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‘We have bigger goals honestly’: Red Sox’ 100 wins is only a prelude to greatness

Nick Cafardo

It’s mind-boggling to think that Alex Cora was the bench coach on a 101-win team (the Astros) that won the World Series championship one year ago and then became manager of a 100-win team the next year. What’s to come? Who knows? Maybe we’ll be able to complete the sentence to read that Cora also won the World Series in his first season as a manager.

Before that, and with 16 games to go, the Red Sox could tie or break their all-time win record of 105. There’s certainly ample time for that. While we know they are a 100-win team with a few flaws, those issues will be left for another time. For now, the Red Sox should celebrate the fact they’ve won triple digits. As Cora said before the game, “It’s hard to win that many games in this league.” And he’s right. For while we may charge that the league is weak and that there are flawed teams everywhere, 100 wins means you’ve had one kick-butt season. Nobody can take that away from them. Every player can say he was a part of a 100-win season, the first since Ted Williams played in 1946 in Boston.

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But Cora put this one in its proper perspective. And we’re sure he told his team the same thing. The 100 wins, made possible by a 1-0 win over the Blue Jays where David Price pitched seven shutout innings, was great, but Cora gave his team accolades and then moved on.

“Like I said yesterday, I’m proud of the guys, the medical staff, the organization, the coaches, the players,” Cora said. “Seems like everything clicked in Fort Myers and we haven’t deviated from the plan. We’ve been very consistent on a daily basis in preparing and going out there on a daily basis and competing. A hundred is a hundred, but we have bigger goals honestly.”

We wonder if there’s more pressure to win it all if you’ve won this many games or is it like any other record that wins a division? The Red Sox won the division with 93 wins the last two years and are on their way to winning a third divisional title. If you don’t win in the postseason, people will forget that you won that many games. It’s like the 16-0 2007 Patriots who lost to the Giants in the Super Bowl. Tremendous feat going undefeated, but when you win all of your regular season games, you expect to do the same in the playoffs and it just didn’t happen.

There are no pitfalls to avoid. There’s nothing you can really do once the postseason starts and ends. It’s all about who’s playing best at the end and sometimes 100-plus win teams just don’t time it well. The 2000 Mariners won 116 games but lost to the Yankees in the ALCS. Last season the Astros won it all. The Indians, who won 22 straight games at one point in September and finished with 102 wins lost in the ALCS to the 101-win Astros. The Dodgers won a major league-best 104 games but lost to the Astros in the World Series.

“I know what I signed up for,” Cora said, “I signed up to win a World Series.”

Indeed that’s exactly right. The Red Sox fired John Farrell who won two straight divisional titles and hired Cora to get them deep into the postseason. That’s what he must do.

Cora became the first manager to guide a team to 100 wins in his first major league managing job since Dusty Baker with the 1993 Giants. And the last manager to do it in the first season with a team was Felipe Alou in 2003.

The 100 wins came early and there's always the danger that you're swept away by the number. It doesn't seem like this Red Sox team will let the feat swallow them up or stop them from keeping their eyes on what's really important.

They really need to play well the rest of the way. They will have home-field advantage which they squandered away in 2016 when they didn't pay attention to detail in the final 10 days of the season and lost home field. This is a team which is 51-20 at home so playing the majority of games at home will be huge. They will also be challenged by the Yankees who need to hold off the Oakland A's for their own home field in the wild-card game. The Red Sox could also be playing the Yankees in the divisional round if the Yankees beat the A's in the wild-card game, so it's important for the Red Sox to show they can continue to dominate the Yankees in the majority of the final six games between the two teams.

The Red Sox continued to get a shot in the arm from Price's stellar pitching. He has been the most dependable Red Sox starter. Now they await Chris Sale getting back to that level and hope Rick Porcello gives them three very good starters in the postseason and that Price can ward off poor performances of playoffs past and continue his good times.

The scoreboard flashed "100 wins" as Dirty Water played in the background. It meant a lot to the fans who were at the ballpark, fans all over New England, to have watched a team that won 100 games. Because most fans weren't around in 1946.

Yes, it was a moment, a win, that you shouldn't forget. It was a moment that will mean more when and if there's a substantive postseason to come. While the wait since the last World Series championship has only been five years, the 100 wins has given rise to the anticipation that this team should be the next great Red Sox team.

Putting a 100-win season into historical perspective

Alex Speier

It is a dazzling number, a once-in-a-generation baseball feat that for some franchises has proven more accurately to be a once-in-a-lifetime accomplishment.

What does 100 wins mean? Intrinsicly, nothing. There are no rings awarded for a triple-digit victory total. Titles aren't automatically conferred upon a team that hits 100 wins.

Nonetheless, such a total does represent something extraordinary within a season, a display of consistent excellence that many baseball lifers never experience.

The Red Sox haven't reached such a lofty total since their 1946 club went 104-50 – a 72-year gap. No living Red Sox alum ever played for a 100-win team in Boston.

Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski often cites the vast array of experiences he's had in the game whenever a given situation emerges. Yet as he recently noted, he has never been part of a team that won 100 games; the 1983 White Sox who went 99-63 (before losing to the Orioles in the ALCS) represented his high-water mark of victories.

Moreover, few fans can offer first-hand testimony to the regular-season dominance of the last 100-win Red Sox team. After all, less than 10 percent of the current US population was alive in 1946.

Since the introduction of the World Series in 1903, there have been 98 teams that reached the 100-win total over 116 seasons — or roughly five in every six seasons. About 4 percent of teams across that time

(roughly one out of every 25) hit the 100-win mark, while just 2.5 percent (roughly one out of every 40) did so between 2010 and 2017.

The Red Sox, in many ways, were “due” for this kind of sustained regular-season brilliance. But other franchises have endured even longer waits. The White Sox last reached 100 victories in 1917 — two years before the Black Sox scandal. The Pirates haven’t cleared the mark since 1909.

While “100” is a satisfyingly round number, it is also an arbitrary one. Nonetheless, it suggests a remarkably steady performance, an indication that the team was sufficiently well-rounded to avoid lengthy downturns.

“That’s a huge number,” said Red Sox bench coach Ron Roenicke. “We’ve got a ways to go, and we hope we win more than just 100, but any time you win 100 it’s incredible.”

“That’s so damn hard to do at this level,” said Blue Jays manager John Gibbons. “It shows you how good you are, how well the team played, and how dominant you were. [But] it doesn’t guarantee you anything once you get in.”

Indeed, for a long time, the idea of a 100-win “curse” was floated when a wealth of standout teams that hit triple digits failed to win the ultimate prize. Over 10 seasons, from 1999 through 2008, all 14 teams that reached the 100-win plateau — including a 2001 Mariners team that won a major league-record 116 games — fell short of a championship.

Certainly, the path to translate regular-season dominance has become rockier with multiple rounds of playoff expansion. From 1903 through 1968, the regular-season pennant winners went straight to the World Series; during that time, 51 percent of the teams that won 100 games — and 60 percent of those that actually won their pennant — won the World Series.

With the introduction of the League Championship Series in 1969, 100-win teams saw those numbers drop. Eight of the 25 teams to win 100 games (32 percent) won a title, including eight of 23 (35 percent) that reached the playoffs. (The 1980 Orioles and 1993 Braves both missed the playoffs in years when they reached 100 wins.)

Since the introduction of the Division Series round in 1995, just four of 25 teams (16 percent) that won 100 games claimed titles. That’s better than the 1-in-8 odds (12.5 percent) that one might assume to exist for the eight Division Series participants, but hardly an overwhelming advantage.

Still, the last two years have seen teams that surpassed the 100-victory threshold — the 2017 Astros and 2016 Cubs — emerge with baseball’s ultimate prize. Those teams, in turn, could lay claim to the title of the best teams in the history of their franchises.

It remains to be seen whether the 2018 Red Sox follow such a path through October to, in a way, validate a great regular season as a transcendent season in franchise history. But regardless of whether they do so, they can at least lay claim to having won in the regular season with a consistency unrivaled by any Red Sox team in more than 70 years — an accomplishment in its own note, even if members of the team approach it in cautious terms.

“One hundred wins? That’s cool,” said Jackie Bradley Jr. “That’s a lot of winning. And winning is a lot of fun.”

100+ win teams by decade

1970-79 13

2000-09 13

1990-99 10

1960-69 10
1940-49 9
1930-39 9
1910-19 9
1980-89 7
2010-17 6
1903-09 6
1920-29 3
1950-59 3

SOURCE: Baseball-Reference.com

100 and counting: Red Sox beat Blue Jays for milestone win

Peter Abraham

Ted Williams was the left fielder when the Red Sox last won 100 games. His close friends Johnny Pesky and Bobby Doerr played shortstop and second base, respectively, and Dom DiMaggio was in center field.

It was 1946. Williams and many of his teammates had just returned from military service that season and post-war life was grand. The Sox finished 104-50 and won the American League going away.

The Sox fell to the St. Louis Cardinals in a seven-game World Series. But Williams, Pesky, and the rest were all in their 20s and the Red Sox looked every bit a powerhouse that would reign for years.

Instead it took 72 years for the Sox to win 100 games again. It was a hurdle Carl Yastrzemski, Jim Rice, Pudge Fisk, Wade Boggs, Roger Clemens, David Ortiz, Pedro Martinez, and all the rest couldn't clear.

It finally happened again on Wednesday night when the Red Sox beat the Toronto Blue Jays, 1-0, before a crowd of 35,178 at Fenway Park.

The 100-46 Red Sox have 16 games remaining to chase down the franchise record of 105 victories set in 1912. Then comes a thicket of playoff games that will define the season.

"We've got bigger goals, honestly," said Alex Cora, the first rookie manager to win 100 games since Dusty Baker led the 1993 San Francisco Giants to a 103-59 record. "Today we got closer. We're going to keep playing."

For now, enjoy the journey. David Price (15-6) was brilliant for seven innings before the bullpen held Toronto down. Craig Kimbrel, No. 46, struck out Dwight Smith Jr. to end the game and record his 39th save.

"Happy to be a part of it," Price said. "The main goal now is to win 101."

But there was no denying the significance of 100 wins as Price stood in the same clubhouse where Williams once practiced his swing.

“Pretty crazy,” he said. “As historic a franchise as the Red Sox are, it’s pretty cool. They’ve had a lot of really good teams there.”

The Sox are a season-best 54 games over .500 and reduced their magic number to clinch the American League East to seven with the Yankees losing at Minnesota.

The Sox, who have won three straight, have a 10-game lead on the Yankees with 16 to play.

Price retired the first 13 batters he faced. He allowed three hits, all singles, and struck out seven without a walk. Toronto advanced one runner beyond first base with the lefthander on the mound and never came close to scoring.

Price has a 1.56 earned run average and 0.83 WHIP in nine starts since the All-Star break. The Red Sox have three quality starts in their last 22 games dating to Aug. 19 and Price is responsible for all three.

