning the Sox can shift them back and forth to the minors. The catch is they have to stay in the minors 10 days between transactions unless they are replacing a player going on the disabled list.

The more they pitch, the less primary set-up men such as Matt Barnes, Joe Kelly or Heath Hembree have to.

"Overall, I think our starters have done an outstanding job giving us a chance to win and going deep into the games," Cora said. "One thing I learned is that sometimes that's not enough, especially when you start playing close games on a daily basis.

"We had to go through those guys. You don't want to be short . . . Whoever we add has come up here and done a good job."

Benintendi second

Seattle shortstop Jean Segura won the American League Final Vote and was added to the All-Star Game roster. Andrew Benintendi finished second.

Major League Baseball said Segura received 13.6 million votes. No totals were given for Benintendi. But he did finish ahead of Giancarlo Stanton (Yankees), Eddie Rosario (Twins), and Andrelton Simmons (Angels).

Benintendi remains eligible for the team, as an injury replacement. He was not available for comment after the Sox beat the Rangers, 4-2. Benintendi was 2 for 4.

Brewers first baseman Jesus Aguilar won the NL vote. He had 20.2 million votes.

Wright moves

Wright threw a bullpen session on Monday, his first since July 1. The righthander is making progress for the first since he went on the disabled list on June 25 with inflammation in his surgically-repaired left knee.

Wright is scheduled to throw again on Thursday. He also will stay in Boston during the All-Star break to continue with treatments.

"I'm feeling better. Now it's a matter of building up," Wright said.

Wright has not appeared in a game since June 22. He will need a minor league game or two before coming off the disabled list. It also has to be determined whether he will start or pitch in relief.

He's consistent

Mookie Betts extended his hit streak to nine games with a single in the first inning and finished 2 for 3. He has been on base via hit or walk in 15 consecutive games. Betts also has scored 75 runs in the 74 games he has played . . . Rafael Devers, who Cora described as "banged-up," was out of the lineup. Eduardo Nunez played third base and went 2 for 4 and Brock Holt (0 for 4) played second . . . Austin Jackson, traded to the Rangers on Sunday, was designated for assignment before being put on the roster. Texas took on roughly \$4.5 million of Jackson's salary through 2019 to obtain righthander Jason Bahr, a promising 23-year-old. Texas now has seven days to trade or release Jackson . . . It was WWE Night at Fenway and Kofi Kingston was on hand. Kingston is a Boston College graduate and a Red Sox fan.

## **Andrew Benintendi misses out in AL All-Star Final Vote**

Peter Abraham

Seattle shortstop Jean Segura won the American League Final Vote and was added to the All-Star Game roster. Andrew Benintendi of the Red Sox finished second.

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## **Adrian Beltre would have been a good fit (again) with Red Sox**

Nick Cafardo

For a while there was a dreamy possibility – that likely future Hall of Famer Adrian Beltre would return for a second engagement with the Red Sox after his successful 2010 cameo.

Beltre, 39, will go down as one of the great one-year wonders in Red Sox history. The 2010 season basically resurrected his career. Agent Scott Boras gambled that one year in Boston would catapult Beltre into a multiyear deal. It sure did: .321 average, 28 homers, 102 RBIs, a league-best 49 doubles, and a .919 OPS.

It was a coup for then GM Theo Epstein. But Epstein, acknowledging Beltre's strong season, had the opportunity to trade for Adrian Gonzalez, a player he had coveted for a few years. So Epstein decided to let Beltre go, trade for Gonzalez (offering Anthony Rizzo, Rey Fuentes and Casey Kelly to the Padres), and move Kevin Youkilis to third base. The decision worked out better for Beltre than anyone else. Gonzalez hit .338 with 27 homers and 117 RBIs for the Sox in 2011.

"I loved it here," Beltre said before Wednesday's series finale with the Red Sox. "I loved the fans and the great ballpark and it was a fun place for me to play. It helped my career to play here, no doubt about it. I would have loved to stay here, but I understood, and I understood now, it's a business. The Red Sox made a business decision. They had two choices — they could have signed me or they could have gotten Gonzalez and they decided on Gonzalez. I'm OK with that.

"[The Red Sox] made me an offer but it wasn't as good as some of the other ones out there. The Rangers really stepped up and made me feel like they wanted me here. I'm so happy it happened because the Rangers' organization treated me so well."

Although Beltre played on two teams that went to the World Series, what he wants, even now, is to win a championship before his career is over.

Which is why he said he's open to a deal, even with his no-trade veto power.

"If it's the right situation I would consider going with the chance that I could win a championship," Beltre said. "It's not going to happen here [with Texas], unfortunately. So to be able to go somewhere and help a team win a championship, that's important to me."

And there seems to be opportunities for him.

Terry Francona managed Beltre in that 2010 season and the Indians could use Beltre at third base and DH. The Braves have youth at third base and could use a veteran leadership presence that Beltre can provide. The Yankees are said to be looking at Manny Machado, but Beltre would serve their purposes as well.

For a moment, there appeared to be scenario in which Beltre would return to the Red Sox and platoon with Rafael Devers, maybe teach the kid how to play third base in the big leagues. But the Red Sox opted for Steve Pearce, making a deal with the Toronto Blue Jays. Pearce has worked out very well in Boston and has allowed manager Alex Cora flexibility at first base with Pearce and Mitch Moreland.

Beltre loves Devers's potential and believes he has a chance to be a big-time player with more seasoning.

But the Red Sox decided they were going to ride it out with Devers, who leads the majors with 19 errors. And Beltre, who has had a couple of hamstring injuries, has stayed put for now. "I'm probably as healthy as I've been right now," said Beltre, save for a recent tooth infection.

Health, he said, will be one of the factors as he decides what he's going to do after this season.

"It's a couple of things — when the season ends I sit with my family and my kids and we make the decision together," Beltre said. "My kids have sacrificed a lot for me to do what I love, but now they're part of the decision with everybody involved. And the other part is my health. I've had a few injuries, but like I said I'm healthy now."

Beltre is the major league's active leader in hits (3,112) and he needs three more to tie Alex Rodriguez for 20th on the career list. He's hit 466 home runs. Lately he's been in a bit of a dip — 5 for 32 after Wednesday's 4-2 loss — which has dropped his average to .288. But he's been hitting .379 with runners in scoring position since May. It appears once the Machado chips fall, Beltre could see some action.

"Whatever happens, I'll take a look at the situation and make a decision," Beltre said. "All that matters to me right now is winning a championship."

### **Dustin Pedroia recognizes what is increasingly obvious: that he's unlikely to play again this season**

Peter Abraham

Dustin Pedroia acknowledged Wednesday what has become increasingly apparent for several weeks: He is unlikely to play again this season.

But the Red Sox second baseman was adamant that his career will continue following the extensive surgery on his left knee last fall.

"Yeah, and I'll be better than ever," Pedroia said. "Absolutely. Absolutely."

Pedroia, his surgeon, and the Red Sox medical staff agree that his knee must fully heal before he returns to the field. They fear a repeat of what happened in May, when Pedroia lasted only three games after coming off the disabled list.

That leaves roughly 12 weeks for Pedroia to be medically cleared, then go through the steps needed to play in the majors.

As every day passes, that becomes less likely. Pedroia, 34, also understands he has to put long-term concerns ahead of short-term goals.

"I've healed quick with every other injury I've had. But this is obviously different," he said. "You can't risk it. If I come back too early and the graft fails, then that's it."

Pedroia will soon return home to Arizona and continue treatments with a physical therapist, Keith Kocher, he has worked with before.

“The treatment that I need, it’s tough to get all that done [in Boston]. Our staff is trying to get all the other guys ready. It’s tough,” Pedroia said. “It stinks leaving the guys, but it’s kind of the right thing to do so I can concentrate on my rehab and not have to split it up throughout the day.

“[The Sox] kind of suggested it. It’s not like I’m going to be gone for a long period of time. It’s just at this stage right now it’s probably smart to do that.”

Pedroia will have a better idea of where he stands in 4-5 weeks. If he is deemed fully healed by then, there’s a chance he could return in September.

But it’s more likely he’s looking at 2019.

“I’d love to play right now. But I can’t . . . I’m going to be back for good if I let it heal. That’s it. I’ve got to let it heal,” said Pedroia, who is signed through 2021 with \$40 million remaining on his deal after this season.

Pedroia had what was described as a “cartilage restoration procedure” on Oct. 25 in New York and did not play competitively until late April in extended spring training.

After appearing in five minor league games, Pedroia was activated off the disabled list on May 25. But he played only three games before being shut down again.

In retrospect, Pedroia returned too soon.

“Since I’m a smaller guy they thought I could play during parts of healing,” he said. “I did for a little bit but then I started to have discomfort. That’s just a sign that you have to wait until everything has healed all the way and then build up a running progression so you don’t have any setbacks.

“It’s just time. Obviously I’m not the type of person to hear that correctly. None of us are. When you’re told a timetable to come back, you feel like you fail if you don’t reach that timetable. But that’s really not it.”

As Pedroia waits, the Sox have flourished without him despite what has been below league-average offensive production at second base.

“I love the way we’re playing. I’m glad I got my one hit,” Pedroia said. “I miss it but I have to take care of this.”

Pedroia said this team is comparable to the World Series champions he played on in 2007 and ’13.

“This is a special team,” he said. “I wish I could have a bigger part. I just have to deal with this.”

### **David Price can’t afford a third straight stinker**

Dan Shaughnessy

Had a quick back-and-forth with my main man, David Price, at his locker Wednesday afternoon. Here’s how it went:

Me: “You said you were ‘searching’ after that bad outing in KC the other night. Did you find what you were looking for?”

Price: “Yup.”

Me: "Can you tell me what you learned?"

Price: "Nope."

Me: "Is it mechanical?"

Price: "Yup."

Me: "How did you end up hitting three guys in one inning?"

Price: "I tried to make sure I got the ball in. I just got it too far in."

Me: "How do you feel about facing the Yankees again later this year?"

Price: "I feel great moving forward for the rest of the season and great facing the Yankees again, whenever that may be. That's a team I've pitched against a lot in my career, probably more than against any team in the big leagues, maybe with the exception of Toronto. I've pitched against both of them a lot and I've had some bad games against [the Yankees] a few times. I gave up nine straight hits against them when I was in Detroit in 2015. Nine straight hits. No walks, no sac flies, no hit by pitches, nine straight knocks."

Me: "Have you been able to tune out the noise around you here in Boston?"

Price: "Yes. I'm still not a subscriber to whatever papers there are. I don't know the last time I've listened to FM or AM radio."

Me: "Have you heard the guy who does a killer impression of you on The SportsHub (Jim Murray)?"

Price: "No."

Me: "I know you talked to Jon Morosi (MLB.com) a little about this, any chance you could opt out of your contract with the Red Sox at the end of this year?"

Price: "I'm not going to sit here and say there's zero percent chance when there's always a chance of anything, but that's nothing that I'm thinking about or putting any thought to, or talking to anyone else about. I expect to win and I expect to do that here."

Me: "How do you feel about playing here?"

Price: "I don't have no problem with it. I need to go out there and pitch better."

Me: "But it seems like you hate it here. Do you hate Boston?"

Price: "I've never said I've hated Boston or had a problem with the fans. That's a perception that's put on me through you guys [in the media]. That's what that is. It's like when we were in Minnesota and I said I wasn't deserving of being an All-Star and didn't think I should be an All-Star, and then all that crap got put out. It turns into that. So write what you want to write."

Me: "Do you ever wish you signed somewhere else?"

Price: "No."

That was it for our interview. Price was professional, polite, and direct. I thanked him for his time and went upstairs to watch the Red Sox knock around the Texas Rangers, 4-2, for their ninth straight victory.

The Red Sox have not lost since Price was routed in Yankee Stadium on July 1. Price was bad in his next start in Kansas City. On Thursday, he returns to the Fenway mound against the Blue Jays.

Sox fans will be waiting.

In this spectacular Sox summer, Price has emerged as the tiny dent on the shiny new Mercedes. He is the red letter C on a pristine transcript of A's. In a season in which just about everything is going right for the Sox, Price still gives our vaunted Fellowship of the Miserable something about which to complain.

Caller on Line 1: "Yeah, I love the Red Sox, but I just don't trust David Price in a big game. He's soft. He thinks too much. Are we gonna be able to pitch him against the Yankees, or in the playoffs?"

Host: "Can't argue with any of that. That's the \$217 million question for the Red Sox in the next few months."

As always, there's an element of piling on when it comes to Price. He's 9-6 with a 4.44 ERA. So he's not having that bad of a season.

But our mythical Caller on Line 1 asks the right questions. Can Price pitch against the Yankees again? Can you trust him in the playoffs?

In the nine starts leading into his stinker in New York, Price was 7-1 with a 2.72 ERA. He gave up only three runs in the one game he lost in that stretch. He was finally pitching like the guy that the Sox thought they bought in December 2015.

And then everything unraveled in the Bronx. Pitching on "Sunday Night Baseball," Price gave up five homers, nine hits, and eight earned runs before Alex Cora mercifully yanked him with only one out in the fourth. By several measures, it was the worst regular-season start of Price's decorated career.

The Sox won his subsequent start, 15-4, last Saturday night, but it was not a good night for Price. It was, instead, another new low for the complex southpaw.

Price fell behind, 3-0, in the early innings at KC, only to see his teammates rally to give him a lead with four runs in the top of the fifth. In the bottom of the inning, pitching against the worst-hitting team in baseball, Price unraveled again. He gave up a single and hit three guys, tying a big-league record for most batters hit in one inning. Cora was forced to come get him again. Price needed 102 pitches to go 4 $\frac{2}{3}$  and could not pick up a win in a 15-4 game.

Price has never been booed loudly in Boston. He's never heard any noise like that which was showered on Sonny Gray when Gray was routed by the Red Sox at Yankee Stadium. But Price can't afford a third straight stinker. He needs to get back on board with the rest of his winning teammates.

And he says he has discovered the flaw. And that with all evidence to the contrary, he does not hate it here.

### **Red Sox interested in Baltimore reliever Zach Britton**

Nick Cafardo

A longtime observer of Dave Dombrowski reminded this reporter, "Never underestimate his ability to pull off something big if he feels he's got a team that can win it all."

Dombrowski must feel that way. So when the Baltimore Sun reports that he's "checked in" on Manny Machado, we should take that seriously. According to a major league source, Boston's more pressing interest is in Zach Britton, who would add depth to the back of the bullpen and give the Red Sox the power lefthander they're missing. Britton hasn't lit the baseball world on fire since returning from his Achilles' injury, but the more he pitches the more comfortable he seems to get.

On the surface it doesn't appear the Red Sox have enough to get Machado. But Dombrowski could certainly get creative. Rafael Devers seems to be off the table.

With Machado, you have an issue of where to play him. He's a shortstop now and he loves that position. Any team would have to convince him to play third, where he's an out-of-this-world defender because of his huge wingspan. This would be a problem for the Red Sox with Xander Bogaerts having a great season and the team not willing to give up on Devers.

Machado is also a rental. Certainly the Red Sox have the ability to re-sign him, but they also have incredibly large financial obligations coming in the next two years. Right now the focus for the Red Sox appears more on Britton than Machado. The Dodgers, Brewers, Cubs, Phillies, Braves, Diamondbacks, Indians, and Cardinals appear to have more to give in a Machado deal.

But we'll see. Dombrowski has a chance to win a World Series championship in both leagues, which would be an amazing feat for a baseball executive. Dombrowski has a team that might be able to pull it off in a year where there aren't many really good teams to beat.

### **Trade reports: Red Sox reportedly still in contact about Manny Machado**

Andrew Mahoney

With baseball's trade deadline just three weeks away, the action is sure to heat up as the Red Sox look to solidify their roster for postseason run. One area of need appears to be the bullpen, and the rumors and reports are already swirling.

Here's a look at the latest reports connecting the Red Sox to possible trade targets (This post will be updated).

A move for Machado?

With the Baltimore Orioles floundering in last place, it seems clear that the team will be sellers at the deadline. The main attraction? Shortstop Manny Machado, writes Nick Cafardo.

The Yankees have expressed interest in Machado, and according to the Baltimore Sun, the Red Sox have also been "in recent contact" with the Orioles.

Of course, the Red Sox are set at shortstop with Xander Bogaerts, but Machado has experience at third base as well. Would the Red Sox dangle Rafael Devers to land Machado? Chad Finn wrote last month that Machado, who will become a free agent at the end of the season, would come at too great of a cost for the Sox. And Alex Speier made the case for why trading Devers, who is just 21 and won't be eligible for free agency until after the 2023 season, makes little sense.

What about second base?

This is shaping up to be a lost season for Dustin Pedroia, who played in just three games this year and is heading back to Arizona to rehab his knee.

The Red Sox have made do with Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt splitting time at the position, and last month signed veteran four-time Gold Glove Brandon Phillips, who is 37 years old and currently getting in shape in Lowell. There are other possibilities, writes Cafardo.

Minnesota's Brian Dozier, 31, will become a free agent at the end of the season and could potentially be had at a small cost given his .223 batting average this year.

The Marlins might be willing to make Starlin Castro available. Castro, 28, is signed through 2020 and is scheduled to make close to \$12 million in 2019 and \$16 million in 2020.

The Reds could part ways with Scooter Gennett, who at 28 leads the National League in batting average and was named to the All-Star team.

Red Sox inquire about Marlins relievers

The Miami Marlins are 18 games under .500 and 14.5 out of first place in the National League East, where they reside in last place. It stands to reason that the Marlins would be sellers at the trade deadline.

According to MLB.com, the Red Sox are among the teams that have contacted the Marlins about relievers Kyle Barraclough, Adam Conley, and Drew Steckenrider.

Barraclough, 28, is the Marlins closer and would seem to be the top choice. The righthander has appeared in 41 games and has just a 1.37 ERA in 39.1 innings. He was named the National League reliever of the month for June after he converted all seven of his save opportunities. He did not allow a run in 12 innings and surrendered only one hit in 36 at-bats.

The South Florida Sentinel reports that the Marlins aren't looking to trade Barraclough, who will be eligible for salary arbitration after this season. The asking price for an arm that could anchor their bullpen over the next few years would be very high.

Conley, 28, is a lefthander who has pitched 21.2 innings in 21 appearances, striking out 26 while walking just nine batters.

Steckenrider, 27, throws righty and has made 43 appearances, striking out 46 and walking 18 while posting a 2.95 ERA. He became the first Marlins pitcher to make 14 or more appearances in a calendar month without allowing a run, and has excelled as a setup man.

Fernando Rodney could be on the block

The Minnesota Twins may be in second place in the AL Central, but they are eight games under .500 and 8.5 behind division leader Cleveland. That adds up to Minnesota closer Fernando Rodney possibly being available as the deadline approaches. The hard-throwing righthander is 41, but he has recorded 20 saves for a team that has won just 40 games. According to ESPN's Jerry Crasnick, the Red Sox are taking a look at Rodney, who played for the Detroit Tigers when Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski was with the organization.

Red Sox interested in Reds reliever

In the NL Central, the Cincinnati Reds are in last place and 14 games behind the first-place Milwaukee Brewers, but they do have righty reliever Raisel Iglesias, 28, who has appeared in 37 games, recording 18 saves and compiling a 2.48 ERA. Cafardo writes that both the Red Sox and Astros are interested in Iglesias, who is signed through 2020 at \$5 million for each of the next two seasons and can become an unrestricted free agent for the 2021 season.

Rotation help?

The Red Sox could also look to bolster their rotation. Former Yankee Nathan Eovaldi, now with the Tampa Bay Rays, is on several teams' wish list, including the Red Sox, according to MLB.com. The Rays have played well and are two games over .500, but that puts them in third place in the AL East, 16 games behind the Red Sox. They may wait right up to the trading deadline before deciding to make a move. In his last start for the Rays, he threw six perfect innings against the Mets before Brandon Nimmo led off the seventh inning with a single to right field.

Eovaldi missed all of last season after undergoing Tommy John surgery, and is in the final year of his contract.

**\* *The Boston Herald***

## **Chris Sale powers Red Sox to ninth straight win**

Jason Mastrodonato

Chris Sale's next start should be for the American League All-Star team on Tuesday.

Last night's gem at Fenway Park ought to guarantee that.

Sale wrapped up his first half by etching his name into the history books once again as he struck out 12 in seven shutout innings in the Red Sox' 4-2 win against the Texas Rangers.

"In the seventh he was throwing 98, 99 mph," manager Alex Cora said. "Physically, he's in a great place. Mechanic-wise, stuff-wise, it's been impressive to see this run. I look up again and I see the strikeouts, just one walk, what else can we say?"

The Red Sox are 65-29 and 36 games over .500 for the first time since 1978.

With a nine-game winning streak on the line there will be no shortage of drama at Fenway tonight, when David Price takes the mound against the Blue Jays coming off two of his worst starts in a Red Sox uniform.

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It would be wise to avoid comparisons of Price to Sale, the Red Sox ace who just finished the first half with a 2.23 ERA and 188 strikeouts, 12th-most all time before the All-Star break.

The amazing part is that it wasn't always looking like one of Sale's best seasons. He had a modest 3.00 ERA on June 1, and his fastball velocity was averaging 94-97 mph.

His next start on June 8, Sale came out and let it rip, averaging 99 mph and touching 101 mph for the first time in his career. As he later described it, he was tired of saving energy and couldn't hold it in any longer.

What has followed has been one of the most dominant runs in history. He's since struck out 78 with only 10 walks and a 0.93 ERA in seven starts.

"He's on top of his game," Cora said. "You've got to give him credit because he's been disciplined. What we wanted to do from day one of spring training, he was disciplined, he bought into it, he believed in it.

"It looks like the last seven, eight, it's been effortless."

Sale has gone six starts in a row where he's struck out at least 11 and walked no more than one, the longest such streak of all-time.

Asked if he's ever been on a run like this, Sale said, "If I did I wouldn't talk about it. This is a pretty funny game, you know? Anytime you feel like you're on top of the world you get knocked right off."

He was again throwing gas, tickling 100 mph on the radar gun while adding a back-breaking slider to the mix.

He struck out two in the first inning, one in the second, one in the third, one in the fourth, three in the fifth, one in the sixth and three in the seventh, ending his night on 110 pitches and walking off to another standing ovation at Fenway Park.

Sale ended the sixth by screaming into his glove, but he wouldn't tell what he said.

“My mom watches this, I can’t say that,” he said, smiling. “I mean, it’s being competitive. I think anybody out there, on this team anyway, would be fired up as well. Not to mention the fact you have a sold-out Fenway Park losing their minds. You feel that and I try and use that as much as I can in my favor. I like pitching here. I appreciate the fans coming out and bringing the energy with them.”

The Red Sox scored first in the second inning when Rougned Odor dropped a fly ball in shallow right field, then added three more in the fifth inning on a double by J.D. Martinez and a triple by Xander Bogaerts.

All four runs were scored off 45-year-old Bartolo Colon, who lasted six innings and took the loss.

The previous record for most strikeouts through a pitcher’s first 200 starts was Pedro Martinez, who struck out 1,600, but Sale already was past that mark with 1,616 strikeouts in his first 199 starts.

He added 12 more last night in his 200th start.

His strikeout rate of 13.1 per nine innings is on pace to be the third-highest of all-time behind only Randy Johnson in 2001 (13.4) and Martinez in 1999 (13.2).

“We have a little bit of time now (with the break),” Sale said. “Obviously try and recover a little bit. I am still going to get my work in and maintain. You don’t want to sit on your butt for eight days and get all locked up and stuff. Try and be smart. Limit the throws over the next few days and try and recover a little bit and hopefully bounce back and be ready to go in the second half.”

### **Red Sox notebook: Dustin Pedroia will stick to long road for recovery this time**

Jason Mastrodonato

It would be easy to dismiss a 34-year-old undersized second baseman and assume his career will soon be over after a complicated knee procedure — the first ever performed on a position player in baseball — created a lengthy recovery process.

But Dustin Pedroia doesn’t see it that way.

Yesterday, he offered some reasons why his knee held up for just three games after returning from the disabled list in May, and why he thinks the long road back is the only road back.

“After learning a lot about it, I think the bottom line is, when I came back and played — from what we were told — since I’m a smaller guy, they thought I could play during parts of healing,” Pedroia said. “And I did for a little bit, but then I started to have discomfort. So that’s just a sign that you have to wait until everything has healed all the way and then build up a running progress and things like that, so you don’t have any setbacks.”

Pedroia had the surgery last October and hoped to make a speedy recovery in just seven months. He knew it was an optimistic projection, but made it happen.

This time he has no timetable for when he might return.

“I can’t control how the human body heals,” he said. “I would love to. I would love to play right now, but that’s not really (possible). I can’t. So once everything heals permanently and we checked that with MRIs and everything — how I’m progressing — and once that happens, and I maintain my strength and keep working hard at that, it shouldn’t be long. So, hopefully I just heal fast.”

Pedroia said he’ll get an MRI in four or five weeks.

“If it’s fully healed then I will play this year,” he said. “If I get a MRI in four or five weeks and it’s three-quarters of the way healed then I probably won’t. I can’t do anything about time.”

“I’ve healed quick with every other injury I’ve had, but this is obviously different. You can’t risk it, you know what I mean? If I come back too early and the graf fails, then that’s it.”

Pedroia said it made sense that the Red Sox were sending him back to his home in Arizona, where he could get more medical attention on a daily basis.

“I think the treatment that I need, it’s tough to get all that done,” he said. “Our staff is trying to get all the other guys ready. It’s tough. So, it stinks leaving the guys, but it’s kind of the right thing to do so I can concentrate on my rehab and not have to split it up throughout the day, things like that.

“So, they suggested it. It’s not like I’m going to be gone for a long period of time, it’s just at this stage right now, it’s probably smart to do that.”

Pedroia was generally in good spirits and insisted his knee would be fully healed at some point.

“When everyone wanted me to have this surgery, it was to not only be healthy the rest of my career, but the rest of my life,” he said. “It’s something that I have to let heal and then build up. We did a great job with strengthening, things like that. I was able to play games and feel great, but it just wasn’t healed all the way, and we have to let it happen.”

Surprise seat for Devers

It’s been a long season for Rafael Devers, but he’s quietly gotten hot over the last three weeks and had homered twice off Bartolo Colon the last time the Sox faced him, which made it a bit surprising to see Devers on the bench last night.

“He’s a little banged up from sliding and diving and all that,” manager Alex Cora said. “Stay away from him today. I know he had a great game against Bartolo in Arlington with the two homers but his health is more important, so we’ll stay away from him and see how he feels tomorrow.”

Devers is hitting .279 with a .789 OPS over his last 22 games, but just .241 with a .715 OPS overall this season.

“He loves to play baseball, regardless of the offensive struggles in certain times or his defensive miscues,” Cora said. “He likes to win, he like to play, he doesn’t make his excuses. He keeps working hard. At that age, to show that maturity, it’s good.” . . .

Steve Pearce started 14 games at second base for the 2016 Blue Jays, and the Sox would consider using him at second, Cora said.

“I thought about it the other day,” Cora said. “I know he can play there but not yet. Outfield, first and DH . . . We’ll think about it.”

Benintendi misses out

Andrew Benintendi narrowly missed out on an election to the American League All-Star team in the final vote taken by the fans.

Seattle Mariners shortstop Jean Segura, hitting .329 with an .824 OPS, was elected as the final member of the team with 13.6 million votes. Benintendi, hitting .301 with a .907 OPS, finished second in the vote, finishing ahead of Yankees slugger Giancarlo Stanton, who finished third out of the five candidates.

### **Journeyman Ryan Brasier finds role in Red Sox bullpen**

Jason Mastrodonato

The Red Sox may have found a hidden gem in 30-year-old right-hander Ryan Brasier.

Prior to this year, he hadn't pitched in the big leagues since 2013 due to injuries and inconsistencies. He had a 3.00 ERA in 30 relief innings in Japan last year and the Red Sox signed him to a minor league contract in March.

He struck out 40 in 40 innings with a 1.34 ERA for Triple-A Pawtucket and has now thrown two scoreless innings for the Red Sox.

"You guys will like this story," manager Alex Cora said. "He was our closer in spring training. Toward the end, when we started playing well, he'll come in. He came in one day and started throwing 97. I was like wait, we need this guy again. And he kept coming and kept dominating. Weak contact. He pitched against the Cubs, I think, and was great. We talked about him. So he goes to Triple A, starts dominating, whatever. We call him up.

"So two days ago he comes in in the ninth inning and I turn around to the dugout and I say, 'you guys don't know who this guy is,' because they don't. In spring training they don't stay. They don't stay, they leave in the fifth inning so I'm like 'you guys have no idea who this guy is, but I tell you what, he was my closer and you'll be surprised.' First pitch 98 and you've got to see the faces of David Price, Chris Sale, all those guys are like 'what?' 97, 98, 97, 98. Yesterday he throws 100 I think. Well it shows 100 up there (laughs) and (Rafael) Devers is at third base like 'oh my god.'"

Brasier had Tommy John surgery in 2014 and took a long time to recover.

"I read the thing about Tommy John and how long it was," Cora said. "I also read that his last outing was against the Rangers which doesn't surprise me. This game is amazing, stuff like that will happen.