“What he’s done has been lights out,” first baseman Mitch Moreland said. “Everybody knows what DP’s capable of. He’s got that every time he walks to the mound.”

The Sox are 21-7 in games Price has started this season, winning 18 of the last 21. With Chris Sale limited to six innings since July 28, Price has been the ace the Sox needed.

“It’s big,” Price said. “I don’t look at it that way. I expect to go out there and throw the baseball like this every five days. It’s good that I’ve been able to do that since [Sale] has been out. He’s back now and we expect him to be himself.”

Related: For Alex Cora, playoff-clincher celebration was subdued

Cora threw a changeup at Toronto in the eighth inning, sending knuckleballer Steven Wright into the game to replace Price.

There was trouble right away when Rowdy Tellez doubled to the gap in left and Danny Jansen drew a four-pitch walk.

Kevin Pillar pinch hit and struck out. When Billy McKinney grounded to the left side, the Sox took the out at second base.

With Tellez at third, Devon Travis hit the ball hard to right field but Mookie Betts broke in to make the catch.

Despite putting eight men on base, Wright has pitched five scoreless innings of relief since being activated off the disabled list earlier this month.

“I’m going to have to learn how to look away knowing that he’s going to find it,” Cora said.

Toronto starter Aaron Sanchez allowed 11 earned runs over 16 innings in three previous starts against the Red Sox this season. But the righthander was sharp this time, allowing one run on three hits over seven innings.

The run was stitched together out of rags.

Moreland drew a leadoff walk in the fifth inning then was forced at second when Rafael Devers grounded to the right side.

Cora called a hit-and-run on the next pitch and Brock Holt sent a slow single into left field, taking advantage of the hole left when shortstop Lourdes Gurriel Jr. broke to cover second.

Sandy Leon, who last drove in a run on Aug. 14, was allowed to hit and popped up to right field. He is hitless in his last 27 at-bats.

With Jackie Bradley Jr. up, Sanchez threw a wild pitch and Devers scored.

The Sox had not won a game without an RBI since Sept. 19, 2017, a 1-0 victory at Baltimore also decided on a wild pitch.

Alex Cora didn't get much sleep after the Red Sox clinched a playoff spot

Peter Abraham

Manager Alex Cora barely got any sleep on Tuesday night after the Red Sox clinched a playoff berth.

Excess celebrating had nothing to do with it. His twin 14-month-old sons, Xander and Isander, were up all night.

"They woke up every hour. If anybody has any ideas for them to sleep the whole night, send me an email. That was bad," Cora said.

When the Sox clinched, there was a brief toast in the clubhouse after the game and a reminder there was much more work still to be done. The Sox will save the celebration for clinching the American League East.

"We're confident. We know where we're at in the standings. We know what we have to do and we're doing it right now," Cora said on Wednesday before the Sox went out and beat the Blue Jays, 1-0.

"Hopefully we can keep playing well, keep winning ballgames and then when we accomplish our next goal then I guess we'll celebrate a little harder."

Cora received plenty of congratulatory text messages after the game but he deflected the praise toward his players.

"Like I tell everybody, I'm proud of the group," he said. "This is a group, they have high expectations. The goal is to win the World Series. Since Day 1 we've talked about it here."

Sale set for Sunday

Sunday afternoon should be an interesting one at Fenway Park.

Chris Sale is lined up to start against the Mets with the goal of pitching three innings. He would face New York ace Jacob deGrom.

Sale threw 26 pitches over one inning on Tuesday in his return from the disabled list then approximately 15 more in the bullpen. There were no problems with his shoulder.

"He's OK. Just regular soreness," Cora said. "Day 1 after the start it was a positive."

Sale struck out two but allowed a double and hit a batter in his first game since Aug. 12.

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"I know Sunday will be better," Cora said.

DeGrom is 8-9 with a 1.71 earned run average in 29 starts. He has given up only nine home runs over 195 innings and struck out 239. The righthander has faced the Sox once in his career, in 2015 at Citi Field.

Sudden substitution

But Moreland was called back when that spot in the order came up. A different lefthanded hitter — Brock Holt — came to the plate instead.

Holt hit a three-run home run, so the move worked out just fine for Cora. But what was going on there?

Cora saw that Toronto had lefthanded reliever Tim Mayza warming up. So if Moreland had been announced into the game, Toronto could have countered.

Righthanded-hitting Brandon Phillips was prepared to pinch hit for the pinch hitter against a lefty, but Cora didn't want to waste Moreland and not have him available later in the game. So Holt was summoned and went to the plate in haste. Toronto stayed with righthander Ryan Tepera and Holt homered to right field.

Cora acknowledged the confusion after the game, offering no excuses. It was a lesson he learned playing for Terry Francona.

"Tito, he was honest," Cora said. "What am I going to say? We had a [pinch hitter] out there for four pitches I guess and all of sudden, 'Wait a minute, let me get the other one.'"

Cora said the confusion was partly the result of expanded rosters and having eight players on the bench. Before Sept. 1, Cora would not have considered burning a pinch hitter.

"If it's a regular game with 25 guys, you don't have that luxury," he said. "I am who I am. It doesn't bother me to be honest. I don't think people are going to take it the wrong way."

Fan injured

An unidentified male fan seated in a box seat to the left of home plate was struck in the head by a bat that flew out of the hands of Toronto's Devin Travis in the eighth inning.

The bat sailed over the protective netting, landing approximately 15 rows up. Ushers and medical personnel quickly attended to the fan. When the man stood up to applause, he pumped his fist in acknowledgment while holding a towel to his head.

The man, who was seated on a stretcher, was wheeled out of the park. The Red Sox said he had been taken to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center for further evaluation.

Progress for Barnes

Righthanded reliever Matt Barnes, who has been unavailable because of inflammation in his left hip, played catch for the third straight day. No bullpen session has been scheduled. "Feeling better," he said . . . Nathan Eovaldi, who pitched 3⅓ innings of relief, will return to the rotation and start against the Yankees in New York on Tuesday. Eovaldi threw eight shutout innings against the Yankees on Aug. 4 but has an ERA of 6.58 in seven games since.

*** *The Boston Herald***

David Price's gem powers Red Sox past Blue Jays for 100th win of season

Michael Silverman

The Red Sox have been around for 118 years and David Price has only been around for the last three of them.

Still, in his 74th start for the team, he threw the first pitch of the 100th victory this season.

Only three other Sox teams have reached the century milestone. It's a nice, round and rarely seen win total, and as cool as it was to see the number appear under his watch, Price has even bigger goals in minds.

"It was big just to get to that mark; we don't have to think about it any more," said Price. "That was a very big win for us. Happy to be a part of it, happy to continue to go out there and try to throw the ball well."

If they can manage to win only six more times in their remaining 16 games, they can break the franchise record for wins, 105 set by the 1912 edition.

Until then, the triple-digit accomplishment, which came the night after the club clinched a playoff berth, stands as a significant testament to the team's remarkable season.

On a night when the offense was mostly stymied in the 1-0 victory over the Blue Jays, Price (15-6) threw seven shutout innings in which he allowed only three singles and no walks, striking out seven.

An effective inning of relief from both Steven Wright and Craig Kimbrel (save No. 39) preserved the well-deserved win for a starter who has returned to ace form in the second half when the team has had to live without Chris Sale, posting a 1.56 ERA over his nine post-All-Star break starts.

The drama of the 100th win was secondary to the team's mantra of "win today," and Price maintained his focus and mastery of his craft, working out of each of the brief jams he faced.

"David is one of the best pitchers in the big leagues," said manager Alex Cora. "I have heard and read what he had to say about this is the guy the organization signed a few years ago and he's here now, and you can see he's in control, he's under control the whole time out there. Inside part of the plate, outside part of the plate, cutter, changeup, fastball up, he's been amazing and he's been very important.

"You lose one of your horses and the other guys have to step up. It's not that he had to but he did, and he's been great."

The Red Sox scored their run in the fifth inning off a wild pitch by Toronto starter Aaron Sanchez.

Price was perfect through the first 4 1/3 innings, until Yangervis Solarte laced a solid single to center field.

The Blue Jays never had much a chance against Price, as just three base-runners reached. Solarte was stranded in the fifth, Jonathan Davis (single, passed ball to second) in the sixth and Solarte again in the seventh.

Price credits the re-introduction of his changeup as central to his success, once he was able to harness the command of his fastball and cut fastball.

"Being able to throw (the changeup) if I was behind in the count, or ahead in the count being able to locate it down, that's a big key for that pitch for me," said Price. "To be able to execute that pitch, for the most part wherever I was trying to throw it, that was big."

J.D. Martinez thought reaching 100 wins was "fun," that it was a sign of how consistently good the team has been. Just like Price lately

"He's been great, he's been great," said Martinez. "I don't know the numbers but I know the last couple months he's been pretty much lights out. I feel like he found a groove. That's what we need. We're going to need him to keep going and see how deep we can go into this thing."

Red Sox notebook: Lefty ace Chris Sale comes through Tuesday's start feeling OK

Michael Silverman

So far, so good with the once mildly irritated left shoulder of Chris Sale.

The day after Sale's one-inning, 26-pitch appearance Tuesday, the Red Sox most valuable southpaw starter reported no ill effects from the outing. A game of catch yesterday followed by a bullpen session tomorrow will be key to Sale's rebound.

After his first return from the shoulder issue on Aug. 12 it took a couple of days before the irritation returned, so the Red Sox and Sale are not getting ahead of themselves when it comes to the pitcher's health. And they will not say for sure he will start on Sunday against the Mets.

"He feels fine," Sox manager Alex Cora said before last night's game against Toronto. "Everything seems that he's OK. Just regular soreness. I guess Day 1 after the start, it was a positive."

Sale will likely be asked to throw three innings in his next outing.

Overall, said Cora, even though there's no finality with Sale's shoulder, the fact he had nothing worse than normal soreness the day after he competed counted as a success.

"He's encouraged," Cora said. "Yesterday was his first big league outing and like he was all over the place and he admitted it and the game sped up with him right away with the (leadoff) double and it's like 'Oh, wait a minute, I've got to compete.' But he'll be fine. At the end he struck out two, induced a pop up. I know Sunday will be better."

Milestone manager

Cora became the first manager to lead a team to 100-plus wins in his first season with the club since Felipe Alou with the 2003 Giants, and the first rookie manager to reach that mark since Dusty Baker (1993 Giants).

The Red Sox reached 100 wins faster (146 games) than the three other Red Sox teams that hit the 100-win mark. They are the fifth team in the Expansion Era (since 1961) to win 100 games in 146 games or fewer. Nine of the previous 16 teams who won 100 in their first 146 games went on to win the World Series. ...

In the fourth inning of last night's 100th win, Xander Bogaerts singled with two out but was thrown out at second base trying to stretch it into a double. The Red Sox challenged the out call, but despite a video that leaned in the Red Sox' favor, the decision-makers in New York were not persuaded. ...Jackie Bradley Jr. stole his 14th base to extend his career high. Over his last 33 games at Fenway, he is batting .339/.390/.560 with 13 doubles. ...

Craig Kimbrel now has 330 career saves, passing Francisco Cordero and tying John Wetteland for 14th on the baseball's all-time list

An honest mistake

After Tuesday's 7-2 win, Cora admitted he committed a minor flub by wanting Mitch Moreland to pinch-hit and then changing his mind to ask Brock Holt to pinch-hit. Holt was in the batting cage under the stands when the request was made, while Moreland was in the on-deck circle. Nevertheless, the switch was made and Holt wound up hitting the game-winning home run.

Cora said he has no problem admitting his mistakes.

"I am who I am. It doesn't bother me, to be honest," the manager said. "I don't think people are going to take it the wrong way, either. Like, if it sped up, it sped up. Hopefully in October we slow it down."

Asked where he learned to show his more self-effacing side, Cora pointed to a master.

“I learned from (Terry Francona) — Tito. You were able to make fun of him, he was honest,” said Cora.

He went into detail about his thinking.

“What am I going to say?,” Cora said. “We had a guy up there for I don’t know how many pitches, four pitches I guess, then all of a sudden, ‘Wait a minute, let me get the other one.’ I was thinking about it throughout, then that’s the part of having so many players, too. Probably a few weeks ago, it was like, ‘OK, let’s send Mitch up there and if they bring the lefty, they bring the lefty,’ but then I was like, ‘I’m not going to burn Mitch against this lefty here. We still have other innings to play. We can use him in another spot. Let’s see if they bring in the lefty for Brock. If they do, we’ve got Brandon (Phillips).’

“That’s the difference. If it’s a regular game with 25 guys, you don’t have that luxury. Halfway through the at-bat, I thought about it and we were just looking for Brock somewhere. He was in the cage. That’s why it took so long.

In the running

Cora has been using Tzu-Wei Lin as his primary pinch-runner, another September luxury. There’s likely no spot for Lin on a playoff roster — Blake Swihart has been identified as a top pinch-runner — but one never knows.

“We know he can run, we know that,” said Cora. “We know he can play defense. It’s tough to get him at-bats right now. Like today, with (Aaron) Sanchez, lefties are hitting .305, but we’ve got (Rafael Devers) and we’ve got Holt, and we’re going to play Xander, so yeah. But he’s a guy that, we know he can run and he can probably steal a few bases if we need that.”

Three-peat looms

With their victory and the Yankees' loss, the Red Sox' magic number to clinch the AL East dropped to seven. Their magic number to clinch the best record in the American League is eight.

If they win the AL East, it would mark the first time in franchise history the club would win the division three times in a row. Their record against AL East teams before last night was 46-19 (.708). Since the divisional era began in 1969, the best single-season record for an AL East team within the division belongs to the 1998 Yankees (.688, 33-15). . . .

Cora said reliever Matt Barnes, who has had a hip problem, is “feeling better,” and that he has played catch the last three days.

100 wins for Red Sox is nice, but a World Series win much better

Steve Buckley

It should tell you all you need to know about the state of the Red Sox, and the manner in which expectations have changed around here over the years, that “100 wins” wasn’t yesterday’s big talker.

No, yesterday’s big talker was that the Patriots added “wide receiver depth” by signing a couple of guys who’d been shown the door by other NFL clubs.

In earlier, edgier hardball times, when “1918” was scorched onto your forehead the day you were born, 100 regular-season victories by the Red Sox would have been looked upon as a sign from heaven that, Lordy, this might be the year. But when the 2018 bustin’-at-the-seams Red Sox took the field against the Toronto Blue Jays last night at Fenway Park, and emerged with a 1-0 victory to hit the heralded century mark, neither the mayor nor governor was in attendance to deliver speeches and proclamations. There were no Damons or Afflecks kickin’ back in the Henry-Werner seats, no Lenny Clarke popping into the NESN

booth to crack that he once saw the Red Sox win 100 games . . . during his first four years in grammar school.

And we all know why.

With the Red Sox having won two straight American League East titles followed by two straight belly-ups in the Division Series, the locals want to see the season last beyond the first round. It doesn't mean the fans aren't filling Fenway, because they are. It doesn't mean they aren't tuning into NESN and 'EEL, because they are. It doesn't mean they aren't attaching themselves to instant heroes, because . . . well, ask Brandon Phillips, whose hi-how-are-ya, game-winning home run last week in Atlanta had everyone filling the airwaves with hopeful dialogue about the veteran second baseman being added to the postseason roster.

Yet this is where we are: The Red Sox could capture the division with a franchise record win total and it would mean nothing if they don't win the World Series.

Alex Cora, the rookie manager, understands this.

John Farrell, fired at the end of last season, did not.

Go back two years ago and you'll recall Farrell raising eyebrows the day before Game 1 of the 2016 Division Series in Cleveland when, in response to a question about what he remembered about Opening Day in Cleveland, said, "I think (the) first question is, 'Hey, are you going to get fired?'"

The skipper then paused, "Well, here we are."

In a few days, the Red Sox were swept three straight by the Indians.

This is the new normal for the Sox: After Brock Holt's pinch-hit three-run homer helped key a 7-2 victory over the Blue Jays Tuesday night, Cora admitted "the game sped up on me," when he planned to have Mitch Moreland go to bat, only to pull him back at the last moment. Talk about accountability.

As for showing up at Fenway yesterday with his team one victory from No. 100, Cora seemed more interested in talking about his twin toddlers Isander and Xander.

"They wake up every hour," he said. "If anyone has any ideas for them to sleep the whole night, send me an email."

But the 100 victories . . .

"Like I tell everybody, I'm proud of the group," he said. "They have high expectations. Our goal is to win the World Series. Since Day 1 we've talked about it here."

Left unsaid is that, yes, for the Red Sox to even have a chance at 100 victories was cool. They haven't hit the century mark in wins since 1946, and yesterday Cora became the first Sox manager since Don Zimmer in 1978 to show up at the park with a chance to win 100 games.

Alas, the '78 Sox lost that infamous one-game playoff to the Yankees, thanks to Bucky Dent's three-run homer off Mike Torrez. Since the game counted in the regular-season standings, the Sox closed out with 99 victories.

The stakes aren't as high this time.

"It's not that I don't get excited," Cora said. "Don't get me wrong. But our goals are as high as the fan base."

Translation: If the Red Sox don't win the World Series, everything that's happened so far will soon be forgotten.

You know that.

More importantly, Cora knows it.

*** *The Providence Journal***

No setbacks for Sale after making brief start

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Exhale, Red Sox Nation.

Chris Sale reported no setbacks from his Tuesday night start against the Blue Jays and is on track to take the ball again on Sunday against the Mets.

The left-hander pitched one inning in a 7-2 victory over Toronto and retreated to the bullpen at Fenway Park to continue his work. Sale threw 40 pitches in all, including 26 during just his second game since July 27.

“A little erratic, obviously,” Sale said Tuesday night. “Drove my pitch count up a little bit, which is why I didn't get to go out for my second and third innings. Got some good work in and we'll move on from there.”

This is the luxury of clinching at least a wildcard berth with 17 games to play. Boston can afford to ease Sale back into the rotation during game situations.

“Hopefully we can keep playing well and keep winning ballgames,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “Hopefully, when we accomplish our next goal, we can celebrate a little bit harder.”

Sale was under immediate pressure after allowing a leadoff double to right field to Lourdes Gurriel Jr. He struck out the next two batters, hit Kendrys Morales on the right foot with a slider and induced a popup to end the inning. Sale threw 14 strikes and induced six swings-and-misses, topping out at 97 mph with his fastball.

“It sped up a little bit on me,” Sale said. “I felt like I was rushing a little bit. I kind of got out of some of the things I need to do to stay on top of things.”

Sale went to the bullpen while Workman took over for a scoreless frame, the first of seven Boston relievers to work in the game. Nathan Eovaldi logged the longest stint out of the bullpen at 3 1/3 innings and Ryan Brasier followed with 1 1/3 innings to pick up the victory. Sale reached his pitch count while Workman was on the mound in the second.

“Probably haven't seen that too many times before, especially this time of year,” Sale said. “You've got to kind of swallow your pride and get your work in. I obviously wanted to get up and down, and we did that.”

Sale will build up to six or seven innings by his final start of the regular season, expecting to approach the 100-pitch mark. He's already been tabbed by Cora to pitch the postseason opener, be it a wildcard game or the A.L. Division Series.

“Yesterday was like his first big league outing,” Cora said. “He was all over the place and he admitted right away the game sped up on him. [Gurriel doubles] and it's like, ‘I've got to compete.’”

“He’ll be fine. At the end he struck out two and induced somebody to pop up. I know Sunday will be better.”

Red Sox Journal: Cora knows expectations are high

Bill Koch

BOSTON — It could have been reasonably assumed the Red Sox would celebrate their first 100-win season since 1946.

The first of Boston’s 17 chances to reach the milestone came Wednesday night against the Blue Jays. The franchise record of 105 victories, set more than a century ago in 1912, is also within sight over the final three weeks.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora might reflect on accomplishments like these at a later date. On Wednesday Cora was trying to shake the cobwebs from an interrupted night of sleep, with 1-year-old twin sons Xander and Isander waking up hourly in need of attention. Cora also knows the real focus on his rookie season in the dugout will start in October.

“The goal is to win the World Series,” Cora said. “Since day one we’ve talked about it here. I still remember that press conference. Obviously, we’ve got a shot now.”

Booking a place in the American League wildcard game puts Boston 12 postseason victories from a championship. That number falls to 11 if the Red Sox can clinch the A.L. East, and Boston carried a magic number of nine going into Wednesday night’s game against Toronto.

“We’ve kind of had the same mindset the whole year — come to the park expecting to win and don’t think about anything else,” said Brock Holt, who hit a pinch-hit three-run homer in Tuesday’s 7-2 triumph. “I think that’s why we’ve been so successful this year.”

Ted Williams, Bobby Doerr and Boo Ferriss were among the many stars in 1946, as Williams and Doerr dominated at the plate and Ferriss won 25 games on the mound. Tris Speaker and Smoky Joe Wood were the twin engines that powered the Red Sox in 1912, with Speaker hitting .383 and Wood winning 34 games. The 1946 team is often cited among the best in franchise history not to win a championship, and the 1912 team is generally listed among the greatest groups of Red Sox ever assembled.

“It’s not that I don’t get excited — don’t get me wrong,” Cora said. “I’m excited for the opportunity and that we’re going to play one more game than the rest of the league. At the same time, our goals are as high as the fan base and everybody else.”