"But from spring training all the way here, he's been doing it and attacking with quality stuff. And he throws quality strikes, up in the zone, down and away, so I can see this guy contributing. Like we talk about before in 2013, Brandon Workman wasn't a part of the equation and he pitched (3 1/3 innings) in the World Series and he's the only pitcher down there that has a World Series ring. So I'm not going to be surprised if this kid stays with us and dominates and contributes the way the people in player development think he can contribute. It's a good story but he's a good pitcher."

Cora said he has trust in Brasier, evident from using him in the ninth inning to close out a pair of wins on Monday and Tuesday.

"He's a grinder," Cora said. "He did an outstanding job in Triple A. And I mean he's come in twice up four runs, which sometimes you go to Joe Kelly and Matt Barnes to keep it there, but we trust this guy. His stuff is outstanding as far as mixing up his pitches. . . . He's a good pitcher and he's going to contribute."

## **\* *The Providence Journal***

### **Red Sox Journal: Brasier's fastball proves to be attention-getter**

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Alex Cora likes to spin a yarn or two during his daily pregame media briefings, a quality that extends to his time presiding over the Red Sox dugout as well.

Boston's manager had his players sitting at attention in the ninth inning Monday night against the Rangers, as relief pitcher Ryan Brasier was summoned for his first big-league appearance in five years. Brasier spent last year pitching for the Hiroshima Carp in the Japan Central League, light years off the radar of most big leaguers.

“I turned around to the dugout and said, ‘You guys don’t know who this guy is,’” Cora said. “They don’t, because in spring training they don’t stay. They leave in the fifth inning.”

Brasier unleashed a fastball at 98 mph on his first pitch to Isiah Kiner-Falefa, the right-hander’s first offering at this level since pitching with the Angels in 2013. The likes of Chris Sale and David Price were instantly intrigued by a 30-year-old journeyman who hasn’t allowed an earned run for Triple-A Pawtucket since May 12. Brasier closed out a 5-0 victory over the Rangers.

“He was our closer in spring training,” Cora said. “Towards the end, when we started playing well, he came in one day and he threw 97. I was like, ‘Wait, we need this guy again.’”

Brasier lit up the Fenway Park radar gun at 100 mph on Tuesday, fanning Delino DeShields for the second out of the ninth in an 8-4 victory. It was the second scoreless frame in as many days for Brasier, and the fact that StatCast had the pitch in question clocked at 96.6 mph instead mattered little to third baseman Rafael Devers.

“Yesterday he throws 100 — well, it showed 100 up there — and Devers is at third base like, ‘Oh my God,’” Cora said. “He’s a grinder. He did an outstanding job in Triple-A.”

Whether or not this is a brief audition or something of a more lasting role for Brasier remains to be seen. Brandon Workman celebrated the five-year anniversary of his big-league debut on Tuesday night and eventually logged 8 2/3 innings over seven playoff appearances in 2013. Workman remains the only member of the current Boston pitching staff with a World Series ring, as the Red Sox defeated the Cardinals in six games.

“From spring training all the way here, he’s been doing it,” Cora said. “He’s been attacking with quality stuff. He throws quality strikes up in the zone, down and away. I can see this guy contributing.”

#### Another opportunity

Wednesday represented something of a third chance this season for left-handed reliever Robby Scott, who was promoted from the PawSox and available to work out of the bullpen. Jalen Beeks was sent down in the corresponding move.

Scott failed to make the 25-man roster out of spring training, losing out to fellow left-hander Bobby Poyner, and was demoted again after absorbing the loss in a 6-2 defeat at Minnesota on June 19. Scott retired just one of the four men he faced, allowing the Twins to open up what had been a 2-2 tie after seven innings.

“He can give us multiple innings,” Cora said. “At the same time, we can match up with him depending on where we’re at. That’s why we made the move.”

Scott has dominated left-handed hitters with the PawSox this season, holding them to just six hits and striking out 20 while recording 42 outs. Beeks worked 2 1/3 innings against Texas on Tuesday, his second career big-league appearance.

#### Health comes first

Devers received the night off Wednesday against the Rangers, a decision that raised some eyebrows after his previous showing against starting pitcher Bartolo Colon.

The third baseman ripped a pair of solo home runs against Colon in a 5-1 win at Texas on May 4, touching up a veteran who is revered as a proper legend in their native Dominican Republic. The 21-year-old Devers was just seven months old when Colon made his 1997 debut with the Indians, the first of his 555 appearances coming into Wednesday’s start opposite Sale. Cora said Devers was “a little bit banged up.”

“I know he had a great game against Bartolo in Arlington with the two homers, but his health is more important,” Cora said. “We’ll stay away from him and see how he feels tomorrow.”

### **Dustin Pedroia lowers hope of returning this season**

Bill Koch

BOSTON — This time, it was Dustin Pedroia himself declining to guarantee he would return to action at any point during the 2018 season.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora said Tuesday that he “hoped” the second baseman would be able to come off the disabled list down the stretch and help Boston make a drive deep into October. Left knee inflammation following offseason cartilage restoration surgery has kept Pedroia off the field since his pregame work May 31 at Houston, and there is no official timetable for his return.

Pedroia departs for Arizona on Friday and will stay there to fully focus on his rehab, leaving the clubhouse he’s called home since his 2006 big-league debut. A week spent in New York with his surgeon, Dr. Riley Williams III, and consultation with Red Sox medical staff have given Pedroia an idea of the work that needs to be done.

“It stinks leaving the guys, but it’s kind of the right thing to do,” Pedroia said prior to Wednesday’s series finale against the Rangers at Fenway Park. “I can concentrate on my rehab and not have to split it up throughout the day.”

Pedroia began what he hoped would be a comeback to regular action by spending time at extended spring training in Fort Myers and two weeks at Triple-A Pawtucket. His Boston return lasted just three games, with Pedroia reporting discomfort to the Red Sox ahead of the series opener with the Astros. He was crestfallen in the visiting clubhouse the following day and has been in something of a holding pattern ever since.

“It’s a process,” Pedroia said. “I’ve seen a lot of doctors. I’ve seen a lot of rehab people and gotten their thoughts. After learning a lot about it, I think the bottom line is when I came back and played — from what we were told, since I’m a smaller guy — they thought I could play during parts of healing. I did for a little bit. Then I started to have discomfort. That’s just a sign that you have to wait until everything has healed all the way and then build up a running progression and things like that so you don’t have any setbacks.

“It’s just time, which sucks,” Pedroia continued. “Obviously I’m not the type of person to hear that correctly. None of us are, because when you’re told a timetable to come back you feel like you failed if you didn’t reach that timetable. That’s really not it. When everyone wanted me to have this surgery it was not only to be healthy for the rest of my career but the rest of my life. It’s something that I have to let heal and then build up.”

Strengthening the muscles surrounding the joint will be a focus for Pedroia, who turns 35 in August and has three years left on the contract extension he signed with Boston prior to the 2014 season. Both he and Cora shifted tone noticeably early this week, beginning to speak more in future terms through 2021 than the final 69 games of this regular season. Brock Holt and Eduardo Nunez have drawn the bulk of the playing time at Pedroia’s spot in the infield.

“I’m disappointed I’m not playing now,” Pedroia said. “That’s a part of it. But you can’t do anything else. I watch every pitch. I’m in every pitch with the guys. It’s a lot easier going through it when we’re (35) games over .500 or whatever we are. That’s the good part.”

Pedroia said he’s in less pain than at the end of May, but an absence of pain will be required to put him back on the field. Along with teammate Steven Wright, Pedroia represents something of a test case for a

procedure usually performed on basketball players. The knuckleballer also finds himself on the disabled list while battling similar left knee inflammation.

"It's just the body telling you it needs time to fully heal all the way, and we'll follow it through MRIs and things like that," Pedroia said. "And once it is, I'll know. When I'm healed all the way I'll start dominating the exercises and play as fast as possible."

## \* **MassLive.com**

### **Boston Red Sox ace Chris Sale finishes off first half with dominant start vs. Rangers**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- If his recent stretch is the best of his career, Chris Sale doesn't want to jinx it by talking about it.

"It's a pretty funny game," Sale said Wednesday night. "Anytime you feel like you're on top of the world, you get knocked right out."

Sale is on top of the world right now, having been dominant in his last seven starts for the Red Sox by posting an 0.94 ERA while striking out 78 batters. Wednesday night was no different, as he held the Rangers in check for seven scoreless innings, allowing just six hits while striking out 12.

Sale has struck out at least 11 batters in each of his past five outings, and as Jason Mastrodonato of the Boston Herald noted, his 13.1 K/9 is the second-highest K/9 rate before the All-Star break in baseball history. Sale isn't just getting hitters out. He's making them look foolish.

The concern about Sale is never how he'll do in the first half, as he's always a candidate to start the All-Star game this time of year and has the last two seasons. But his August struggles a year ago changed things for the Red Sox this year, and, under new manager Alex Cora, they're being a little more careful with Sale.

A later All-Star break means Sale has actually thrown more innings (129) in the unofficial first half of this season than last (127.2), but those numbers don't tell the story. Through 20 starts last year, Sale threw 141.1 innings. Through the same number of outings this year, he has thrown just 120.

"You've got to give him credit because he has been disciplined," Cora said. "What we've wanted to do since Day 1 of spring training, is discipline. He bought into it, he believes in it. We've been able to steal a few innings and pitches here and there."

Sale now faces a long layoff, with his spot in the rotation coming up Monday, the first day of the All-Star break. While he's a lock to pitch (and possibly) start Monday, he'll still have significant time off before start no. 21.

"We've got a little bit of time now," Sale said. "I think my next start would fall on Monday, so I do have an extended time. I'll try to obviously recover for a little bit. I'm still gonna get my work in because I don't want to sit on my butt for eight days and get all locked up. Just try to be smart and limit the throws in the next few days. I'll bounce back ready for the second half."

With the coaching staff in the middle of discussions on how the rotation will look following the break, Sale might be pushed back to the middle or end of the group in an effort to give him even more rest. With a playoff spot all but locked up for the league-leading Red Sox, it doesn't make much sense to push Sale early in the second half and have to worry about him in October.

For now, Sale is on a level few have ever reached. And the Red Sox, despite taking him along slowly, are reaping the benefits.

"For whatever he says that he doesn't know what's going on and just wants to give us the chance to win, he's a proud individual," Cora said. "He told me after the game that he felt good tonight."

### **Boston Red Sox win ninth in a row, beating Rangers 4-2**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Death, taxes and Chris Sale dominating in a Red Sox win.

Sale dominated again for Boston on Tuesday night, going seven scoreless innings while striking out 12 Rangers. It was the fifth straight outing he had struck out at least 11 opposing batters and the ninth straight win for the Red Sox, who swept the Rangers in a three-game set, winning 4-2.

Boston's offense was powered by a fifth-inning rally that saw J.D. Martinez drive in Mookie Betts and Andrew Benintendi with a 2-RBI double and Xander Bogaerts drive in Martinez on a pop up to left field that fell between two colliding Rangers and was ruled a triple. Betts, Benintendi and Bogaerts each had multiple hits for Boston.

Texas loaded the bases off Heath Hembree in the eighth inning before manager Alex Cora called on Craig Kimbrel for four outs. Kimbrel walked Robinson Chirinos to make it 4-2 before striking out Joey Gallo to escape the jam.

Kimbrel struck out the side in order in the ninth to clinch the win.

Sale continues dominance in win

Sale has posted video-game numbers in his last seven starts, owning an 0.94 ERA while striking out 78 batters. For the season, his ERA is 2.23.

As @SoxNotes pointed out on Twitter, Sale extended his streak of recording at least 11 strikeouts and one or fewer walks by doing it in his fifth straight start. Heading into the All-Star break, Sale has been about as good as he has ever been in his fantastic career.

Boston is now 12-8 in games started by Sale this season, though the club is 4-7 in Sale starts in which they have scored four runs or fewer.

Blue Jays up next for Boston

The red-hot Sox will continue their homestand with a four-game set against the Blue Jays that starts Thursday.

Thursday, 7:10 p.m.: LHP J.A. Happ vs. LHP David Price

Friday, 7:10 p.m.: RHP Ryan Borucki vs. RHP Rick Porcello

Thursday, 1:05 p.m.: TBA (maybe RHP Marco Estrada) vs. LHP Eduardo Rodriguez

Thursday, 1:05 p.m.: RHP Marcus Stroman vs. TBA (likely LHP Brian Johnson)

### **No All-Star Game for Andrew Benintendi: Boston Red Sox OF places 2nd in Final Vote**

Nick O'Malley

The votes are in, and Andrew Benintendi will not be getting his first career All-Star nod.

The Boston Red Sox outfielder was one of five finalists for the last remaining spot on the American League All-Star roster. As is the case in recent seasons, the final spot was put up to a fan vote. Despite heavy campaigning by the Red Sox on social media, the spot went to Seattle Mariners shortstop Jean Segura. Benintendi placed second in the voting in the Final Vote.

With Benintendi out, that leaves the Red Sox with five All-Stars this year heading down to Washington D.C. Starting pitcher Chris Sale, designated hitter J.D. Martinez, first baseman Mitch Moreland, outfielder Mookie Betts and closer Craig Kimbrel will be representing the Red Sox at the All-Star game this year.

### **With Dustin Pedroia out, could Boston Red Sox use Steve Pearce at second base?**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- With Dustin Pedroia's status uncertain for the rest of the season, Boston will likely keep using a combination of Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt at second base. But there might be another player on the roster who could see some time there as the season goes on-- hot-hitting newcomer Steve Pearce.

Pearce, who is hitting .458 with five extra-base hits in eight games since being acquired from Toronto, has 33 career appearances at second base. Primarily a first baseman and outfielder, Pearce made 13 starts at second for Baltimore in 2015 and 14 starts there for Tampa Bay in 2016.

Manager Alex Cora has decided so far to opt with Nunez and Holt at the spot, noting that Boston sees Pearce as a first baseman and designated hitter.

"Not yet," Cora said. "I know he can play there, but not yet."

Pearce wouldn't provide the defense that Nunez or Holt can at second, but starting him there is an option to explore if Cora wants to get Pearce, Mitch Moreland and J.D. Martinez in the lineup for a certain matchup.

"Now that you bring it up, yeah," Cora said when asked if Pearce could be considered at second. "Thank you."

### **Dustin Pedroia injury: Boston Red Sox second baseman heads to Arizona on Friday, won't commit to return this season**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Injured Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia will head home to Arizona on Friday to continue rehabbing his injured left knee. Pedroia met with reporters Wednesday at Fenway Park and would not guarantee that he will return this season.

"There's no timetable," Pedroia said. "I can't control how the human body heals. I'd love to. I'd love to play right now. But I can't. Once everything heals permanently and I get checked out with MRI to see how I'm progressing... once that happens and I maintain my strength and keep working hard at that, it shouldn't be long. Hopefully I just heal fast."