Changing his mind

Cora’s minor gaffe in the seventh inning Tuesday night had him thinking of former Boston manager Terry Francona.

Holt was sent to the plate to hit for Sandy Leon only after Mitch Moreland had come out on deck. Eduardo Nunez was in the process of drawing a walk when Moreland was called back and Holt was summoned from the indoor batting cage down the tunnel from the Red Sox dugout.

“He would make fun of himself,” said Cora, who played for Francona in Boston from 2005-08. “He was honest.

“What am I going to say? We had a pinch hitter there, a guy out there, for I don’t know how many pitches — four pitches, I guess. All of a sudden — wait a minute — let me get the other one.”

Cora was prepared to burn Holt for Brandon Phillips in that situation if the Blue Jays had called in a left-hander from the bullpen. Facing a 2-1 deficit at the time, Cora wanted to save Moreland for later to potentially tie the game with one swing. Instead, Holt put the Red Sox on top for good with his second pinch-hit homer of the season.

“It doesn’t bother me, to be honest,” Cora said. “I don’t think people are going to take it the wrong way, either. If it speeds up, it speeds up. Hopefully in October we slow it down.”

Eovaldi to start against Yankees

Nathan Eovaldi will start Tuesday’s opener of a three-game series at Yankee Stadium. Eovaldi made his first relief appearance in more than two years on Tuesday night. ... Tuesday marked Boston’s 10th victory of the season when trailing after six innings. The Red Sox are now 10-38 in such situations — they’re 77-5 when holding the lead. ... Eduardo Rodriguez starts opposite Sam Gaviglio on Thursday night in the final game of the season series between Boston and Toronto.

Red Sox 1, Blue Jays 0: Price fires Boston to first 100-win season in 72 years

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- Chris Sale has managed just four starts since July’s All-Star Game, but that certainly doesn’t mean the Red Sox have lacked an ace to top their rotation.

David Price has been all that and more over his last nine outings, the latest of which came Wednesday night at Fenway Park. The Blue Jays became the left-hander’s most recent victims in a 1-0 shutout, one that clinched a first 100-win season for Boston in 72 years.

Not since 1946 have the Red Sox been so prolific in a regular season, with franchise greats like Ted Williams and Bobby Doerr leading the charge. Price has picked up the slack for the current group with Sale sidelined for the better part of the last six weeks, and Rafael Devers scored the only run Boston required on a wild pitch in the fifth inning.

“We’re focused on today,” Price said. “Today is over, so we want to get to 101. That’s what we’ve done all year long. That’s why we have 100 wins right now. That’s what we’ll continue to do.”

“We’ve been very consistent on a daily basis preparing and going out there and playing,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “Don’t get me wrong – 100 is 100. But we’ve got bigger goals, honestly. Today we got closer – we’re getting closer to one of the goals.”

It’s just the fourth 100-win season all-time for the Red Sox, and it lowers their magic number in the American League East to eight. The first of those four seasons also came with a rookie manager at the helm. Jake Stahl steered Boston to 105 wins and a World Series title in 1912, the same year the ballpark opened for business.

Price retired the first 13 men he faced and required a mere 92 pitches to coast through seven frames. Yangervis Solarte’s two singles and a first career hit for Jonathan Davis were all Toronto had to show for its efforts against Price, who lowered his earned-run average in his last nine starts to a measly 1.56. He’s struck out 60 against just nine walks over his last 57 2/3 innings.

“He’s been very important,” Cora said. “You lose one of your horses and other guys have to step up. It’s not that he had to, but he did. And he’s been great.”

The Blue Jays advanced just one runner to second base against Price, that coming in the sixth when Davis sent a one-out single to right and moved up on a passed ball. Billy McKinney and Devon Travis each flew harmlessly to center, ending the inning. Price fanned a swinging Teoscar Hernandez on a changeup to end

the seventh, nodding his head approvingly and walking to the home dugout basking in a standing ovation from the 35,178 on hand.

“To be able to locate (the changeup) down, that’s a big key to that pitch for me,” Price said. “To be able to execute that pitch – for the most part, whenever I’m trying to throw it – is big for me.”

Toronto right-hander Aaron Sanchez was nearly Price’s equal in this one, matching zeroes until Boston finally broke the ice with a little small ball in the fifth. Devers reached on a fielder’s choice and was on the run when Brock Holt bounced a single through the vacant left side, leaving runners at the corners. Sanchez was one strike from escaping the jam when he spiked a curveball to Jackie Bradley Jr., a wild pitch that allowed Devers to score to make it 1-0.

The Blue Jays managed their only real chance against unconventional setup man Steven Wright in the eighth. The knuckleballer was in immediate trouble when Rowdy Tellez sent a leadoff double to left center and Danny Jansen drew a walk. Wright struck out pinch hitter Kevin Pillar, induced a fielder’s choice grounder to second by McKinney and got Travis on a liner to center to end the inning.

Craig Kimbrel worked around a two-out walk in the ninth for his 39th save, digging out of a 3-and-0 hole against Lourdes Gurriel Jr. to retire the leadoff man in the inning. It was the 14th shutout victory of the season for the Red Sox and the third by the same score. Boston improved to 23-11 in games decided by one run, including victories in each of its last four.

*** *MassLive.com***

Robby Scott: Surgeon told me he 'had no idea how' I made it through entire 2017 season

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- Red Sox left-handed reliever Robby Scott underwent a left elbow arthroscopy and debridement at Mass. General on Oct. 11, 2017, just two days after the Astros eliminated Boston from the ALDS.

Dr. Luke Oh removed five bone chips and three bone spurs from his elbow.

"Going into the surgery my arm was stuck. I was at a negative-44 degrees range of motion," Scott told MassLive.com. "I came out of surgery at like negative-5. Now I have a full range of motion. So it was basically learning a whole, new arm going into spring training. It was a little bit more of a struggle than I was expecting and hoping."

Scott spent most of 2018 at Triple-A Pawtucket after spending most of the 2017 season on Boston's 25-man roster. He has spent only 21 days on the big league roster this year.

He certainly pitched well at Pawtucket. Scott posted a 1.86 ERA, 1.16 WHIP, .200 batting average against and 63 strikeouts compared to 21 walks in 48.1 innings (45 relief outings). He allowed only one home run.

He's back with Boston as a September call-up. He's trying to make an impression as relievers compete for postseason jobs.

"Obviously we've got something special brewing here; a historic team that's on a historic run to do something special," he said. "I'm just happy to be here and in whatever way, shape or form that I can help, when the phone rings, and it's my name, I'm going to do what's necessary for me to help out."

Scott said he didn't just feel pain in his arm at the end of last season. His arm didn't feel right "pretty much throughout the year."

"Credit to our medical staff and our doctors kind of keeping me on the field," he said. "Because when we went in for surgery and met with the doctor, he was kind of like, 'I have no idea how you kind of made it through the entire season with what you were dealing with.'"

It's pretty remarkable he posted a 3.79 ERA, 0.98 WHIP and .179 batting average against in 57 outings (35.2 innings) for Boston in 2017.

Scott was limited with his strength training and conditioning during the beginning of last offseason. His throwing program was delayed until mid-December.

"It was a completely different offseason than I've ever had," Scott said. "I hadn't had a surgery before. So the rehab and treatment and all that kind of stuff was obviously completely different than what I'm used to throughout the offseason."

He allowed six runs, 10 hits and five walks in 6.2 innings during spring training.

"Obviously it was a little bit of a struggle this spring training getting into the swing of things after the surgery," Scott said. "Just kind of retraining the whole, new arm. And then just kind of getting back into the swing of things early in the year in Pawtucket and getting off to a good start.

"And then having a couple opportunities up here throughout the year. Obviously they didn't go as well as I had hoped," Scott added. "But at the same time, going back down there (to Triple A) and just realizing that I still have the opportunity to go out there and play. And I still have a job to do."

Pitching coach Dana LeVangie and manager Alex Cora wanted Scott to approve vs. right-handed batters this season.

He held left-handed batters to a .148 batting average and right-handed hitters to a .228 average at Pawtucket this year.

Right-handed batters hit .246 against him compared to lefties hitting .121 vs. him with the Red Sox in 2017.

"I think if you kind of look at numbers and the splits from last year, it wouldn't necessarily be the batting averages that stick out to you," Scott said. "It's probably the damage pitches that were the biggest thing. So limiting impact on those damage counts, 2-0, 2-1. Pitch selection in those counts. Not giving in. Not necessarily having to throw a fastball in that count.

"I've been working on speed differential between fastballs and changeups, trying to get a little bit more variation in that range," Scott added. "And also being able to throw my curveball for strikes more often. It's just basic stuff that needed to be addressed and needed to be cleaned up."

How one pitch from Boston Red Sox lefty David Price changed his whole season

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Out of the 2,535 pitches David Price has thrown for the Red Sox this year, one stands out: a 2-0 cutter with the bases loaded to Tigers catcher James McCann on July 20.

Almost two months later, virtually everyone has forgotten about that game (a 1-0 Red Sox win), let alone that specific pitch. But not Price.

"If there's one pitch in the second half that's really propelled me to do what I have, it's that 2-0 cutter for a called strike," Price said. "It wasn't an out. It wasn't a swing or miss. It was just a well-executed pitch."

That night in Detroit, in Boston's first game back from the All-Star break, Price retired the first nine Tigers he faced before giving up three singles in a row to start the fourth in a 1-0 game. He got John Hicks to line out before facing McCann and missing with a two-seamer and cutter to get the count to 2-0.

Price then reached back and threw an 88 mph cutter that was called a strike on the outside part of the plate. He went back to his cutter with the next pitch, getting a swinging strike, before eventually striking McCann out on a 3-2 changeup.

Price got a called strike with his cutter against the next batter, Victor Martinez, who lined out to right field to end the inning. And though no one knew it at the time, gained a ton of confidence in a pitch that would be lethal for the entire second half.

Price's seven scoreless innings against the Blue Jays on Wednesday night dropped his second-half ERA to 1.56 over nine starts since the All-Star break. As he has ascended into the staff ace in the absence of Chris Sale, the cutter has been an exceedingly important pitch.

Entering Wednesday's start, Price had thrown his cutter 28.1 percent of the time this season, up significantly from his first two years in Boston (19.2 percent in 2016, 20.8 percent in 2017). That number has increased even more in the second half, as he has thrown it for 28.6 percent of pitches while hitters have hit just .180 against it.

Price's cutter use jumped dramatically starting on July 20, when he threw it for 32.29 percent of his pitches against Detroit after averaging 22.7 percent in his five previous starts. Since, he's thrown it for more than 25 percent of his pitches in seven of nine starts, including three scoreless outings.

Price's use of the cutter has allowed him to increase usage of his changeup, which has been a dominant pitch in recent outings. While the changeup has rightfully made headlines, everything works in concert, allowing Price to show his full arsenal in what has been his best stretch since signing with Boston in Dec. 2015.