When Pedroia returned from the disabled list in early May, the belief from doctors and trainers was that as a smaller player, he'd be able to keep enough weight off the knee to be able to play while completing the rehab process. After weeks spent in extended spring training and in the minors, Pedroia felt discomfort three games into his major-league return and hit the DL once again.

"That was just the point of 'it's not all the way healed yet,'" Pedroia said. "Once it does, then I could handle, instead of five weeks, six months or a year and then I'd be good. It's a coincidence it happened here."

Pedroia's decision to head to Arizona for his rehab was due to the burden he felt he was putting on the Red Sox medical staff, who are also tasked with getting the rest of the roster to play on any given day. Pedroia

doesn't believe he'll be in Arizona for "a long period of time" but was not sure what the next step in his rehab process would be.

"You can't risk it," Pedroia said. "If I come back too early and the graf fails, then that's it. When I came back, everyone thought, since I'm a smaller guy and don't bear a lot of weight, that I could play while I was healing. Obviously, I couldn't. That's normal. It's not like the surgery failed or anything like that. It just takes time for it to heal all the way and then build it up from there. It's not gonna be an issue anymore [after that]."

Pedroia's program in Arizona will be dedicated to getting the knee back to 100 percent, with no urgency to get back before the end of this season. He said repeatedly that he had no doubt that he would be able to return to the Red Sox at some point in the future, even if it's not in 2018.

"If I get this thing MRI'd in four or five weeks and it's fully healed, then I'll play this year," Pedroia said. "If they MRI it in five weeks and it's three quarters of the way healed, then I probably won't. You can't do anything about time."

### **Boston Red Sox call up Robby Scott, option Jalen Beeks**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- The Red Sox swapped out lefties Wednesday, optioning Jalen Beeks to Pawtucket and recalling Robby Scott.

Beeks made his second appearance with Boston on Tuesday, allowing three earned runs in 2.1 innings of relief against the Rangers. He has allowed nine earned runs in 6.1 major-league innings this year, putting his ERA at 12.79.

Beeks will return to Pawtucket's rotation, where has been solid all year.

Scott has made just one appearance in the bigs this year, allowing two earned runs in 0.1 innings on June 19 in Minnesota. He owns a 3.64 ERA in 65 major-league appearances since debuting in 2016.

Scott may be sent back to Pawtucket this weekend, when Boston will need a roster spot for Brian Johnson. Johnson is expected to start Sunday after spending a few days on the disabled list with hip inflammation.

## **\* *The Lawrence Eagle Tribune***

### **Five Red Sox Takes: Chris Sale is on another level right now**

Chris Mason

BOSTON — With Chris Sale getting the ball and the Texas Rangers in town, it felt almost inevitable that the Red Sox would win their ninth straight.

Especially given the tear Sale has been on lately.

Sure enough, the ace was outstanding again, and the Red Sox completed a sweep of the Rangers with a 4-2 win. Here are five takes from Fenway Park:

#### 1. Sale is on another level

Sale's dominance continued, as he toyed with Texas hitters last night. Sale struck out 12 Rangers over seven shutout innings, improving to 10-4 on the season.

It marked Sale's seventh straight start of at least six innings, with nine or more strikeouts and two runs or fewer.

Only four other pitchers in history have done that: Nolan Ryan, Johan Santana, John Smoltz and Pedro Martinez.

## 2. Sale saves most of the 'pen, too

The Sox really couldn't afford an abbreviated night from Sale, given the state of their relievers.

"We're a little bit short," Alex Cora admitted before the game.

Boston's bullpen has been taxed lately — they used six pitchers on Wednesday night — so it was imperative that Sale be economical with his pitches and go deep into the ballgame.

He certainly did that; Heath Hembree was first out of the 'pen in the eighth inning with a 4-0 lead.

## 3. Kimbrel gets a four-out save

Hembree's outing didn't go as planned. After allowing a run and loading the bases, Cora turned to his closer with two outs.

Fortunately, Craig Kimbrel has been well rested. He'd only pitched three times in the previous two weeks, so Cora was comfortable summoning him for four outs.

Kimbrel walked a run home, but escaped further damage, then threw a 1-2-3 ninth to pick up the save.

## 4. RBI party continues for Bogaerts

Xander Bogaerts has been driving in runners at a torrid rate over the past week, and the series finale against the Rangers was no exception.

Bogaerts picked up his 13th RBI in the last seven games with a run-scoring triple, and finished the night 3 for 4. He scored a run of his own, too.

## 5. Rangers really bad on defense

Texas was charged with two errors, and had the official scorer been harsher, it could have been more. Their first of the night will live on blooper reels for a while.

In the bottom of the second inning, the Rangers had their infield in — a testament to how nasty Sale has been — and Eduardo Nunez hit a popup just beyond the infield. Rougned Odor had enough time to run back, camp under it, and just missed the ball.

It was that kind of week for Texas in Boston

## **In the first half, Alex Cora lived up to his end of the bargain with Chris Sale**

Chris Mason

BOSTON — Chris Sale's 20th start of the season was as crisp as any that preceded it.

The Red Sox ace threw seven innings of shutout ball, striking out 12 Rangers and lighting up the radar gun at 99 MPH.

Heading into the All-Star break, Sale is firing on all cylinders. Now the challenge is maintaining that, and Alex Cora has put him in position to.

Throughout Sale's career, he's been plagued by a second-half slide. At 6-foot-6 and 180 pounds, Sale has fatigued down the stretch, and 2017 was no exception. In August and September, Sale slid from Cy Young favorite to an every-other-outing pitcher.

So Cora sat down with Sale over the winter, and he and rest of the coaching staff mapped out a plan to preserve the ace. Sale would ramp things up slower than normal on and off the field — akin to a plane taking off — and whenever Cora could save an inning or two, he would.

"You've got to give him credit because he's been disciplined," Cora said. "What we wanted to do from day one of spring training, he was disciplined, he bought into it, he believed in it. We've been able to steal a few innings here, a few pitches there. He has a few starts that, he went over 100, but it looks like the last seven, eight, it's been effortless.

"Mechanic-wise, like I said, he's where he wants to be. The ball is coming out of his hand very clean. It's been impressive. We feel that now, with this break, he's going to reset, reload, and he's going to have a good second part of the season."

Those few pitches and innings Cora has stolen are adding up: Sale has thrown 171 fewer pitches and 12 1/3 fewer innings than he did through 20 starts last season.

That's basically two free starts.

It's no sure bet that Sale won't slide in the second half, but his manager has him in a better position to stay strong than in years past.

### **Bartolo Colon still a joy to watch at 45**

Chris Mason

BOSTON — A legend took the mound at Fenway Park last night. Chris Sale pitched, too.

At 45, Bartolo Colon is still toeing the rubber for the Texas Rangers. The oldest pitcher in the big leagues by four years — Fernando Rodney is 41 — Colon continues to outrun Father Time.

It's become his norm.

Only two seasons removed from an All-Star appearance, the 5-foot-11, 285-pound enigma is no stranger to defying the odds. Earlier this season, Colon took a perfect game into the eighth inning against the reigning World Champion Houston Astros.

Red Sox first base coach Tom Goodwin had a front row seat to Colon's early 40's. From 2014-2016, he was one of his coaches with the New York Mets.

"Good guy," Goodwin said. "Awesome cat."

The older he's gotten, the more larger-than-life Colon's personality grows. Goodwin faced him quite a bit as a player — he went 6 for 24, doubling twice — and their last showdown came in 2002.

Sixteen years later, Colon is still going.

"I love it. I love it," Goodwin said. "Guys can take a lot (from him). They can learn a lot. Not just his longevity that he's played the game with and what he's done to make the adjustments that he needed to make to stay successful... but just the joy that he has playing the game. I think a lot can be said for that."

When Colon arrived in the majors, he earned an ace's reputation with triple-digit heat. After more than two decades, it's a battle to hit 90 on the radar gun, but he's grown as a pitcher.

Forty-two-year-old Alex Cora — who joked that he felt "young" with Colon pitching — is impressed by the way the veteran stuck with it.

Faced with an adapt-or-die game, Colon chose to evolve.

"In an era where you pitch vertical, fastballs up, breaking balls down, he still goes east to west, and at 87-88 up to 91 he's still getting people out," Cora said. "So he's a good one."

Though his body doesn't reflect it, Goodwin recalls Colon's diligence en route to an the 2013 All-Star Game as a Met.

"Behind the scenes, when you see him in the weight room he gets after it," Colon said. "He still gets after it to this day."

Of course, he still has fun with it, too.

Cora's favorite Colon story is easy to peg. He's told it a few times this season.

When the two were Red Sox teammates in 2008, Cora needed something from the weight room in the middle of the game, and found Colon on the StairMaster with two TVs on. One was turned to the game being played.

The other? Colon's favorite Spanish soap opera.

"He comes out and he has fun every day," Goodwin said. "Now I understand that he's played a long time and he can afford to do that, but just to still see it on his face."

Though he never meant to, Goodwin actually had a viral internet moment thanks to Colon in New York.

"We had a little hand shake where we did a little something and we'd snap," Goodwin recalls. "Miss high, go low, hit it, and then snap."

In '15, the Mets were playing the Marlins and slow-moving Justin Bour hit a roller down the first base line. Colon jogged over to the ball, and all in one motion, scooped the ball up and flipped it behind his back right into the first baseman's mitt.

It was the final out of the inning, and Colon didn't slow down as he made his way to the Mets dugout, where Goodwin was waiting on the top step.

They did their signature handshake with the cameras rolling.

"It wasn't even breaking stride, it was just a boom-boom snap and he's smiling and he's just so nonchalant," Goodwin laughed. "It's just how he is in playing, so nonchalantly, it's something that always kind of catches me."

If nothing else, Colon has always been a joy to watch.

## **\* *The Worcester Telegram & Gazette***

**Red Sox: Boston's success on field can ride party line**

Bill Ballou

BOSTON — It is not too early for Red Sox fans to start thinking about how the next presidential election will affect their team, and if they are truly concerned about something as essential as winning and losing, their course of action is clear.

Vote for the Democrat.

While incumbent Donald Trump has the best record of any U.S. president in terms of how the Red Sox are doing with him in the White House, the team has done much better under Democrats through the years. Boston is 4,642-4,057 (.534) with a Democrat in the White House, 4,832-4,748 (.504) under various Republican presidents.

And if you think the two are not connected — the Red Sox' fortunes and the president — think again.

For instance, the man considered to be the Joe Kerrigan of presidents — Herbert Hoover — also has the worst Red Sox record of any president at 215-399 (.350). No wonder the voters got him out of office after the minimum four years and replaced him with Franklin D. Roosevelt.

FDR turned things around nicely. The Sox were 952-874 (.521) for him, the 952 victories being a presidential record. However, Boston never won an American League pennant for Roosevelt. The Sox did for his successor, though, with Harry Truman in the White House for the 1946 team, the last from Boston to win 100 or more games.

Democrats and Republicans are tied in World Series victories at four apiece. Democrat Woodrow Wilson holds the record with three — 1915, 1916 and 1918 — while Boston also won under Barack Obama in 2013. Republican winners are Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, William Howard Taft in 2012 and George W. Bush in 2004 and 2007.

One more note about Wilson — he was also president when the Boston Braves won the World Series in 1914.

There have only been three midseason presidential changes, the first coming in the team's inaugural 1901 season when William McKinley was assassinated. Boston was 70-53 when he died in September, then went 9-4 the rest of the way with Theodore Roosevelt in the White House.

Warren G. Harding died in August 1923 and was replaced by Calvin Coolidge, who could not prevent the Sox from finishing in last place.

The other change included some revenge extracted by Richard Nixon on his way out the door of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

In 1972, Nixon was re-elected in a landslide, beating George McGovern. Massachusetts was the only state to give its electoral votes to McGovern. Nixon resigned on Aug. 9, 1974, and when he did, the Red Sox were 62-50 and had a four-game lead in the AL East.

They tanked under new President Gerald Ford, going 22-28 over the final 50 games. Boston's four-game lead wound up being a seven-game deficit.

While Democrats hold a wide lead in the won-lost department, the last president to post a losing Red Sox record was a Democrat, and he made it two in a row. That was Lyndon Johnson, and Boston was 384-426 (.474) for him. Johnson was preceded by John F. Kennedy at 228-255 (.472).

Kennedy was a Red Sox fan, a New Englander, and in general presidents from Red Sox country have not presided over Boston teams with very good records. The Sox were barely above .500 for George H.W.

Bush — born in Massachusetts, raised in Connecticut — at 328-320; did not do well for Kennedy, and were awful for Coolidge.

The Sox were 293-529 under Coolidge, a Vermonter, from late in 1923 through 1928. That was unfortunate, since the first lady — Grace Goodhue Coolidge — was probably the biggest baseball fan of all the first ladies. She was certainly more of a fan than Martha Washington, whose team playing in a city named after her husband has not been in a World Series since 1933.

Boston was 157-98 (.616) under Trump heading into last night, and he is the only president with a winning percentage in the .600s. In 2½ years, we'll see how much of a connection there is between victories in the AL East and votes in the electoral college.

### **Red Sox 4, Rangers 2: Another dominating performance from Chris Sale**

Bill Ballou

BOSTON — Better late than never is one of those mildewed sayings that should be erased from the world's hard drives, especially when it comes to the Red Sox and Cy Young Award winners.

It may as well have been never when they acquired Bob Turley after his Cy Young Award, or Tom Seaver, Frank Viola or Eric Gagne, etc. And, for that matter Bartolo Colon.

On the other side of that equation, though, you have Chris Sale.

He added to his potential Cy Young resumé Wednesday night by outpitching Colon in Boston's 4-2 victory over the Rangers. Sale is 10-4 with a 2.23 earned run average, and in the last five weeks has been as dominant as any Boston starter in recent decades.

He is 5-1, 0.94 in his last seven starts. In his last four starts, all wins, Sale is 4-0 and has allowed one earned run in 27 innings (0.33 ERA) with four walks and 48 strikeouts.

Boston has won nine in a row and is 65-29, on a pace to win 112 games this season. The Sox retained their 3½ game lead over the Yankees in the A.L. East.

Sale is not a newcomer to success, but these recent performances have been at another level, one that he perhaps has never reached before. If he has, Sale's not saying.

"If I did, I wouldn't talk about it," he said. "This is a pretty funny game, you know. Any time you feel like you're on top of the world, you get knocked right off."

In this latest win, Sale worked seven innings and allowed just six hits. He walked one and struck out 12. The bullpen faltered a bit as Heath Hembree gave up two runs in the eighth. Craig Kimbrel got the last four outs, the key one being a bases-loaded strikeout of Joey Gallo in the eighth.

Colon fell to 5-7 with a six-inning effort.

The Red Sox had 11 hits and for the second straight night had a triple, but no home runs. Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi and Eduardo Nunez had two hits each while Xander Bogaerts had three, including his second triple in two nights.