If the Red Sox do accomplish their end goal of winning the World Series this year, Price will be a major part of it. Boston might just have to thank a random pitch in mid-July for all of it.

Red Sox win 100 games for first time in 72 years, Price tosses 7 shutout innings to beat Blue Jays

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- The Red Sox have 100 wins in a season for the first time in 72 years.

Boston beat the Blue Jays 1-0 here at Fenway Park on Wednesday to improve to 100-46.

The 2018 Red Sox became the first Red Sox team to win 100 games since the 1946 club did it. Boston is five wins away from tying the franchise record for most victories in a season (105) held by the 1912 Red Sox.

Winningest teams in Red Sox history:

1912 Red Sox: 105 wins

1946 Red Sox: 104 wins

1915 Red Sox: 101 wins

2018 Red Sox: 100 wins

1978 Red Sox: 99 wins

Price dominates

David Price pitched another gem. He tossed 7 shutout innings, allowing only three hits and no walks while striking out seven.

Price improved to 6-0 with a 1.82 ERA (64.1 innings, 13 earned runs), 0.84 WHIP and 68 strikeouts compared to nine walks in his past 10 starts dating back to July 12.

The lefty threw 33 two-seam fastballs, averaging 93.3 mph and topping out at 94.5 mph, per Baseball Savant. He mixed in 31 changeups, 18 cutters and 10 four-seam fastballs.

Boston Red Sox lefty David Price is 0-8 with a 5.74 ERA (37 earned runs, 58 innings) in nine postseason starts, but his numbers are worse than he has pitched.

Steven Wright takes care of the eighth

Knuckleballer Steven Wright pitched the eighth inning, setting up for Craig Kimbrel in the ninth.

Wright allowed a leadoff double and walk. But he then struck out Kevin Pillar swinging, retired Billy McKinney on a forceout and got Devon Travis to line out to right field.

Kimbrel fired a scoreless ninth.

Sox take 1-0 lead

The Red Sox took a 1-0 lead in the fifth inning against Blue Jays starter Aaron Sanchez. Mitch Moreland walked. Rafael Devers reached on a forceout.

Brock Holt singled through the shift to put runners at the corners with one out. Sandy Leon flied out to shallow right field for the second out. But Sanchez threw a wild pitch that scored Devers.

Chris Sale injury: Left-hander's recovery 'positive' one day after start vs. Blue Jays

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox left-hander Chris Sale showed encouraging signs Wednesday afternoon in his recovery from his first start back from the disabled list Tuesday night.

"Everything seems that he's okay," said manager Alex Cora. "Just regular soreness. I guess Day 1 after the start-- it was a positive."

Sale was slated to play catch Wednesday and throw a bullpen Friday before starting against the Mets at Fenway Park on Sunday. He is slated for about three innings in that start after throwing a scoreless inning against Toronto on Tuesday.

"He's encouraged," Cora said. "Yesterday, his first big-league outing, he was all over the place. He admitted it. The game kind of sped up on him. Right away, double. It's like, oh, wait a minute. He'll be fine. At the end, he struck out two and induced somebody to pop up. I know Sunday will be better."

Sale's start Tuesday was his first major-league outing since Aug. 11 and just his second since July 27 due to shoulder inflammation. Boston is hoping to build him up for the postseason and will likely have him pitch twice more after his start Sunday.

Matt Barnes injury: Red Sox reliever throws for third straight day, but no bullpen session scheduled

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- Red Sox setup man Matt Barnes (hip inflammation) played catch for a third straight day Wednesday.

"He's feeling better," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. 'He played Monday. He played catch yesterday. He's playing catch today. Nothing yet as far as scheduling a bullpen. But it's good to see him go out there and play catch."

Cora revealed last Friday that Barnes has been dealing with a sore hip and an MRI revealed inflammation.

He last pitched Monday in Atlanta. He has a 3.39 ERA and 1.20 WHIP in 58 outings (58.1 innings).

*** *RedSox.com***

Price dominates as Sox reach 100-win plateau

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- For each victory by the Red Sox this season, an action shot has been posted in manager Alex Cora's office to serve as a lasting memory of what went right that particular day.

You can be sure that David Price will be the player pictured from Wednesday night, when he was masterful in leading the way to a 1-0 triumph vs. the Blue Jays that gave the Red Sox 100 wins in a season for the first time since 1946.

The last Red Sox pitcher to win the 100th game of the season for the club was the late Dave "Boo" Ferriss. Seventy two years later, Price earned that distinction, stifling the Blue Jays over seven marvelous innings in which he allowed three hits, walked none and struck out seven.

"Pretty crazy," said Price. "As a storied franchise as the Red Sox are, that's pretty cool. They've had a lot of really good teams here and to be in that same conversation with those teams, that's a lot of consistency."

Speaking of consistency, this latest performance was the continuation of what has easily been Price's best stretch in three years with Boston. In his nine starts since the All-Star break, Price is 5-0 with a 1.56 ERA. He continues to own Toronto, improving to 21-3 lifetime against his former team.

The surge by Price couldn't have come at a better time, given that ace Chris Sale has pitched just six innings since the start of August due to left shoulder inflammation.

"I have heard and read what David had to say about this is the guy the organization signed a few years ago and he's here now, and you can see he's in control," said Cora. "He's under control the whole time out there. Inside part of the plate, outside part of the plate, changeup, fastball up, he's been amazing and he's been very important. You lose one of your horses and the other guys have to step up. It's not that he had to but he did -- and he's been great."

The changeup was a top weapon for Price -- he threw 31 of them, generating 10 swings and misses.

"It was a very big pitch," Price said. "Being able to throw it if I was behind in the count, or ahead in the count being able to locate it down, that's a big key for that pitch for me. To be able to execute that pitch, for the most part wherever I was trying to throw it, that was big."

A day after clinching a spot in the playoffs, the 100-46 Red Sox moved another step closer to the American League East title, reducing their magic number to seven after the Twins beat the Yankees, 3-1, at Target Field.

Boston is just six wins from establishing a new franchise record for wins in a season, which is currently held by the 1912 team.

"The main goal now is to win 101," said Price. "Like I said, this team is real focused on today. Today is over, so we want to get to 101. That's what we've done all year long. That's why we have 100 wins right now. That's what we need to continue to do."

It was clear from the outset that Price had his very best stuff. He retired the first 13 batters he faced until Yangervis Solarte smacked a clean single with one out in the fifth.

Aaron Sanchez was also shutting down the Red Sox, but they were able to plate the lone run of the game in the bottom of the fifth when Rafael Devers scored on a wild pitch.

The one run proved to be enough on a night Boston achieved a three-digit milestone.

"It's been fun," said J.D. Martinez. "We've played good ball all year. We've had our downs, we've had our ups, but I think the biggest thing is we've been consistent."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Wright's escape: Cora went to knuckleballer Steven Wright as the eighth-inning guy, with the Red Sox clinging to that 1-0 lead. Wright started on shaky ground, serving up a double to Rowdy Tellez and walking Danny Jansen. But the righty buckled down and got the next three batters, giving a clean handoff to Craig Kimbrel, who recorded his 39th save in the ninth.

"Today was a little bit tough at first, but I was able to get the ball down," Wright said. "It sucks when you give up a double and walk a guy, but I knew I just had to bear down. It's one of those things. You can get in a lot of stuff, but get out of a lot of stuff."

SOUND SMART

Cora became the first manager to lead a team to 100-plus wins in his first year with a team since Felipe Alou (2003 Giants). Cora is the first rookie manager to win 100 games since Dusty Baker (1993 Giants).

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

In the top of the fifth, Kendrys Morales hit one deep in the hole and Xander Bogaerts slid on one knee to field it. He then got up and made a cannon throw to first in time to get the the slow-footed Morales for the first out of the inning.

HE SAID IT

"Like I said yesterday, proud of the guys, proud of the medical staff, the organization, the coaches. It seems like everything was clicking in Fort Myers, [Fla.] and we haven't deviated from the plan. We've been very consistent on a daily basis of preparing, going out there and playing. Don't get me wrong, 100 is 100, but we've got bigger goals, honestly. Today we got closer. We're getting closer to one of the goals and we've got to keep playing." -- Cora

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

It looked like Bogaerts might get a double in the bottom of the fourth when he laced one to left, and Teoscar Hernandez dropped it on the dive. As Bogaerts motored in, it looked like he might have gotten in under the tag of second baseman Devon Travis. However, Bogaerts was ruled out. Cora called for a challenge, but the initial call was upheld.

UP NEXT

Eduardo Rodriguez (12-4, 3.64 ERA) will close out this three-game series against the Blue Jays when he pitches on Thursday night. Rodriguez was brilliant in his first start back from the disabled list and shaky in his second outing. He'll try to get back on track in this one against a team he has fared well against this season, going 2-0 with a 2.41 ERA in three starts. The Jays counter with righty Sam Gaviglio (3-8, 5.25 ERA). First pitch is scheduled for 7:10 p.m. ET.

Sale good to go for Sunday against deGrom

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- When Alex Cora bumped into Chris Sale in the weight room on Wednesday afternoon, he could tell the ace had bounced back well from his one-inning "opener" on Tuesday.

That upbeat demeanor was about all Cora needed to see to officially line Sale up for his next step, a three-inning stint against the Mets on Sunday in which he'll be opposed by a fellow stud pitcher in Jacob deGrom.

"He's encouraged," said Cora. "Yesterday was his first big league outing, and like he was all over the place -- and he admitted it. And the game sped up with him right away with the double and it's like, 'Oh, wait a minute. I've got to compete.' But he'll be fine. At the end he struck out two, induced a popup. I know Sunday will be better."

After facing the Mets, Sale will next pitch on Sept. 21 in Cleveland and his final start of the regular season is expected to be Sept. 26 at home against the Orioles.

From there, Sale would have eight days of rest before Game 1 of the American League Division Series, but the Red Sox would probably keep him busy with batting practice or perhaps a simulated game.

"He's going to play catch today," said Cora. "He's throwing a bullpen [session] on Friday and we'll go from there. Everything seems that he's OK. Just regular soreness. For Day 1 after the start, it was a positive."

Long night for Cora after clinch

Though the Red Sox accomplished their first goal by clinching a postseason berth on Tuesday night, it was not a restful night at home for Cora. Once again, the manager provided some humor in his pregame media session on Wednesday with talk about his 1-year-old twin sons, Xander and Isander.

"Rough night by the twins, honestly, last night. They were awful," said Cora. "They woke up every hour last night. If anybody has any ideas for them to sleep the whole night, send me an e-mail. That was bad."

Once Cora wiped the sand out of his eyes, he received many complimentary text messages from friends and family members for the Red Sox becoming the first MLB team this season to clinch a ticket to the postseason.