"It looks like in the last seven, eight [starts], it's been effortless," Alex Cora said of his ace, adding that Sale has bought into the conditioning and usage program the team designed for him in spring training. "He's where he wants to be and the ball's coming out of his hand very clean. It's been impressive.

"We feel that now, with this break, he's going to reset and reload and he's going to have a good second part of the season."

The Rangers were an offensive nuisance more than anything in the early innings, putting a runner on base here and another one there, but didn't do anything scary until the sixth. Elvis Andrus led off with a double and Nomar Mazara's infield single moved him to third.

Sale then struck out Adrian Beltre and started a 1-6-3 double play on a hard shot by Rougned Odor.

"I think the double play, that was great," Cora said. "He caught it under control, knew the situation, turned and threw to second base and Xander turns it. He knew right after that that he had one more inning.

"He told me after the game that that felt good."

Boston scored in the second when Bogaerts singled to left and went to second base on Colon's errant pickoff attempt. Brock Holt's grounder to second moved Bogaerts over to third and he scored when Odor was charged with the Rangers' second error of the inning.

Texas had the infield in for Nunez and he lofted a popup just past the grass into center field. Odor went back to get it but muffed the attempt and the ball fell safely as Bogaerts scored.

The Red Sox then gave their ace a little breathing room with a three-run rally in the fifth. Betts and Benintendi both singled to left, then J.D. Martinez ripped one down the left-field line and into the corner for a double. The hit drove in Betts easily, Benintendi not so easily, but it was a two-run double in any case to make it a 3-0 game.

Bogaerts' triple drove home Martinez and Sale and the Sox had just enough to make it through the night.

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

### **Sale's 12-K gem sends Sox to 9th straight W**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The roars in Fenway Park were building, as everyone could sense that Chris Sale's latest overpowering masterpiece was about to be over.

Sale would later admit he felt the adrenaline of the moment. It would have been hard not to. The lefty reached back for one more unhittable pitch, and Ryan Rua waved weakly at the 98.1-mph heater to end the top of the seventh inning in what wound up to be a 4-2 victory over the Rangers on Wednesday night.

"I think anybody out there, on this team anyway, would be fired up as well. Not to mention the fact you have a sold-out Fenway Park losing their minds," Sale said. "You feel that, and I try and use that as much as I can in my favor. I like pitching here. I appreciate the fans coming out and bringing the energy with them."

That made it nine in a row for the sizzling Red Sox, who are now an MLB-best 65-29. Sale (10-4, 2.23 ERA) might even be hotter than that. In the lanky lefty's last seven starts, he is 5-1 with a 0.94 ERA. During that stretch, he has 78 strikeouts in 48 innings.

Does Sale ever recall having a stretch like this?

"If I did, I wouldn't talk about it. This is a pretty funny game, you know? Anytime you feel like you're on top of the world you get knocked right off," Sale said. "So for me, I come in, try to win games, and be a good teammate at the same time."

In this one, Sale scattered six inconsequential hits over seven scoreless innings, walking one and striking out 12. Of his 110 pitches, 80 were for strikes.

The next time Sale pitches, it will be for the American League in the All-Star Game presented by Mastercard on Tuesday (7:30 p.m. ET on FOX).

He could not be any more dominant going into the Midsummer Classic. Sale has recorded 11-plus strikeouts with one or no walks in his last five starts, extending his own MLB record. If you can't remember the last time Sale gave up a homer, it's because he hasn't been taken deep in his past 51 innings. The Red Sox feel they are seeing the payoff of scaling Sale back in Spring Training and during the early portion of the regular season.

"He's on top of his game," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "You've got to give him credit because he's been disciplined, what we wanted to do from Day 1 of Spring Training. He was disciplined, he bought into it, he believed in it. We've been able to steal a few innings here, a few pitches there. He has a few starts that, he went over 100 [pitches], but it looks like the last seven, eight, it's been effortless.

"The ball is coming out of his hand very clean. It's been impressive. We feel that now, with this break, he's going to reset, reload, and he's going to have a good second part of the season."

It was an effective if unspectacular night for the Boston bats, who faced 45-year-old Bartolo Colon for the first six innings. Mookie Betts and Andrew Benintendi set the table with two hits each. J.D. Martinez -- the RBI machine -- knocked both of them in with a two-run double down the left-field line as part of a three-run fifth against Colon.

It didn't help the Rangers that they gifted a couple of runs to Boston. One of them was on an Eduardo Nunez popup that second baseman Rougned Odor couldn't come up with in the second. The other was on a fly to left-center as Joey Gallo and Delino DeShields collided trying to make the catch, allowing Xander Bogaerts to get an RBI triple.

The 65 wins by the Red Sox prior to the All-Star break ties the 1969 Orioles for the most in history.

"I keep saying I'm proud of them," Cora said. "They show up every day and they trust the information that is given, they keep working on their craft, they're becoming great teammates. I keep saying the baseball talk is getting louder and louder, and good teams do that."

#### MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

With the bases loaded and two outs in the eighth, Cora called on closer Craig Kimbrel in a tough spot. After Kimbrel walked Robinson Chirinos to force in a run, it was suddenly a 4-2 game with the powerful Gallo at the plate. Kimbrel did what he needed to do. In a six-pitch at-bat, Kimbrel blew a 98.5-mph fastball by Gallo to escape the jam. Kimbrel came back out for the ninth and struck out the side, picking up his 28th save.

"I hate to put him in that corner," Cora said of Kimbrel. "He did an outstanding job. Good pitches to Gallo and then he came back and dominated. You look up there, and the WHIP and ERA is going down very, very quick. He's in a good place."

#### SOUND SMART

When the Red Sox score the first run of a game, the opponent has a right to be worried. The Sox are 43-4 when scoring first, the best mark in the Majors.

#### YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

The one sticky situation for Sale in this one was in the sixth, when Elvis Andrus led off with a double and Nomar Mazara followed with a single, putting runners at the corners with nobody out. Sale first helped himself out by striking out Adrian Beltre, then helped himself with the glove, snagging a hot shot back to

the box by Odor and firing to second base for the second out. Bogaerts made a lightning-quick turn and fired to first for the inning-ending double play.

"Better to be lucky than good sometimes. Not too far away from the hitter, so sometimes the ball catches you," Sale said. "Tried to make a good throw. Almost went a little wide left there. Luckily, Bogey is pretty darn good over there. I mean, I thought the turn at second base was the best part about that double play. He got it in and out, and if he didn't do that that quick, I don't think we get him at first. So all around, pretty good play."

#### HE SAID IT

"Not at all. I think if you turn your nose up at an All-Star Game, you've got something wrong. I'm appreciative just going. I've been there a couple times before, and they're all special. I know one day I'll look back on all this and appreciate it, whether I start, don't start, make it, don't make it. I'm not too worried about that." -- Sale, when asked if he would be disappointed if he didn't start the All-Star Game

#### MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

Betts thought he had an infield hit in the sixth on a grounder deep in the hole at shortstop. Andrus ranged over to make a nice play, and then made a jump throw that one-hopped Odor, who stretched to receive the throw. Originally, baserunner Sandy Leon was called safe, as second-base umpire Todd Tichenor ruled Odor came off the bag. But the Rangers challenged the play, and it was overturned after a brief review.

#### UP NEXT

Lefty David Price had been on a nice roll until stumbling his last two starts. Price will try to get back on track Thursday night when he opens a four-game series against the Blue Jays that will lead the Red Sox into the All-Star break. Toronto could be just the opponent for Price to get his groove back. Lifetime against the Blue Jays, he is 19-3 with a 2.46 ERA. The Jays will counter with lefty J.A. Happ, who is the subject of numerous trade rumors. First pitch is scheduled for 7:10 p.m. ET.

#### **MRI on knee in 4-5 weeks to guide Pedroia**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Dustin Pedroia is adamant that he will make a full recovery from the left knee surgery that has kept him out of all but three games this season.

What he won't do anymore is set timetables.

Pedroia, who is headed home to Arizona to complete his rehab, is all-in on getting his knee completely healthy. He hopes it leads to a return for the team that currently has the best record in baseball, but he makes no guarantees.

"Just have to let it heal," Pedroia said. "If I get this thing MRI'd in four or five weeks and it's fully healed, then I will play this year. If I get an MRI in four or five weeks and it's three-quarters of the way healed, then I probably won't. I can't do anything about time."

There are 11 weeks left in the regular season, and perhaps a few more weeks of postseason play after that.

Pedroia said he thought he was healed enough to play when he was activated on May 25, but quickly learned that his entire left leg wasn't sturdy enough to play baseball every day.

"Mentally, it's been a grind because you put in all the work and things like that, and some things you can't control," Pedroia said. "I can control being strong and things like that, but I can't do anything about healing a bone that's transplanted in me. Everything has to incorporate all the way for everything to be pain-free and allow me to load weight on it consistently."

"I was strong enough to do it for a short period of time, but the everyday repetition after this surgery demands high intensity, and it just needs to be healed fully to do that."

The challenging part of Pedroia's initial comeback was that no position player had ever gone through a microfracture surgery and cartilage restoration procedure, so there was no benchmark.

"When everyone wanted me to have this surgery, it was to not only be healthy the rest of my career, but the rest of my life. It's something that I have to let heal and then build up," Pedroia said. "We did a great job with strengthening, things like that. I was able to play games and feel great, but it just wasn't healed all the way, and we have to let it happen.

"Like [manager] Alex [Cora] said, there's no timetable. I can't control how the human body heals," Pedroia said. "I would love to. I would love to play right now. But that's not really [possible]. I can't. So, once everything heals permanently and we checked that with MRIs and everything -- how I'm progressing -- and once that happens, and I maintain my strength and keep working hard at that, it shouldn't be long. So, hopefully I just heal fast."

In Pedroia's absence, the Red Sox have built a 64-29 record and a 3 1/2-game lead in the American League East entering Wednesday. Eduardo Nunez and Brock Holt have held down second base in his absence.

"I mean, I'm disappointed I'm not playing now. That's a part of it. Can't do anything else, you know what I mean? I'll watch every pitch," Pedroia said. "I'm in every pitch with the guys. It's a lot easier going through it when we're 50 games over .500 or whatever we are. So that's the good part. That's the great thing, is we're playing great. Just sit back and watch the guys rake and pitch well and play great defense and continue rolling."

Brasier could be a find for Sox

When the Red Sox signed Ryan Brasier to a Minor League contract that didn't include an invitation to Spring Training back on March 2, few people even heard about the transaction. So when the right-hander was recalled from Triple-A Pawtucket on Sunday, many fans didn't know who he was.

The story is worth following. Brasier, a sixth-round Draft pick of the Angels in 2007, made his MLB debut in 2013, pitching seven games. Shortly after that, he underwent Tommy John surgery and didn't make it back to the mound in a Major League game until this week.

Between stints in the Majors, Brasier pitched in Oakland's farm system for two years, and also for Hiroshima in Japan last year.

Brasier closed out a 5-0 win over the Rangers on Monday and an 8-4 win on Tuesday, lighting up the radar gun in the process.

As a Minor League extra, Brasier led the Red Sox in saves back in Spring Training, closing out all three of his opportunities.

His entry Monday led to a humorous moment in the dugout.

"Two days ago, he comes in in the ninth inning and I turn around to the dugout and I say, 'You guys don't know who this guy is,' because they don't," Cora said. "In Spring Training, they don't stay, they leave in the fifth inning. So I'm like, 'You guys have no idea who this guy is, but I tell you what, he was my closer and you'll be surprised.'

"First pitch was 98 and you've got to see the faces of David Price, Chris Sale, all those guys are like, 'What?' 97, 98, 97, 98. Yesterday he throws 100, I think. Well it shows 100 up there [on the scoreboard] and [Rafael] Devers is at third base like, 'Oh my God.'

"He's a good pitcher and he's going to contribute."

## How the AL East is looking as Deadline nears

Ian Browne

With the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline less than three weeks away, the buzz is building all around the Major Leagues. From cell phone to cell phone, from batting cage to batting cage, everyone is talking trades.

In the American League East, much of the hype surrounds Orioles superstar Manny Machado. Would Baltimore dare trade him within the division to the Yankees or Red Sox? There's also the matter of how the Yankees will upgrade their starting rotation and if Boston can add another big arm to its bullpen.

This week, MLB.com spoke with scouts and executives for their opinions on what other teams might do.

Here is a breakdown.

### BLUE JAYS

What they need to do: "If Josh Donaldson is healthy, they have to consider moving him. And they also have Ryan Tepera. He's currently on the DL, but his name is out there and he is a reliever a lot of teams could use. Donaldson could be a sneak attack for a team like Cleveland or the Yankees." -- National League scout

What they can get: "They are middle of the pack on offense and less than middle of the pack with pitching. They shouldn't be picky. They need young, controllable building blocks. Hard to believe they were contending for a title just two years ago. It has fallen apart fast. They need to get something done." -- American League coach

### ORIOLES

What they will do: "You watch, they will try to get rid of [Brad] Brach, [Zach] Britton, Machado, Adam Jones, any or all of those guys. And the sleeper of the whole group is Mychal Givens, because he's the best one of the bunch. And he's controllable. He has a huge price tag." -- NL scout

What they can get: "I don't think they're going to get a lot back for Machado on his own. For a three-month rental, you're not going to give up your best prospect. But if you throw in Givens in a Machado deal? You'd get a ton back. Machado and Givens might get you Gleyber Torres. I don't think the Red Sox have enough in their system to get a guy like Givens. The Yankees do. The Yankees have an amazing system." -- NL scout

### RAYS

What will they do: "Trade Wilson Ramos. They just need to agree with something with the Nationals. But don't sleep on the Red Sox now that Christian Vazquez is out for six to eight weeks. There is definitely potential for Ramos to Red Sox." -- AL scout

What they should do: "If I'm the Rays, I'm trading every one of the guys -- [Nathan] Eovaldi, [Adeiny] Hechavarria, Ramos. You're not going to win. You're out of it. The only guys I'm keeping in that bullpen are [Jose] Alvarado and [Diego] Castillo. And teams are looking for any little pieces. It's just the Rays are tough to deal with." -- AL front office executive

### RED SOX

What they need: "The Red Sox are only interested in getting a high-end eighth-inning reliever. And by high end, I mean Kelvin Herrera, Wade Davis, somebody that's better than Joe Smith, but not as good as Craig Kimbrel. Those guys are former closers, period. By the way, I don't believe for a second they are going to trade for Machado. What message does that send to Devers, who is 21, and could wind up being a stud?" -- NL scout

What they can get: "I've heard the Red Sox are hot and heavy for Adam Ottavino, the big righty from the Rockies. Don't forget about Kyle Barraclough, either. Honestly, they need a lefty, which is why Zach Britton is probably the best fit. Dombrowski usually gets what he wants this time of year. The challenge this year is that he's already traded so many elite prospects the last few years." -- NL front-office executive

#### YANKEES

What they need: "They desperately need a starter. And if they can't get that, they're going to try and get someone to lengthen their bullpen by adding another piece to that already electric bullpen." -- NL scout

What they can get: "I would say the Yankees are in on J.A. Happ, [Nathan] Eovaldi, possibly Ryan Madson. If they can't get the starter they want, they have to have a five-man bullpen that can go out and the starters only have to go four. They'd go for the same ones as the Red Sox, save for Wade Davis, because the Yankees wouldn't take on that salary." -- NL scout

"They are the New York Yankees, so they should do what they can to get the best pitcher on the block -- Cole Hamels. You always love to have the lefty at Yankee Stadium." -- AL scout

### \* **WEEI.com**

#### **Chris Sale may not be Pedro Martinez, but Wednesday he bested Hall of Famer with one accomplishment**

Ryan Hannable

Chris Sale isn't quite Pedro Martinez when it comes to pure dominance on the mound, but he's pretty close.

And on Wednesday, Sale was able to remove Martinez from the record books with one statistic.

The game marked Sale's 200th career start and before him Martinez held the MLB record for most strikeouts in a player's first 200 starts with 1,600. Sale already had him beat going into the start as he entered with 1,616.

Sale was able to add 12 more in the Red Sox' 4-2 win over the Rangers to complete a three-game sweep. It was also their ninth straight win overall.

The left-hander continued his recent dominance by going seven shutout innings, scattering six hits, walking one and striking out 12. Sale has recorded 11 or more strikeouts and one walk or less in five consecutive starts, extending the longest such streak in MLB history.

"Just more of the same," he said. "Just trying to throw strikes, fill up the zone. Yet again our guys come through and put some runs off the board and it takes a little bit of the tension. Allows me to just go out there and try to throw strikes and fill up the zone."

Over his last seven starts, he is 5-1 with a 0.94 ERA, while recording 78 strikeouts in 48 innings.

The only real time Sale was tested came in the sixth when he was faced with a first-and-third, nobody out situation. He struck out Adrian Beltre and then got a 1-6-3 double play, which left him particularly fired up. Sale walked off the mound yelling into his glove as he was so pumped about the play given the situation.

"My mom watches this, I can't say that," he joked after.

Sale's go-to pitch on Wednesday was his slider, as he made several Rangers hitters look silly with the pitch. According to Baseball Savant, he threw the pitch (43) one fewer time than his fastball (44). The slider also got him 10 swing-and-misses and he finished with 20 in all.

Although there's still plenty of time before it happens, a few dominant October starts could get Sale into the conversation with Pedro, but for now the Red Sox will take this most recent stretch.

J.D. Martinez has now reached base in 35 straight home games, the longest such streak since Kevin Youkilis had a 38-game streak from 2006-07.

### **Andrew Benintendi finishes behind Jean Segura in AL All-Star final vote**

Ryan Hannable

Unless he's added as an injury replacement, Andrew Benintendi will not be playing in the All-Star game next week.

The Red Sox outfielder finished in second behind Mariners shortstop Jean Segura in the AL final vote. Fans voted online over the last several days. Behind Benintendi were Giancarlo Stanton, Eddie Rosario and Andrelton Simmons. Segura received over 13 million votes.

Segura ranks second in the majors with 116 hits and became the first Mariners player ever to win the final vote.

Brewers first baseman Jesús Aguilar won on the NL side.

### **Price talks opt-out, Yankees, feelings for Boston in interview**

John Tomase

David Price isn't afraid of facing the Yankees, won't rule out opting out of his contract but doesn't consider it a pressing issue, and insists he doesn't hate Boston.

Those were the takeaways from a quick interview with the Globe's Dan Shaughnessy on Wednesday.

Start with the Yankees. Price allowed five homers in his last start against them and is just 2-6 against them in his Red Sox career. Shaughnessy asked Price how he feels against them moving forward.

"I feel great moving forward for the rest of the season and great facing the Yankees again, whenever that may be," he said. "That's a team I've pitched against a lot in my career, probably more than against any team in the big leagues, maybe with the exception of Toronto. I've pitched against both of them a lot and I've had some bad games against (the Yankees) a few times. I gave up nine straight hits against them when I was in Detroit in 2015. Nine straight hits. No walks, no sac flies, no hit by pitches, nine straight knocks."

Price doesn't listen to his critics in print or on the airwaves.

"I'm still not a subscriber to whatever papers there are," he said. "I don't know the last time I've listened to FM or AM radio."

On opting out of his contract:

"I'm not going to sit here and say there's zero percent chance when there's always a chance of anything, but that's nothing that I'm thinking about or putting any thought to, or talking to anyone else about," he said. "I expect to win and I expect to do that here."

Does he like Boston?

"I don't have no problem with it," he said. "I need to go out there and pitch better."

"I've never said I've hated Boston or had a problem with the fans. That's a perception that's put on me through you guys (in the media). That's what that is. It's like when we were in Minnesota and I said I wasn't deserving of being an All-Star and didn't think I should be an All-Star, and then all that crap got put out. It turns into that. So write what you want to write."

### **Dustin Pedroia confirms he will play again, but won't commit to this season**

Ryan Hannable

On Tuesday, after Red Sox manager Alex Cora revealed Dustin Pedroia will go back to Arizona to rehab his injured knee, some wondered if this could potentially be the end of his career.

The second baseman will turn 35 years old next month and still isn't 100 percent healthy following knee surgery last October.

Speaking Wednesday in the Red Sox clubhouse, Pedroia was adamant he will play again.

"Oh yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah," he said. "And I will be better than ever. Absolutely. Absolutely."

While he said he will play baseball again, he couldn't say for sure it will be this season.

"Just have to let it heal," Pedroia said. "If I get this thing MRI'd in four or five weeks and it's fully healed then I will play this year. If I get a MRI in four or five weeks and it's three-quarters of the way healed then I probably won't. I can't do anything about time."

"I can't control how the human body heals. I would love to," he added. "I would love to play right now. But that's not really [possible]. I can't. So, once everything heals permanently and we checked that with MRIs and everything – how I'm progressing – and once that happens, and I maintain my strength and keep working hard at that, it shouldn't be long. So, hopefully I just heal fast."

Ideally, Pedroia would stay with the team, but at the stage he's at he feels the best thing to do is to get away.

"I think the treatment that I need, it's tough to get all that done," he said. "Our staff is trying to get all the other guys ready. It's tough. So, it stinks leaving the guys, but it's kind of the right thing to do so I can concentrate on my rehab and not have to split it up throughout the day, things like that. So, they suggested it. It's not like I'm going to be gone for a long period of time, it's just at this stage right now, it's probably smart to do that."

Fortunately for Pedroia, the Red Sox have the best record in baseball so that makes things a little easier on him being away.

"I'll watch every pitch," he said. "I'm in every pitch with the guys. It's a lot easier going through it when we're 50 games over .500 or whatever we are. So that's the good part."

### **Red Sox make roster move to add fresh bullpen arm**

Ryan Hannable

The Red Sox made a minor roster move in advance of the series finale against the Rangers on Wednesday.

Left-hander Jalen Beeks was optioned to Triple-A Pawtucket and left-handed reliever Robby Scott was recalled as the corresponding move. Beeks, a starter, threw 2 1/3 innings of relief of Hector Velazquez on Tuesday night. That was just his second major league appearance.

Scott made his lone major league appearance of the season on June 19 in Minnesota, allowing two runs in just 1/3 of an inning. He has made 30 relief appearances for the PawSox this season, posting a 1.15 ERA with 48 strikeouts and a .183 opponent batting average. Scott did make the 2017 Opening Day roster.

He gives the bullpen some depth and a fresh arm.

## **\* *NBCSportsBoston.com***

### **Down on baseball? Sale, Martinez deserve your attention**

Evan Drellich

BOSTON — The slugger's deep exhales at the plate before launching opposite field homers on inside pitches seemingly every night. The wiry lefty ace screaming into his glove after throwing wipeout sliders that look like they jump out of right field.

When it comes to spectacle, Chris Sale and J.D. Martinez have given fans every reason to pay attention to the Red Sox. Or at the least, to their individual spotlights: Martinez's every at-bat, Sale's every pitch.

Put the Red Sox' nine-game win streak and their brewing September race with the Yankees aside. Ignore baseball's overall health issues, like a lack of balls in play.

If the Sox' dominance in a top-heavy American League doesn't excite you, then at the least, the individual mastery displayed by Sale and Martinez should. The AL Cy Young winner and American League MVP may be on the same team.

Steve Pearce said his mind is blown talking hitting with Martinez. Sale told his pitching coach he's turning in his Chevy for a Ferrari, and within a few starts, Sale embarked on a historic run that continued Wednesday night against the Rangers in a 4-2 win.

He's got five consecutive starts with at least 11 strikeouts, tied for the best in his career, and the second longest for a Sox pitcher since Pedro Martinez rattled off 10 in a row from 1999 into 2000.

He's also the first pitcher in major league history to walk one batter or fewer while striking out at least 11 in five straight starts.

"If I did, I wouldn't talk about it," Sale said when asked if he remembers another run like this. "This is a pretty funny game, you know? Anytime you feel like you're on top of the world you get knocked right off. So for me, I come in to try to win games, and be a good teammate at the same time."

Through 200 career starts now, Sale has 1,628 strikeouts — the most ever for a pitcher through that many outings. Pedro's 1,600 was the previous record.

Martinez's average was up to .330 after a 1-for-4 performance Wednesday. He's reached base in 35 straight home games. From the Red Sox' crack media relations staff: "Since last year's All-Star Game, a year ago today, has hit .320/.384/.692/1.076 with 59 HR and 151 RBI, leading MLB in HR, RBI, SLG, OPS, XBH (97), and TB (404)."

The Red Sox employ two kings of their respective trades. If a winning team in a weak league somehow doesn't do it for you, if all those damn strikeouts from anonymous relievers are annoying you, Martinez and Sale should make up for your anguish.

## **\* *NESN.com***

### **Red Sox Wrap: Chris Sale Strikes Out 12 As Boston Wins Its Ninth Straight**

Logan Mullen

Two things have been near-constant for the Boston Red Sox this season: winning games and Chris Sale mowing down opposing hitters.

Both were on full display Wednesday night.

The Sox completed their third straight series sweep and won their ninth consecutive game as they beat the Texas Rangers 4-2 in the series finale at Fenway Park.

Sale punched out 12 batters in the victory, upping his season total to an insane 188 as he made his last start before the All-Star break.

With the win, the Red Sox climb to 65-29, while the Rangers fall to 40-54.

Here's how it all went down:

#### GAME IN A WORD

Sale.

Wednesday's win was all about the starter as he continued his trend of dominating the opposition. **ON THE BUMP**

— Sale earned his 10th win of the season as he tossed seven scoreless innings, striking out 12 while allowing six hits and one walk.

Although he allowed his share of hits, the Rangers hardly made the ace sweat. Multiple runners reached base in an inning just once all night, as Sale overmatched the Texas lineup all night long.

Everything in Sale's arsenal was working for him. His fastball hit 99 mph on multiple occasions, and his slider was biting and fooling hitters left and right.

— Heath Hembree entered in the eighth and found himself in some trouble. Elvis Andrus hit a one-out single, but got to third during the next at-bat after he stole second and advanced again on a wild pitch. Nomar Mazara brought Andrus in with a single to right that just got past Holt at second base, cutting Boston's lead to 4-1. Rougned Odor followed that up with a two-out double that moved Mazara to third. Hembree then walked Jurickson Profar to load the bases and spell the end of his night.

— Craig Kimbrel entered with a three-run advantage and two outs with the bases juiced in the eighth. The closer immediately brought in a run by walking Robinson Chirinos on four pitches, which trimmed Boston's lead to 4-2. But he responded by striking out Joey Gallo to end the inning.

Kimbrel slammed the door in the ninth, striking out the side to earn the save.

#### IN THE BATTER'S BOX

— A stroke of luck in the second inning put the Sox on the board first. Xander Bogaerts began the inning with a single, then moved to second on an errant pickoff throw. Brock Holt pushed Bogaerts to third with a groundout to second. Then Eduardo Nunez lofted a fly ball to shallow right, but Odor couldn't track it down, with the ball dropping and scoring Bogaerts to make it 1-0.

— Boston proceeded to give itself a comfortable advantage in the fifth. Mookie Betts and Andrew Benintendi hit one-out singles, with both coming in on a J.D. Martinez double, upping their advantage to 3-0. Two batters later with two down, Bogaerts clubbed a triple that scored Martinez from first and give Sale a four-run cushion.

— Bogaerts led the Sox with three hits.

— Betts, Benintendi and Nunez had a pair of base knocks each.

— Martinez and Sandy Leon each registered one hit.

— Mitch Moreland, Jackie Bradley Jr. and Holt went hitless.

#### TWEET OF THE DAY

Sheesh.

#### UP NEXT

The Red Sox will begin a four-game set against the Toronto Blue Jays on Thursday. David Price is set to get the ball for Boston and will be opposed by J.A. Happ. First pitch from Fenway Park is scheduled for 7:10 p.m. ET.

### **\* *BostonSportsJournal.com***

#### **BSJ Game Report: Red Sox 4, Rangers 2 – Chris Sale stays hot, strikes out 12**

Sean McAdam

#### HEADLINES

Sale at top of his game: Continuing his amazing stretch since early June, Chris Sale tossed seven shutout innings and struck out 12 while walking just one. In his last seven outings, he's compiled a 0.94 ERA and has a strikeout-to-walk ratio of 78-10 over 48 innings while allowing only 27 hits. This was his fifth-straight start with 11 or more strikeouts and one or no walks, the longest such streak in major league history. "He's on top of his game," said Alex Cora. "It looks like the last seven or eight have been effortless. (In terms of mechanics), he's where he wants to be. The ball's coming out of his hand very clean. It's very impressive." In his last two outings, Sale was given four runs of backing before he even threw a pitch, but Wednesday was different — it was either scoreless or a one-run game until the bottom of the fifth. Of course, none of that mattered to Sale, who just keep filling up the strike zone and overpowering hitters. "You just try to match zeroes," said Sale. "That's it. Whether you've got a 10-run lead or a tie ballgame, you're trying to put zeroes up as often as you can, and go out there for shutdown innings when (your team) scores." And even in the seventh inning, with his pitch count nearing 100, Sale still had power to burn, throwing fastballs at 98 mph.

Martinez shows his intelligence as a hitter: It's well-documented that J.D. Martinez is, for the most part, a hitter who goes to right and right-center. But in the fifth inning, with the Sox clinging to a 1-0 lead, Martinez came to the plate with runners at first and second and one out. Texas third baseman Jurickson Profar, in recognition of Martinez's habit of going the other way, was playing him far off the line. So, naturally, Martinez hammered a pitch from Bartolo Colon just inside the bag at third. The ball traveled into the left-field corner, scoring both baserunners and opening the Sox' lead to 3-0. "Obviously, he (usually) stays inside the ball and doesn't pull too many," said Cora. "But he got a pitch and pulled it down the line. You put the ball in play and good things are going to happen." Martinez has knocked in 79 runs in 89 games this season.