"There are a lot of people that are proud of what, supposedly, I'm doing," said Cora. "Like I tell everybody, I'm proud of the group. This is a group, [and] they have high expectations. The goal is to win the World Series."

Barnes getting better

The Red Sox have been without setup man Matt Barnes for the past 10 days, as he has been dealing with inflammation in his left hip.

"He's feeling better," Cora said. "He played catch Monday, he played catch yesterday and he's playing catch today. Nothing yet as far as scheduling or a bullpen [session], but [it's] good to see him go out there and play catch."

*** *WEEI.com***

Cora on OMF: Sale feels good, remains on track to be ready for start of playoffs

John Tomase

Red Sox manager Alex Cora believes Chris Sale is on track to contribute in the postseason after throwing one inning in his return to the mound on Tuesday night.

Making his weekly visit on OMF on Wednesday, Cora said Cora feels better the day after starting than he did after either of his last two starts, each of which resulted in a stint on the disabled list.

"I think he's going to be honest and comparing his situation, compared to when he went on the DL and after Baltimore, he feels good," Cora said. "He feels good."

The next step for Sale is playing catch on Wednesday in advance of Sunday's start against the Mets. Cora hopes he throws three or four innings before stretching out to six or seven innings in his final start of the season, against the Orioles in late September. That would leave Sale with eight or nine days of rest before the Division Series begins on Oct. 5.

On Tuesday against the Blue Jays, Sale exhibited some rust. He allowed a double and struck out two in one inning, throwing 26 pitches and 14 strikes.

"He didn't pitch for so long that his mechanics were off," Cora said. "He was excited, actually, a little bit anxious. You heard him. His mechanics were out of whack and the game sped up on him, which is like, wow, that happens to the best of the best. He made some good pitches, the fastball was 96, 97, the slider was OK, and he was able to get out of it."

Cora decided against giving Sale a second inning, preferring that he throw 12 more pitches in the bullpen.

When all was said and done, Cora liked what he had seen and what it means for October.

"He will be where he needs to be," Cora declared. "We're counting on this guy in October, and I feel confident that he's going to contribute."

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

Forget the future for a moment. Enjoy the present.

Evan Drellich

BOSTON — There was a small toast after win No. 99 in the Red Sox clubhouse. On Wednesday, the day of win No. 100, manager Alex Cora was more effusive about a mistake he made in the dugout a night earlier than he was celebrating a victory that does, yes, mean something.

MORE - Sale Project could put Red Sox over edge

They're 100-46. If the regular season is aptly compared to marathon, the Sox' march to the finish line now in September after a beautiful race shouldn't be ignored because of the sprint that awaits.

"Like I said yesterday, proud of the guys, proud of the medical staff, the organization, the coaches," Cora said after a 1-0 nailbiter over the Blue Jays. "It seems like everything was clicking in Fort Myers, and we haven't deviated from the plan. We've been very consistent on a daily basis of preparing, going out there, and playing.

"Don't get me wrong, 100 is 100, but we've got bigger goals, honestly. Today we got closer. We're getting closer to one of the goals and we've got to keep playing."

We know, they know, you know. Everyone knows: October or bust. But the unpredictable nature of baseball's postseason awaits, and the winter will probably be spent one of two ways: lamenting why the Sox couldn't win it all, or celebrating the fact that they did.

These 100 wins — and likely, the franchise record of at least 106 wins this team likely will finish with — may never really get its due. If the Sox lose in the first or second round, or even the World Series, they should nonetheless be able to appreciate how dominant they were this regular season.

The Sox should not substitute postseason success with regular season success, or mix up priorities. But there's no need to pretend that this accomplishment is small, or meaningless.

Cora is the first manager to lead a team to 100-plus wins in his 1st season as a skipper since Dusty Baker did it with the Giants in 1993. The Giants went 103-59, a mark Cora's group will likely beat.

"The main goal now is to win 101," said David Price, whose renewed changeup-backdoor cutter combination has made him look like the best David Price Boston has seen yet. "This team is real focused on today. Today is over, so we want to get to 101. That's what we've done all year long. That's why we have 100 wins right now. That's what we need to continue to do."

That is probably true. But reflection is OK. It's deserved. (Price, being Price, would probably be criticized were he to be reflective publicly at this point.)

Had you predicted a year ago that the first season of triple-digit wins in Red Sox history since 1946 would come with the help of Price gem, you likely would have been called a loon. But that's the turnaround, perhaps, in a nutshell: Price is dominant, and the Sox are not just good, they're historically great for the regular season.

Many things that had to be corrected from a 93-win season a year ago — that's an odd thought still, isn't it, correcting a 93-win season — have been fixed. Most, in fact.

The Sox' sustained position as the best team in baseball by record means a lot. Cora's excellence, Price's excellence, J.D. Martinez's unreal hitting, Mookie Betts' MVP candidacy and so on — all of it reflects well on Dave Dombrowski, on Sam Kennedy, on John Henry and Tom Werner.

The future can wait. October can wait. The Sox will soak in champagne in the near future, and the division. But it doesn't have to be one night, the night they clinch, where what they've done is considered at length. A 162-game season can be enjoyed on more than one night. The regular season isn't meaningless. It is, actually, a better show of skill and superiority than the postseason — at least in some ways. Many ways. But we can save that conversation for another day.

Today, and in the coming days, the Red Sox organization and Red Sox fans should start to have moments of reflection, not just thoughts ahead.

*** NESN.com**

Red Sox Wrap: David Price Tosses Gem In Boston's 100th Win Of Season

Lauren Campbell

One day after clinching a playoff berth, the Boston Red Sox reached another milestone in their spectacular season. Boston secured its 100th win of the season Wednesday night thanks to some lights-out pitching from David Price, beating the Toronto Blue Jays 1-0 in the middle contest of a three-game set at Fenway Park.

Price continuing to showcase his best stuff was key for the Red Sox, as the offense was quiet, scoring its lone run on a passed ball. The Sox now are inching closer to winning the American League East, lowering their magic number to eight. With the win, the Red Sox improved to 100-46, while the Blue Jays slipped to 65-80.

Here's how it all went down:

GAME IN A WORD

Price.

The left-hander has been in peak form since the All-Star break, and Wednesday night was no different.

ON THE BUMP

— Price was brilliant, tossing seven scoreless innings with no walks and seven strikeouts. The southpaw carried a perfect game into the fifth inning, but a Yangervis Solarte one-out single put an end to the perfection. Toronto couldn't capitalize with a runner on though, as Price got the last two outs of the stanza with a lineout and strikeout. With two outs in the second, Solarte again singled, but Price got Teoscar Hernandez to strike out swinging to end the threat and preserve Boston's 1-0 lead. His night concluded after the punch out, as he left to a standing ovation from the Fenway Park crowd.

— Steven Wright pitched the eighth and immediately ran into some trouble as he gave up a leadoff double followed by a walk. But he responded by getting the next three outs, keeping the lead safe.

— Craig Kimbrel put the tying run on via a walk with two outs, but got Dwight Smith Jr. to look at strike three to close out the game, earning save No. 39.

IN THE BATTER'S BOX

— Boston struck first in the fifth inning after Blue Jays starter Aaron Sanchez ran into a bit of trouble. Rafael Devers moved from first to third on a Brock Holt single, and later scored on a wild pitch to give the Red Sox the 1-0 lead.

— The Red Sox threatened to extend the lead in the eighth after Jackie Bradley Jr. doubled and later stole third before Mookie Betts walked. A J.D. Martinez walk loaded the bases for Xander Bogaerts, but the shortstop flied out to end the potential threat.

— Betts, Bogaerts, Holt and Bradley all had a hit for the Red Sox.

— All other Boston batters went hitless.

TWEET OF THE GAME

Dominance.

UP NEXT

The two sides will wrap up their three-game set Thursday at Fenway Park. Eduardo Rodriguez is expected to get the ball for Boston and be opposed by Sam Gaviglio. First pitch is set for 7:10 p.m. ET.

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

McAdam: Red Sox reach 100 ..and counting

Sean McAdam

Even as their championship drought dragged on, year after year — heck, decade after decade — the Red Sox, as a franchise, had themselves some impressive regular seasons. Remember: it was October that always threw them for a loop.

But this was a franchise that won a thrilling four-team pennant race to win the A.L. flag in 1967. Eight years later, they won the AL East and took part in a classic World Series. Three years later, they owned, lost, then re-gained a share of the division title.

They won enough to reach the playoffs several times in the 1990s and again in the early part of this century. Finally, the drought ended with a World Series win in 2004, followed the following year by a first-place tie, then, another pennant and World Series in 2007, and the next year, another trip to the ALCS.

In 2013, they rebounded from a last-place finish the previous year to win the division and another title. And in each of the last two seasons, they captured the A.L. East crown.

But in none of those seasons did the Red Sox manage to do what this year's edition accomplished with a 1 - 0 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays Wednesday night when, for only the fourth time in franchise history and the first time since 1946, the Sox won their 100th game.

It marked the second-straight night of a milestone being realized at Fenway. On Tuesday, the Sox, by virtue of their win over the Jays and some help elsewhere, had assured themselves of a playoff spot, qualifying for the third consecutive year.

But then, reaching the postseason has become the minimum standard for the Red Sox, who have done so 10 times in the last 17 seasons.

The 100 wins, however, was an accomplishment that was a long time in development. Put it this way: to recall the last time it happened, you'd have to be, conservatively, 77 years old.

It never happened over the course of Carl Yastrzemski's long career, which covered parts of three decades. It didn't happen while Jim Rice played. Or, for that matter, Pedro Martinez or Manny Ramirez or David Ortiz. The latter three won some rings — Ortiz has three by himself — but the Sox never won more than 98 regular-season games while any of the trio wore Red Sox uniforms.

Only last year, two American League teams topped the 100-win mark: Houston and Cleveland. But before Wednesday night, the last AL East team to clear that bar was the 2009 Yankees.

"Me personally, I've talked about it with a couple of guys already," mused Mitch Moreland. "I've been pretty fortunate through my career to be on some good teams but I've never been on one, so it's definitely special."

Indeed, Moreland went to the postseason five times while with the Texas Rangers, including back-to-back trips to the World Series. But never did those Texas teams get to 100.

Around the Red Sox clubhouse, there was more of the same. Ian Kinsler played with Moreland in Texas and then was traded to Detroit before the 2014 season. The Tigers won the AL Central, but didn't come close to winning 100.

In fact, in a clubhouse stuffed to the gills with about 37 players, not a one had been on a 100-win team. A number of players — Moreland, Kinsler, J.D. Martinez, David Price, Brandon Phillips, Drew Pomeranz — had made multiple stops in their playing careers before arriving in Boston, and none of them had played on a team with 100 or more victories.