Finally, a stolen base: In the eighth inning Wednesday night, Elvis Andrus took off for second base and slid in safely ahead of Sandy Leon's throw. The newsworthiness of that? It was the first stolen base against the Red Sox after 18 games in which they didn't allow any, dating back to June 21. There are a number of reasons for that: Red Sox pitchers have worked to control the running game better, keeping runners close by changing their times and looks. Also, the dominance the Red Sox have shown with their explosive offense means the Sox are often up by big margins, making it unwise for opposing teams to risk making outs while trailing. And, of course, the game has changed to where some teams don't philosophically believe the risk-reward is worth it when it comes to running. But some credit has to go to Leon and Christian Vazquez for their strong arms and quick times down to second.

## TURNING POINT

The Red Sox led 3-0 in the sixth when the Rangers had their only hint of a rally brewing against Sale, with runners at the corners and just one out. But Sale stabbed a comebacker from Jurickson Profar, wheeled and fired to second, and Xander Bogaerts quickly turned to first for the inning-ending double play.

## TWO UP

**Mookie Betts:** Ho hum. Betts had two hits and a walk in four plate appearances, recording his third-straight, multi-hit game and 31st this season. He extended his hitting streak to nine games and has now reached safely in 15 straight.

**Craig Kimbrel:** He walked in a run on four pitches after inheriting a bases-loaded mess, but then straightened himself out by fanning the next hitter to strand three, and then struck out all three hitters he faced in the ninth for his 28th save.

## WO DOWN

**Heath Hembree:** Hembree had allowed just four runs in his last 22 appearances before Wednesday night, but endured a rocky eighth, tagged for three hits, a walk and two runs.

**Brock Holt:** Holt was 0-for-4 at the plate, stranded a runner at third and hit into a double play.

## QUOTE OF NOTE

“My Mom watches this — I can’t say that.”

— Chris Sale, asked what he shouted into his glove after completing a 1-6-3 double play to end the sixth.

## STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

The win moved the Red Sox 36 games over .500 for the first time since the final day of the 1978 season.

The Red Sox improved to 43-4 when scoring the first run.

Boston has the game’s best winning percentage (.721) at home.

The series sweep was the third straight and 10th of the season.

Sale has allowed one run in his last 28 innings.

Martinez has eight RBI in his last five games and 24 in his last 16.

## UP NEXT

The Red Sox begin their final series of the first half Thursday with the first of four against Toronto. LHP David Price (9-6, 4.44) will make the start for the Sox, while the Jays will pitch LHP J.A. Happ (10-5, 4.44).

## **Red Sox’ involvement with Machado grossly overstated**

Sean McAdam

With the non-waiver trade deadline on the horizon, disinformation can be as prevalent as actual information when it comes to teams and their interest in a particular player.

Case in point: the Red Sox and Manny Machado.

Two separate reports Tuesday night indicated that the Red Sox had jumped into the Machado sweepstakes, which seemed odd at first blush, since upgrading either shortstop or third base is far from a priority for the Sox, and the fact that Sox seemingly don’t have anywhere near the package of prospects to land a player of Machado’s caliber and outbid the half-dozen teams already involving in the bidding.

Sure enough, according to a source, the reports came as news to those in the Red Sox organization. Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, as part of his due diligence, did make a call

on Machado last month, only to find the asking price was way beyond the Red Sox' liking.

Machado is headed for free agency this fall and the Orioles, 40 games under .500, have made the determination to move him — perhaps even before next week's All-Star Game — in order to get something in return before he departs as a free agent.

Since then, there've been no substantive talks between the organizations about Machado, though the Sox continue to monitor the market for Baltimore closer Zach Britton.

The source of the Red Sox' sudden "interest," an industry source confirmed Wednesday, is the Orioles' ownership group, which apparently determined that floating news of renewed involvement by the Red Sox on Machado would in turn prompt the New York Yankees to heighten their interest and perhaps sweeten their offer.

John and Louis Angelos, sons of principal owner Peter Angelos, according to multiple sources, last weekend leaked a list of teams in on Machado, going so far as to, anonymously of course, rank the quality of the offers made by the bidding teams.

The Yankees, sensing that the Orioles weren't bowled over by bids from — among others — the Dodgers, Brewers, Diamondbacks and Cardinals — signaled an interest.

On the surface, the Yanks don't have a pressing need for Machado, as accomplished as he is. Didi Gregorius has been productive at shortstop and rookie Miguel Andjuar at third leads all American League rookies in extra-base hits and is second in homers and third in slugging percentage.

But as was the case with their acquisition of Giancarlo Stanton last winter, the Yankees see an opportunity to upgrade their offense and improve their already powerful lineup. And for the Yankees — either unimpressed with the market for starting pitchers or balking at the cost of the better available arms — adding yet more offense presents an alternative method to make their team better: if they can't limit the opposition, they can always try to score more runs.

Even if the Red Sox were legitimately interested in Machado, it's highly doubtful that the Sox could put together a competitive offer, especially with their two most highly-regarded prospects off the table for the time being. Infielder Michael Chavis just returned earlier this month from an 80-game PED suspension, and as such, his stock is down considerably as teams wait to determine if his breakthrough 2017 season was the result of illegal enhancements.

Further, Jay Groome, the Red Sox' top pitching prospect, is out for the rest of this season and most of next after undergoing Tommy John surgery in May.

Meanwhile, a baseball source indicated that the Red Sox remain almost exclusively in the market for bullpen help. To date, the organization hasn't differentiated between rentals — such as Britton or Jeurys Familia — or relievers who remain under control for several more seasons, like San Diego's Brad Hand or Cincinnati's Raisel Iglesias.

The latter would offer the Red Sox protection in the event the team doesn't re-sign Craig Kimbrel, a free agent this fall. But, of course, they would also represent a far higher acquisition cost.

**Final: Red Sox 4, Rangers 2 – Sale at top of his game as Sox win 9th straight.**

Sean McAdam

Chris Sale's final start of the first half was merely a continuation of the run of starts he's been on for the last five weeks.

Sale tossed seven shutout innings, striking out a dozen and walking just one, while the Red Sox used an unearned run, a two-run double from J.D. Martinez and a run-scoring triple from Xander Bogaerts to beat the Texas Rangers, 4-2 for their ninth straight win.

Things got a bit hairy in the eighth when the Rangers used three hits, a walk and a wild pitch to get a run and load the bases off Heath Hembree. Craig Kimbrel walked in another run before fanning Joey Gallo to end the inning. Kimbrel then retired the side in order in the ninth for his 28th save.

#### IN-GAME OBSERVATIONS

9:49 Tough outing for Heath Hembree, who allows a run and fills the bases, requiring Craig Kimbrel to come in for the eighth in a game the Sox led by four not long ago.

9:19 Yet another start for Sale in which he's throwing fastballs in the upper 90's in his final inning of work. Second pitch to Joey Gallo was clocked at 98 mph.

8:43 This start is far different than Sale's last two, in this respect: the last two times out — in NY and again in KC, he got a lot of early support and led 4-0 before he threw a single pitch. Not the case tonight, where it was scoreless for an inning and a half and a one-run game ever since.

8:25 Ageless Bartolo Colon has the Red Sox pounding the ball into the ground — eight outs via the ground in the fourth inning.

7:50 The Rangers brought the infield in with a runner on third and one out in the second. Can't blame them, I guess, with Chris Sale on the mound. But the strategy backfires when Eduardo Nunez hits a popup to shallow center, and a twisting, turning Roughned Odor can't track it down. Ball falls in for an error, run scores.

7:40 It's early yet, of course, but Sale's slider is even more devastating than usual, with a huge horizontal break to it. Several Rangers have flailed away with futility already.

WHO: Red Sox vs. Rangers

WHEN: 7:10 p.m.

WHERE: Fenway Park

WHAT'S UP: The Sox are in the middle of their third winning streak of at least eight games this season, having won 13-of-15 and 15-of-18, en route to the best record in baseball. They've also won their last five in a row against the Rangers and 11 of their last 13 in head-to-head meetings. The Rangers, meanwhile, are 2-4 in their last six games and have lost five of their last eight.

STARTING PITCHERS: LHP Chris Sale (9-4, 2.36) vs. RHP Bartolo Colon (5-6, 4.65).

TV/RADIO: NESN/ESPN; WEEI 93. FM

#### LINEUPS

##### RED SOX

Betts RF

Benintendi LF

Martinez DH

Moreland 1B

Bogaerts SS

Holt 2B

Nunez 3B

Leon C

Bradley CF

## RANGERS

Deshields CF  
Andrus SS  
Mazara RF  
Beltre DH  
Odor 2B  
Profar 3B  
Chirinos C  
Gallo LF  
Rua 1B

## NEWS AND NOTES

2B Dustin Pedroia is on his way back to Arizona to resume his rehab and is confident that he'll be able to resume his career eventually. "It stinks leaving the guys," said Pedroia, "but it's kind of the right thing to do so I can concentrate on my rehab and not have to split up (treatment time) throughout the day (while active players get ready). At this stage, it's probably smart to do this." Pedroia says he and the doctors have learned that he played his three games at the major league level prematurely. "Since I'm a smaller guy, they thought I could play during parts of healing," Pedroia said. "I did for a little while. Then, I started to have discomfort. That's a sign that you have to wait until everything heals all the way, so you don't have any setbacks. It's just (takes) time, which sucks. It's something I have to let heal and then build up. We have to let it happen." Pedroia had been saying all along that he would return this year, but on Wednesday, he hedged that bet somewhat. "There's no timetable," he said. "I can't control how the human body heals. Once everything heals permanently, it shouldn't be long. Hopefully, I just heal fast."

The Red Sox made a roster move, returning LHP Jalen Beeks to Pawtucket and re-calling LHP Robby Scott.

3B Rafael Devers got the night off, as Cora said he's "banged up," from a slide last week and other bumps and bruises. Eduardo Nunez is at third base for the night.

The Sox are undecided on a starter for Sunday. LHP Brian Johnson, who's on the DL with hip injury, throws a bullpen tomorrow. If he responds well, he'll get the start. Otherwise, it looks like RHP Hector Velazquez will go again.

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

### **Armed with crib sheets, Red Sox catchers bring analytics revolution from the dugout to field**

Jen McCaffrey

Blake Swihart wears his on his left wrist. Sandy Leon and Christian Vazquez have theirs in their back pockets. And Red Sox manager Alex Cora carries one to the mound every time there's a pitching change. At this point, no one wants to leave the dugout without it.

It's an index card cheat sheet, stuffed with a boatload of information for Red Sox catchers on how their pitchers should attack the opposing team's lineup.

The catcher cards are an in-game tool, like the quarterback's play-calling card in football. The Red Sox research and development department, led by Zack Scott, created the cards which offer color-coded pitch recommendations based on each pitcher's strengths combined with the weaknesses of the opposing lineup. Red Sox catchers can choose from a variety of cards depending on which pitcher is on the mound. One card

shows first-pitch strikes. Another shows which pitches to get them back into the count if they've fallen behind. A third card shows which pitches to use to put a hitter away.

"I think it's a paint by numbers approach where it allows a catcher to be a little more creative but yet still follow a basic game plan," Red Sox vice president of pitching development and assistant pitching coach Brian Bannister said. "So it gives you options and so maybe on a certain guy in a certain count there's three choices so you get to throw one of those three and it can be whatever the pitcher is using well that night or the catcher has a gut feeling about it and it matches up so it's just a way to have a basic framework but yet still allow creativity."

Other teams across the league have their own variations of the cards, but this is Boston's first season using the cards in-game. When Cora was in Houston, the Astros had a similar system for their catchers. Hitting coach Tim Hyers was also familiar with a catchers-card setup from his days with the Los Angeles Angels. The Seattle Mariners have cards for their catchers as well. Red Sox infielders already wear similar defensive alignment cards under their hats, as The Athletic detailed in April, to help them determine where they should position themselves during innings.

"I think it just makes sense to do it," Bannister said. "I think there has to be a whole pipeline from the front office to the coaching staff to the catchers and pitchers buying in for it to actually work and as soon as everyone is on the same page with that, I think it just makes sense to have a little cheat sheet right there on what to throw. That way in the moment you're not trying to remember or make a mistake you have a reference."

The cards are created before each series by the Red Sox research and development department, (also known as the analytics department) with input from pitching coach Dana LeVangie and advance scout JT Watkins. They're merely reference points for the catchers, not hard-and-fast rules.

"We have a couple of really talented analysts in Dan Meyer and Joe McDonald who worked on this very sophisticated predictive analytics model tracking individual batter-pitcher matchups," Scott said. "(They) come up with choices, that say, on paper these look like good choices for this matchup, pitch locations in certain situations. (We) try to keep it as simple as possible so that it's useful and not overwhelming. So then it's up to (the catchers)."

When Cora arrived in Boston, he made a hard push for more tangible analytical information.

"Alex was really interested," Scott said. "He comes in and basically says I want to try to do this and get as much of an edge as we can so tasked my department with coming up with tools."

While the cards are new, Scott and his team have been providing similar information to the club for the last couple seasons. Senior analyst Greg Rybarcyk, who developed the infielder's defensive alignment cards, did a lot of the groundwork pinpointing which pitches each Red Sox pitcher should throw in certain high-leverage situations against different opponents. Meyer, who's just 24 and previously worked as a quantitative analyst for the Mariners, brought in a new approach and the department melded the two together in creating the visual format the Red Sox catchers now use.

Crunching the numbers was the easy part. Determining the best way present it to the catchers was the hard part. Scott traveled with the Red Sox to Toronto in late April and sat in on LeVangie's meeting with his pitchers and catchers prior to the series. Scott gathered useful feedback and developed an idea of how to display the plethora of data visually on the cards. When Scott got back to Boston he relayed his thoughts about how to create the cards visually and the analysts got to work. The catchers started using the cards in-game shortly thereafter.

Vazquez, who landed on the disabled list over the weekend with a broken pinkie finger and had surgery this week, benefited from the cards over the first half of the season. Baseball's information age means players are armed with an overwhelming amount of data, which can be a vice and a virtue. The catcher cards are meant to help players synthesize and quickly process that information.

“It’s helped in a couple situations, close games, men on base,” Vazquez said. “We can go there and have an idea of how we’re going to attack the hitter. We go back a long time with these pitchers and we know them very good but it helps a lot.”

With Vazquez on the disabled list, Leon will take on brunt of the catching work with Swihart as his backup. Leon is still getting used to the system, but has found it helpful in some situations. He doesn’t use the cards as much as Vazquez or Swihart, but still finds them helpful to have.

“It helps. If you’ve got a bases loaded, 2-2, or 3-2 and you have to call the right pitch,” Leon said. “But sometimes the game dictates differently. I use it, but not that much. I’d rather go how the guy is throwing the ball or how it’s going that night. What his good pitch is that night so I’ll go with that. I’m just trying to learn about the whole game and how we’ve been pitching a guy, how we’ve been getting a guy out so I’ll go with that.”

Since it’s such a new system, there’s been a collaborative effort to refine the cards to make them more user-friendly for the catchers. Swihart prefers to have it right on his wrist while Vazquez doesn’t like having the card visible for TV cameras to potentially zoom in on it. That’s why he puts his in his back pocket.

“We’re still working on it constantly to find better ways,” Scott said. “It’s not the end-all be-all, like anything we do, it’s just another tool and really in the heat of the game the cards, with the catchers, it’s really just a refresher, almost like a cheat sheet. If you’re blanking or if you’re just not recalling in the heat of the moment, the game is fast, you can just look at it and it triggers ‘oh yeah this is what we want to do.’”

Scott is hoping to sit down with the coaching staff in the next few weeks for some additional feedback on the cards. He’s hoping they can quantify the team’s results when they do use the cards versus when the catchers go with their instincts.

“It’s that dialogue which is really them understanding what’s under the hood because we don’t want anything to be a black box,” Scott said.

With a staff ERA among the best in baseball, and the most wins of any team in the majors, it seems as though the catchers’ Cliff’s Notes are a part of making this all work, and they seem likely to stay.

### **Dustin Pedroia insists this isn’t the end of his career: ‘I will be better than ever’**

Chad Jennings

Dustin Pedroia has gone through the procedure, done the rehabilitation work, sought the second and third opinions, and gone back for the checkups. But there’s still one crucial, unavoidable, indefinite factor in his recovery and return from left knee surgery.

“Just time,” he said. “Which sucks.”

On Wednesday afternoon, Pedroia addressed his ongoing physical uncertainty with one absolute truth, and one staunch belief.

He knows now that his knee is not ready to play baseball. He came off the disabled list seven weeks ago believing it might be, but he knows better today. That’s why he’s going home to Arizona to do physical therapy and strengthening exercises before even attempting another rehab assignment. He needs more time. He knows that now.

But don’t tell Pedroia, 34, this might be the end of his career, that a lifetime of baseball is going to end with cartilage replacement surgery, seventh months of rehabilitation and three all-too-brief games back in the majors. Pedroia will be back. He believes that with hardened conviction.

“Oh yeah,” he said. “Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah. And I will be better than ever.”

Pedroia believes it's just a matter of time, but he has no idea how much time. He recognizes the possibility that he won't be able to play again this season. He's mentally preparing to play this season, he's hoping to play this season, but he's learned enough to know it's not a given.

"If I get this thing MRI'd in four or five weeks and it's fully healed, then I will play this year," he said. "If I get an MRI in four or five weeks and it's three-quarters of the way healed, then I probably won't. I can't do anything about time."

Pedroia had cartilage replacement and microfracture surgery on his left knee at the end of last season. His recovery has been well documented: from the surgery itself, to his extended spring training, to his minor league rehab assignment, to his latest setback. He last played on May 29, and he's been back on the disabled list since June 2.

"I think I played those games at seven months (after surgery)," he said. "A lot of (other athletes who had the procedure) played around 11, 12 months. So, the thinking was, since I am not very physically gifted (in terms of size) that I could play while I'm healing. That's really not the case, so I'll just keep going. I'm at eight and a half months now, so every day is healing and getting better and back to where we all want me to be."

Pedroia said it's "coincidence" that this setback happened within a week of his return to the big league team. He thinks the timing would have been the same whether he was in extended spring training, on a Triple-A rehab assignment, or playing second base at Fenway Park. It was just a matter of time and workload. He simply wasn't healthy enough – not yet – for the long haul, and there's too much at stake to fight through the pain like he did last year.

"You can't risk it, you know what I mean?" Pedroia said. "If I come back too early and the graft fails, then that's it. So, at the point I came back everyone thought that because I'm a smaller guy, I don't bear a lot of weight, that you can play while you're healing. But obviously I couldn't. And that's normal. It's not like the surgery failed or anything like that. It just takes time for it to heal all the way and build up from there, and then it's not going to be an issue anymore."

Pedroia said he's going home, away from the Red Sox, because it's better for everyone that way. He won't take up the trainers' time, and he won't have to fit his rehab and strengthening work around the team's schedule. For better and for worse, it's all a matter of time.

"We've been told there's going to be bumps in the road," Pedroia said. "And this is one of them. But the end result is going to be the same. You guys saw me running for those three games. It looked pretty good. That's going to happen every single day when my knee is fully healed. And it will. It's going to happen."

## **\* *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram***

### **Rangers Reaction: Were Rangers trying to save Choo's streak by not using him to hit late?**

Jeff Wilson

BOSTON -- The time has come to publicly air a grievance that burdens those travelers who rely on hotel gyms to offset all the poor eating and other extra calories that might be consumed during and after work on the road.

For the love of God, clean up after yourselves.

The gym Wednesday was a disaster. One elliptical machine and one treadmill had fresh drops, streams and pools of sweat, and the floor mats and stability balls were also soiled with fresh perspiration.

That left one elliptical that sounded like it might explode at the next stride and a gently soiled treadmill.

It also smelled like a postgame football locker room.

It's just common courtesy to clean up, and it takes, oh, 30 seconds. People wouldn't leave their houses in that condition, but apparently they think someone else will tidy things up at a hotel gym after they leave.

Unacceptable.

Also unacceptable, though not unexpected: The Texas Rangers' showing against the Boston Red Sox.

Here's some Rangers Reaction from a 4-2 loss that completed a three-game sweep.

1. Shin-Soo Choo sat for the second time in three games as Adrian Beltre started at designated hitter for the second time in three games.

Both instances came against left-handed starters who could have made it challenging for the lefty-hitting Choo to extend his MLB-leading 48-game on-base streak, especially Wednesday starter Chris Sale.

Was manager Jeff Banister trying to preserve the streak? He wouldn't let that line of questioning get off the ground in his pregame chat/World Cup watch party with the media.

"When Choo's locked in swinging, which he has been, and all things being equal, I've never held him out of this consistent left-on-left situation at all," Banister said. "It has everything to do with Adrian is DH-ing and Choo's not."

Choo is unable to play the outfield as he deals with a quadriceps strain, so when Beltre's 39-year-old legs need some rest at DH, Choo sits. If Beltre had been able to play third base, Choo would have been the DH.

OK. Makes a lot of sense. Choo was only 2 for 26 against Sale. If one of them had to sit, it wasn't going to be the right-handed-hitting Beltre.

But the game suddenly got tight in the eighth inning, as the Rangers cut a 4-0 deficit in half. The bases were loaded with two outs for Joey Gallo, who struck out for the fourth time to end the threat. The Rangers are going to let Gallo hit there.

Choo, meanwhile, was stationed on the bench. He didn't have a bat in his hands or a helmet on his head. Had Gallo reached, Ryan Rua was on deck to face Craig Kimbrel — one of the nastiest closers in MLB history — in a right-vs.-right matchup.

And when Kimbrel came back for the ninth with the difference still only two runs, Choo was still on the bench.

Rua struck out, and the streak lives on.

It appeared something fishy was going on.

Banister, though, said that Choo was going to hit for Rua in the eighth, streak be damned. Choo said no one had told him that, but also said that he had taken swings in the cage in the fifth and sixth innings.

He didn't have his batting gloves, leg shield, elbow shield, forearm shield or helmet on, but he said he could have quickly put them on and grabbed a bat and hit for Rua.

"I don't typically put the pinch hitter out on deck in that situation unless we're definitely going to pull the trigger," Banister said.

But Banister wasn't going to use Choo to start the ninth, as he wanted to use Choo as the tying run.

"He and I have talked about that. We're in this to win baseball games," Banister said. "So, he was available and needed to hit if we needed him in those situations."

Choo said that he doesn't believe that Banister was trying to preserve his streak against the Red Sox. Choo said that his quad is improving but not to the point where he can play the outfield.

That's not going to happen until after the All-Star break.

So, things aren't always as they appear. But things sure appeared to be fishy in the eighth and ninth innings.

"I know a lot of people think that way," Choo said. "But my quad's not 100 percent. If I could play the field, I could go say, 'Put me out there.' But I have only one option — DH."

2. Elvis Andrus was given a first-inning double on a ball that Mitch Moreland would say he should have had. The official scored seemed to think so, too, before declaring "two-base hit" instead of "error first base."

Andrus won't complain, and Moreland probably won't either. The hit was the start of a good Wednesday.

"I needed that one, for sure," Andrus said.

But, first, a look at the not-so-good

Andrus is still searching after coming off the disabled list just more than three weeks ago. He has hit safely in 12 of the past 14 games, but he's batting .258 (17 for 66) during that stretch and is batting only .218 (19 for 87) in 19 games since being activated following a 59-game absence for a broken right arm.

He is batting .222 (6 for 27) so far on the road trip.

The cause for his woes is the same as it was when asked two weeks ago — his timing remains off. He has jumped back into the best baseball league in the world with pitchers performing at their peak.

There wasn't a second spring training for him to slowly find a rhythm against pitchers who were trying to find theirs.

So, he has to keep working four or five at-bats a game until something clicks. Baseball people call that "grinding."

"It's just part of the process that he's going to have to continue to battle through," manager Jeff Banister said.

Wednesday's game was Andrus' best. He just missed a home run in his second at-bat, hooking a slider foul, and he lined a double to left in his third. To do it against Sale is no small feat.

He also reached on a broken bat chopper in the eighth for a three-hit game that raised his average from .246 to .259.

Maybe Andrus' battle is almost won.

"I've never been in this situation before in my career," Andrus said. "It's challenged me a lot. I feel like I'm making better adjustments every day, so it's just about staying there and keep working hard knowing that my swing will come back."

3. Bartolo Colon's pursuit of pitching history will extend into the second half of the season.

The right-hander pitched reasonably well against a Red Sox team that manhandles just about every pitcher, allowing four runs (three earned) in six innings.

But it wasn't good enough for career win No. 246, which would have moved him past Dennis Martinez for the most career wins by a pitcher from Latin America.

Barring a relief appearance this weekend at Baltimore, Colon will finish the first half still seeking that win but with 106 2/3 innings and a 4.64 ERA. Who saw that coming before the season?

He's going to get that record, and the sooner the better so that that storyline can be put to bed and another involving "Big Sexy" can begin.

The most likely one to develop once the record falls is if he will finally retire. How about this one: Would the Rangers, who have only one pitcher under contract for 2019, consider re-signing Colon?

Stranger things have happened, like a 45-year-old 285-pounder still pitching effectively in the major leagues.

## **\* *Associated Press***

### **Sale helps Red Sox win 9th straight, 4-2 over Texas**

BOSTON -- Chris Sale came off the mound, yelling something into his glove that wasn't fit for his mother's ears.

It wasn't another strikeout that got him fired up, though he had 12 of those on Wednesday night. It was a comebacker that he stabbed out of the air to start an inning-ending double play.

"Sometimes, the ball catches you," he said after leading the Red Sox to their ninth straight win, a 4-2 victory over the Texas Rangers. "Anybody out there would be fired up."

Sale pitched seven innings of shutout ball in his final start before the All-Star Game, and major league batting leader Mookie Betts had two hits for Boston. J.D. Martinez had a pair of RBI to pad his major league-leading total of 79 as the Red Sox improved to 36 games above .500 for the first time since Bucky Dent homered over the Green Monster in a one-game playoff to settle the 1978 AL East title.

"We don't care where we're at or who we're facing," said Sale (10-4), who allowed six hits and walked one to win his fifth straight decision. "We come to win games, and that's all you can expect."

Bartolo Colon (5-7) allowed four runs -- three earned -- on nine hits and two walks, striking out three in six innings. Elvis Andrus had three hits for the Rangers, who struck out 18 times to lose for the fifth time in six games.

Andrus doubled to lead off the sixth, and then Nomar Mazara singled before Sale struck out Adrian Beltre. Rougned Odor hit a hard chopper back up the middle that Sale snagged, throwing to second to start the double play.

He walked off the mound shouting into his glove. Asked what he was yelling, he said, "My mom watches this. I can't say that."

Xander Bogaerts had three hits for the Red Sox, who have won 14 of 16 games. It's the second nine-game winning streak for the Red Sox this season; they also won nine straight after losing on opening day.

## CLOSING TIME

The Red Sox took a 4-0 lead into the eighth before Texas scored one off Heath Hembree and loaded the bases; Craig Kimbrel walked in a second run but then struck out Joey Gallo to end the inning.

He struck out the side in the ninth for his 28th save, and his 19th in a row.

"Good pitches there to Gallo," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "And then he came back and dominated."

## DANGER ZONE

The Rangers had difficulty with three different popups in shallow center field.

In the second, Eduardo Nunez reached on an error by second baseman Rougned Odor that scored Bogaerts to make it 1-0. After Martinez already drove in a pair of runs with a fifth-inning double, Bogaerts lofted one to left-center that caused a collision between left fielder Gallo and center fielder Delino Deshields, resulting in an RBI triple.

Nunez blooped another one into center in the sixth that Deshields dove for. Nunez was thrown out trying to stretch it into a double.

"The challenge is when the ball isn't in the air long enough to make the catch," Rangers manager Jef Banister said.

## NO BENNY

Red Sox left fielder Andrew Benintendi finished second in the voting for the final spot on the AL All-Star roster, losing out to Seattle shortstop Jean Segura. Benintendi had two hits on Wednesday for his sixth straight multi-hit game. He also scored for the sixth game in a row but failed to double, ending a streak of five straight games.

## FOR SALE

Sale made his 200th career start. ... It was the 11th time in his 20 starts this season he gave up one run or none. ... It was his ninth game this season with at least 10 strikeouts and his fifth straight with at least 11 strikeouts and no more than one walk.

## TRAINER'S ROOM

Rangers: Deshields left the game after diving for Nunez's bloop in the sixth inning. He was evaluated for neck and shoulder problems. Later the same inning, Odor talked to the training staff after stretching awkwardly to hold the bag on a force at second.

"He's being evaluated; back, upper-neck area," Banister said after the game. "I just took him out to be evaluated."

Red Sox: 2B Dustin Pedroia was scheduled to return home to Arizona to continue his rehab from left knee surgery.

## UP NEXT

Rangers: Off Thursday, visit Baltimore on Friday, when LHP Cole Hamels (5-6) faces RHP Alex Cobb (2-11).

Red Sox: Host Toronto on Thursday, with David Price (9-6) facing a Blue Jays pitcher TBA.