The distinction will mean nothing in a few weeks when the postseason begins, of course. Some teams have won fewer than 90 and won a ring, while the winningest team in modern history, the 2001 Seattle Mariners, never even reached the World Series.

Perhaps that's why manager Alex Cora seemed to almost downplay the achievement.

“Don’t get me wrong — a hundred is a hundred,” Cora said. “But we’ve got bigger goals.”

But in the Red Sox clubhouse, where the feat barely seemed to register, some of his players were quick to credit him with setting the proper tone that has allowed them to reach the milestone — and do it with another 16 games left to play.

“I think he’s been part of keeping us consistent,” said Martinez, “keeping us neutral, not letting us get too high or too low — just keeping us going, really.”

“We stay consistent,” said Price. “We’ve done a tremendous job of that all year long and that starts with A.C. He brings that mindset every single day. There’s never any panic in the dugout, never any panic in the clubhouse.”

Cora — and his players — will come under more scrutiny next month when the playoffs begin and the Red Sox attempt to win their first post-season series since 2013, then try to win it all.

That’s been the goal since spring training, as it should be. But on a Wednesday night in September, whether it seemed like a big deal to them or not, these Red Sox did something no Red Sox team had done before them for the past seven decades.

BSJ Game Report: Red Sox 1, Blue Jays 0 – Price, two relievers pitch in on shutout

Sean McAdam

Price continues to step up: With Chris Sale sidelined for all but seven innings since July 31, someone needed to pick up the slack in the Red Sox starting rotation. David Price to the rescue. Price tossed seven shutout innings Wednesday night and since the All-Star break — which came just a couple of weeks before Sale was shut down for the first time with shoulder inflammation — Price is now 5-0 with 1.56 ERA in a span of nine starts. “David’s one of the best pitchers in the big leagues,” said Alex Cora. “He’s been working on a daily basis to be this guy. He’s under control the whole time out there — the inside part of the plate, the outside part of the plate. He’s been amazing and he’s been very important. You lose one of your horses and you need other guys to step up.” Price retired the first 13 hitters he faced and allowed just three hits — all singles — without a walk over seven innings and allowed only one baserunner to reach second base. Price had a sense warming up prior to the game that he would have good stuff. “That’s probably the best I’ve been other than that rainout game in Baltimore (in July),” Price said. “Tonight was pretty good.” Particularly effective for Price was his changeup, which he threw to start hitters off, and, when necessary, when behind in the count.

Wright gets his chance in a high-leverage spot: Leading 1-0 in the top of the eighth and with Price at 92 pitches, Cora had a decision to make: he went with Steven Wright. Wright created some uncomfortable moments when he yielded a leadoff double to Rowdy Tellez and a four-pitch walk to Danny Jansen, giving the Jays two on and no outs. But just as quickly as he seemed to lose the feel for his knuckler, he regained it. “It was a little bit tough at first,” allowed Wright, “but I was able to get the ball down. That’s all I try to do, is throw strikes. I knew that my knuckleball was a little erratic at first, but I just knew that I had to bear down and get a ground ball.” In the dugout, meanwhile, Cora was trying to remain calm. “He lost it for a little bit,” acknowledged Cora. “That’s the thing — I’m going to have to be a little bit (patient), look away and know he’s going to find it.”

Offense had to claw: The Red Sox had only four hits all night – three singles and a double. Through the first seven innings, they only had multiple baserunners once –but made their chance count. In the fifth, Mitch Moreland walked, got erased on a force play as Rafael Devers reached. Devers went to third on a hit-and-run from Brock Holt, and after Holt swiped second, Toronto starter Aaron Sanchez unleashed a wild pitch then enabled Devers to trot home from third and Holt to move to third. That was all the Sox got — that inning and or any other. But thanks to the pitching of Price, Wright and closer Craig Kimbrel, it was all they needed. It all led to the Red Sox’ third 1-0 victory of the season.

TURNING POINT

The Red Sox had just broken a scoreless tie with a run in the bottom of the fifth when, in the top of the next inning, Toronto outfielder Jonathan Davis singled to right with one out. One out later, with Devon Travis at the plate, Sandy Leon was charged with a passed ball, allowing Davis to go to second, where he represented the tying run in scoring position. But Price got Travis on a flyout to center, providing the shutdown inning the Sox needed and preserving the 1-0 lead.

TWO UP

Craig Kimbrel: The closer issued a two-out walk but otherwise shut down the Blue Jays for his 39th save of the year and career save No. 330, tying him for 14th all-time.

Brock Holt: No pinch-hit homer tonight, but he did nicely execute a hit-and-run in the fifth that helped set up the only run of the game.

ONE DOWN

Andrew Benintendi: A rare hitless night for the outfielder; during his four at-bats, he stranded three baserunners.

QUOTE OF NOTE

“We’re focused on today. Today is over, so we want to get to 101.”
— David Price on reaching 100 wins.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

The Red Sox reached the 100-win plateau for the first time since 1946 and just the fourth time in franchise history.

Cora became the first manager to direct his team to a 100-win season in his first year with the club since Felipe Alou in 2003 and the first to do as a rookie manager since Dusty Baker in 1993.

The Sox are 54 games over .500 for the first time this season.

Boston is 12-2 in its last 14 games against Toronto and since the start of the 2017 season, 27-10.

The shutout was the 14th of the season for the season.

David Price extended his home winning streak to eight straight decisions.

UP NEXT

The Red Sox and Blue Jays conclude their series — and the season series — Thursday night at 7:10 with LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (12-4, 3.64) vs. RHP Sam Gaviglio (3-8, 5.25).

*** *The Athletic***

By the numbers: Red Sox’ path to 100 wins

Chad Jennings

One hundred wins is a one of those sports milestones that ultimately doesn’t mean much – there are no bonus points for reaching triple digits – but still stands as a significant accomplishment; an undeniable sign of a unquestionably good season.

With their 1-0 win on Wednesday, the Red Sox became the first team to reach 100 wins this season, little-needed confirmation that they’re in the driver’s seat of the division and the league.

But it is a milestone, and one that’s especially meaningful for this franchise.

Despite all of their recent success — three championships since 2004, on track for their third straight division title — the Red Sox have not won 100 games in a season since the days of The Splendid Splinter. Curses have been broken, Triple Crowns won and iconic home runs waved fair since the Red Sox last won 100 games in a season.

Here's a look, by the numbers, at the Red Sox latest round number.

72

Years since the Red Sox last won 100 games. Last time it happened was 1946, when Ted Williams was named American League MVP in his first season back from World War II. Bobby Doerr, Johnny Pesky and Dom DiMaggio were also freshly returned from the war and finished third, fourth and ninth in MVP voting. All told, seven of the top 13 MVP finishers were Red Sox that season, which surely helped them win the American League pennant by 12 games over the second-place Tigers and by 55 games over the last place Athletics. That Red Sox team lost to the 98-win Cardinals in the World Series.

1

Year in which the Red Sox won more than 95 games, advanced to the playoffs and failed to win the World Series. That 1946 season is the outlier. For the most part, overwhelming regular season success has translated to playoff success for the Red Sox (when they get there). They've won the World Series five out of the six years in which they've won more than 95 games and advanced to the playoffs (1912, 1915, 2004, 2007, 2013). There were four other years (1948, 1949, 1977, 1978) in which the Red Sox won more than 95 games but failed to make the postseason (before the wild card era). They've already clinched a playoff berth this season.

6

Wins needed to break the franchise record for wins in a season, set in 1912. The Red Sox have 16 games to do it, and they're well ahead of the pace. In their worst 16-game stretch of the season, the Red Sox won eight games, so it would take easily their worst baseball of the season to fall short of the franchise record. Baseball's all-time record, though, is likely out of reach. The 1906 Cubs and 2001 Mariners each won 116 games. The Red Sox would have to go undefeated the rest of the way to tie that mark. They're on pace for 110 wins, which would be tied for the fifth-most in baseball history.

54

Games over .500, the Red Sox' highest such mark of the season. They have finished at least 54 games over .500 only twice in franchise history: their 105-win season in 1912 (58 games over .500) and their 104-win season in 1946 (54 games over .500). When the Red Sox won 101 games in 1915, they were 53 games over .500. The Orioles are 63 games below .500.

8

Franchises that still have not had a 100-win season. The Rays have a good excuse, having been around since only 1998, but the Rangers have existed as a franchise since 1961 and have never won more than 96 games (didn't win 100 during their years as the Washington Senators, either). The Rockies, Padres, Marlins, Brewers, Blue Jays and Nationals have also never won 100 games (And no, the Nationals didn't win 100 as the Expos). The Pirates have won 100 games in a season, but not since 1909. The next-longest drought belongs to the White Sox, who last won 100 games in 1917.

62

Total 100-win seasons since the Red Sox last reached the century mark in 1946. Nineteen different franchises have had a 100-win season since then, led by the Yankees who have done it 11 times in that span. The Braves have done it six times, while the Cardinals, Athletics and Orioles — yes, this year's shambolic Orioles — have done it five times apiece. Twelve different franchises have won 100 games in the 2000s, including the Astros, Indians and Dodgers just last season. The closest the Red Sox came during their 72-year drought was 1978, when they won 99. They won 98 in 2004 and 97 in 2013.

2

Years it took the Diamondbacks to have their first 100-win season. They won 65 games in their inaugural 1998 season, then won 100 the very next year when Randy Johnson struck out 364 and Matt Williams drove in 142.

49

Road wins for the Red Sox this season. They have six road games remaining – against playoff-bound teams in New York and Cleveland – and if they win just one of those, they’ll have at least 50 wins at home and 50 on the road for the first time in franchise history. The most recent Major League teams to do that were the 2011 Phillies (52 home/50 road) and 2008 Angels (50 home, 50 road). The Red Sox are 51-20 at Fenway Park, baseball’s highest home winning percentage this season.

1993

The last time a manager won 100 games in his first season as manager, a feat Red Sox manager Alex Cora has achieved in his debut. The last to do it was Dusty Baker, whose 1993 Giants won 103 but still finished second in the National League West. Baker had the benefit of free agent addition Barry Bonds, who hit 46 home runs in his first year with the team. He also had homegrown MVP candidate Matt Williams, who won Gold Glove and Silver Slugger awards that season. On the mound, Baker had the Cy Young runner-up in Bill Swift and All-Star closer Rod Beck. Cora can surely relate, thanks to J.D. Martinez, Mookie Betts, Chris Sale and Craig Kimbrel.

*** *The Toronto Sun***

Brilliant Aaron Sanchez returns to form as Blue Jays fall just short at Fenway

Rob Longley

BOSTON — In the 24 months and change since Aaron Sanchez finished the 2016 season with the lowest earned run average in the American League, he hasn’t forgotten how to throw a baseball.

He hasn’t lost any significant arm strength, either, nor has the right hander lost the confidence that he can be among the elite in the game.

The challenge now for the 26-year-old Californian is to stay healthy and prove it, something he took a big step towards on Wednesday night at Fenway Park.

Ultimately, Sanchez took the loss in an 1-0 Red Sox victory that featured an outstanding pitching duel with his former Jays teammate David Price. With the win, the Sox hit the 100-win mark for just the fourth time in franchise history and the first since 1946.

“I just know when I get the reps that will come,” said Sanchez, who had his second-longest outing of the season. “I just have to get comfortable again. I know what I’m capable of doing it’s just a matter of staying healthy, really.”

Though frustrated that the lone run he surrendered came on a wild pitch, a fired-up Sanchez was exceptional in what was a massive confidence boost for the star-crossed pitcher, who has essentially had two wasted seasons due to injury

“I’ve always felt that (he can be among the best in the game) and I still think he can,” Jays manager John Gibbons said. “It’s been torture for him out there the last couple of years. He’s back out there and feeling good. Hopefully that’s all behind him.”

Matching Price toe-to-toe and fastball-to-fastball, Sanchez gave up just three hits and one earned run while striking out six. His only wobble came in the fifth when a pitch in the dirt eluded catcher Danny Jansen and brought Mitch Moreland home for the only run of the game.

The seven complete was his longest since he went eight innings way, way back on April 10.

Since then there was a long stint on the disabled list with a bruised finger — a year after missing most of the campaign with a blister on a different digit on his throwing hand.

He has had uneven results in his seven games since returning on Aug. 25, but Wednesday Sanchez renewed the faith the Jays organization has kept in him.

Demonstrative and vocal from the outset — his yells could be heard clearly in the Fenway press box — Sanchez flashed the form that made him the ERA leader two seasons ago.

Gibbons acknowledges that the 24 months since have been excruciating for Sanchez, who was riding a huge wave of confidence when he completed the 2016 season and was on the verge of emerging as one of the best young arms in the game.

“He’s not going to let on with that, but I know him pretty good and I could tell it was bothering him,” Gibbons said. “It’s his career and you only have so many years.

“Shoot, he was on top of the world a couple of years ago. You always want to keep on going (up). He just stopped because of freak things.”

CENTURY CLUB

The 100th win was a significant milestone for the Sox and their Fenway Faithful who are expecting big things over the next month and a half.

With a record of 100-46, they are 54 games above .500 for the first time since 1946. With 16 games remaining, the Sox are just five shy of the club record for wins set in the 1912 season.

A good chunk of that success has come against the Jays as Boston has won 12 of their past 14 against the struggling Toronto squad.

The Sox also reached the 100-win mark in the shortest number of games in club history. The previous team to do it faster was the incredible 2001 Seattle Mariners, who reached the century plateau in 140 contests.

PRICE IS RIGHT

Red Sox starter Price continued his brilliant form since the all star break taking a no-hitter into the fifth before a one-out Yangervis Solarte single ended that drama.

Like Sanchez, Price went seven complete also allowing three hits but struck out seven in his shutout performance. In nine starts since break, the veteran lefty has a 5-0 record with a skimpy 1.56 ERA.

He continued his dominance over the Jays as well, improving to 21-3 in his career.

“He looked like the old guy,” Gibbons said. “I think this will be the year he wins some games in the playoffs. He deserves it.”

AROUND THE BASES

The Jays offence continues to struggle — “Too many strikeouts,” groused Gibbons — scoring just two runs in two games here so far. They were shut out for the 10th time this season ... With the loss, the Jays are at a season-low 15 games below .500. They are also 34.5 games behind the Red Sox, the farthest they’ve been out of the division lead since Sept. 30, 2004 ... Red-hot rookie Rowdy Tellez was back in the lineup at first base and had a double (what else) to lead off the Jays eighth. He’s the first player since 2013 to have seven

doubles in his first seven major league games ... Tellez, a self-professed baseball historian on his first taste of the Fenway Park experience: "Babe Ruth played here. That says a lot." ... The Jays double-A affiliate New Hampshire Fisher Cats moved to within a game of clinching the best-of-five moved to within one win of claiming the Eastern League title. The Cats beat the Akron Rubber Ducks 6-1 on Wednesday and can wrap up the title at home in Manchester, N.H. on Friday ... A man sitting in the box seats at the game was hit on the forehead by a bat that slipped out of Devon Travis' hands in the eighth inning. The bat cleared the netting along the baseline and landed about 15 rows up in the box seats, about midway between third base and home plate. Security scrambled for towels and a stretcher was brought to take the man. He walked to the stretcher and sat on it and was wheeled away.

*** *The Toronto Star***

David Price outduels Jays' Aaron Sanchez as Red Sox get to 100 wins

Richard Griffin

A hard-fought 1-0 loss against the Red Sox on Wednesday at Fenway Park was a reminder for fans of what the Blue Jays had just three seasons ago. David Price, the former Jays lefty, and right-hander Aaron Sanchez — both of whom were integral to the Jays winning the AL East in 2015 and ending a 22-year playoff drought — locked up in an old-fashioned pitchers' duel. It was decided by a couple of defensive miscues behind Sanchez in the fifth inning.

Price, who ran his career record against the Jays to 21-6, retired the first 13 batters he faced before Yangervis Solarte lined a single to centre field with one out in the fifth inning. Jays rookie Jonathan Davis looped a single to right in the sixth, the first hit of his major-league career. Price allowed just three hits through his seven innings as the Jays dropped to a dismal 1-8 at Fenway this year.

Sanchez was making his fourth start since returning from the disabled list due to a finger issue. He matched zeroes with Price through four innings and had a chance to escape the fifth, but two defensive plays not made were the difference.

With Mitch Moreland on first base, Rafael Devers grounded softly to Devon Travis. Moreland stopped in the baseline to force Travis to come to him for the tag. But Travis tangled up with the big first baseman on the tag and was unable to complete the throw to complete the double play. Following a perfect hit-and-run by Brock Holt, rookie catcher Danny Jansen carelessly reached for a curveball in the dirt instead of dropping to block it. The pitch went to the backstop and Devers scored the only run in Sanchez's seven innings.

The Jays record dropped to 15 games below .500 for the first time since Sept. 26, 2013, and they are now 34 1/2 games behind the leading Red Sox, the furthest they have trailed in the division at any time since Sept. 30, 2004. Boston is now 100-46.

Following his half-season with the Jays in 2015, Price signed a seven-year deal with the Red Sox that included an opt-out after three years. The option to abandon four years and \$127 million to seek a better deal was brought up to Price in the midst of his best season in Boston.

"Why would I leave here to go to a team that's not as good as this team?" Price told MassLive. "I came here to win. I don't worry about all the other stuff. Just come here to win. We're going to have a really good chance to do that."

The Price decision may not be as noble and loyal as it seems. That is a lot of guaranteed money, an average of almost \$32 million for the next four years, to try and match as a free agent in the off-season. The same teams that competed the last time would be competing again, likely minus the Red Sox. Despite some rocky moments in Boston, what do they say about a bird in the hand?

Meanwhile, Sanchez continued to impress in his preparation for a full season in 2019. The 2016 AL ERA leader posted his second consecutive quality start since returning from his finger injury.

*** *Associated Press***

Red Sox reach 100 wins for 1st time since '46, beat Jays 1-0

BOSTON -- The scoreboards at Fenway Park were all flashing "100 WINS" to celebrate the Red Sox reaching the milestone for the first time since Ted Williams returned from World War II.

David Price was already thinking about No. 101.

"That's what we've done all year," Price said on Wednesday night after pitching seven innings of three-hit ball to beat the Toronto Blue Jays 1-0. "That's why we have 100 wins right now."

Price (15-6) struck out seven to win his sixth straight decision, leaving after 92 pitches with a lead earned when Rafael Devers scampered home on a wild pitch by Aaron Sanchez (4-6) in the fifth inning. The Red Sox left-hander is unbeaten in 11 starts and is 5-0 with a 1.56 ERA in five starts since the All-Star break.

Steven Wright pitched the eighth and Craig Kimbrel got three outs for his 39th save, and Boston's magic number for clinching the AL East dropped to seven over the second-place New York Yankees.

"Don't get me wrong; 100 is 100. But we've got bigger goals, obviously," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "Today we got closer to one of those goals."

A night after becoming the first major league team this year to clinch a playoff spot, Boston won for the 10th time in 14 games and moved a season-high 54 games above .500 for the first time since the 1946 team of Williams, Johnny Pesky, Bobby Doerr and Dom DiMaggio went 104-50.

The Red Sox need only to go 6-10 the rest of the season to break the franchise record of 105 wins, set in 1912. Boston also won 101 games in 1915.

"Somebody just told me it's been done three times here and the last one was 70-something years ago," first baseman Mitch Moreland said. "I think that speaks for itself."

BLUE BLUE JAYS

Sanchez allowed three hits and struck out six, allowing the game's only run after Moreland walked to lead off the fifth. Devers reached on a fielder's choice and took third when Brock Holt poked a single through the hole at shortstop on a hit-and-run.

Sanchez bounced a 2-2 pitch to Jackie Bradley Jr. in the dirt and past catcher Danny Jansen to the backstop, allowing Devers to score.

"I love Price. I keep in touch with Price even to this day," said Sanchez, who was teammates with Price in Toronto in 2015. "To go out there and match what he's doing. ... Just to go out there and have a special night like that was fun. It's unfortunate they scored the way they did and we lost the way we did."

Toronto fell to 1-8 at Fenway Park this year and dropped to a season-worst 15 games below .500.

DOUBLE DUTY

Rowdy Tellez has seven doubles in his first seven games, the most for any player in the majors since 1908. Jonathan Davis had his first major league hit for Toronto, which hasn't won back-to-back games since Aug. 24-25.

CENTURY CLUB

Cora is the first manager with 100 wins in his first season with a club since Felipe Alou with the 2003 San Francisco Giants and the first in his initial season as a big league manager since Dusty Baker with the 1993 Giants.

FOR SALE

Cora said Chris Sale, who returned to the mound on Tuesday night for the first time since Aug. 12, did not report any issues with his left shoulder. Sale was scheduled to play catch on Wednesday and throw a bullpen session on Friday. The plan is for him to pitch three innings against the New York Mets.

"He's encouraged," Cora said. "Yesterday was like his first big league outing. He was all over the plate. He admitted it -- the game sped up on him."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Blue Jays: RHP Marcus Stroman, who hasn't pitched since Sept. 3 because of a blister on his right index finger, may be done for the year, manager John Gibbons said.

Red Sox: RHP Matt Barnes who hasn't pitched since Sept. 4 because of left hip inflammation, played catch on Monday and Tuesday, and he was scheduled to do so again on Wednesday.

UP NEXT

Blue Jays: RHP Sam Gaviglio (3-8) pitches the series finale on Thursday night.

Red Sox: LHP Eduardo Rodriguez (12-4) takes the mound for Boston.