

The Boston Red Sox Wednesday, October 31, 2018

*** *The Boston Globe***

Red Sox pick up Chris Sale's option for 2019

Peter Abraham

The Red Sox on Tuesday picked up their \$15 million option on Chris Sale for 2019.

Sale was 12-4 with a 2.11 earned run average over 27 starts in the regular season for the Sox. The All-Star lefthander struck out 237 over 158 innings with only 34 walks.

Sale started three games in the postseason and relieved twice. He had a 4.11 ERA in those games and struck out the final three batters of the World Series on Sunday.

The decision to retain Sale, while seemingly simple, also indicates that his two stints on the disabled list with shoulder inflammation are not a precursor to surgery.

Barring an extension, Sale would become a free agent after next season.

Two Red Sox players face a Wednesday deadline on their contract options. Infielder Eduardo Nunez holds a \$5 million option for 2019. The 31-year-old is sure to exercise that after his OPS fell from .801 to .677 this season.

Lefthander David Price can opt out of the final four years and \$127 million remaining on his contract to become a free agent.

Price was 16-7 with a 3.58 in 30 starts during the regular season, then was 3-1 with a 3.46 ERA in six postseason games.

At 33, Price likely could not command a guaranteed \$127 million as a free agent. Jake Arrieta, at 32, landed a three-year, \$75 million deal from the Phillies last winter.

To a man, Red Sox cite Nathan Eovaldi's performance as their inspiration

Tara Sullivan

LOS ANGELES — With one mistake pitch, Nathan Eovaldi lost a game. But he may have won the Red Sox a World Series.

Ask yourself this: Was there any moment bigger, any stretch more important, any effort more significant than what Eovaldi did in Game 3 Friday night in Los Angeles? Yes, Steve Pearce was a deserving MVP for his eight RBIs on four World Series hits, and yes, David Price was an equally deserving candidate for his two victories, including the clincher, and one relief appearance.

But if there is an award for MVM (most valuable moment), give that to Eovaldi. It was his Herculean effort in the 18-inning marathon loss that reverberated most strongly across a locker room positively thrumming under the bonds of fraternity, a touchstone in the series to remind these already close-knit players just how much they were willing to do for each other.

Six-plus innings in relief. Ninety-seven pitches out of the pen. Hundred-mile-an-hour fastballs until the very end, from an arm with an elbow ligament twice repaired by Tommy John surgery.

It was as strong a testament to stamina, courage, and guts as any of his teammates had ever seen on a baseball field, the definition of putting team above self, from a guy who'd only joined the team at the trade deadline. It served as both inspiration and incentive to everyone around him to replace the utter unfairness of his being tagged with a loss with the absolute joy of winning a championship.

They felt like they owed him, and they went out and delivered.

"What Nathan did, that just . . . we didn't even feel like we lost that game because of what he went out there and did," Rick Porcello said on the Dodger Stadium field following Sunday night's 5-1 championship-clinching win, two nights after Eovaldi had surrendered a walkoff home run to Max Muncy.

Turns out we had it all wrong after Muncy's hit. Where we thought we'd find a shellshocked team staggering in the rubble of a devastating loss, we found a group of comrades steeled by resolve and ready for more. Where we thought we'd find a manager stewing in the regret of lost opportunity, we found a leader moved by his players' effort, spurred to gather his troops.

Alex Cora isn't much for team meetings, but he called a short one in the clubhouse following the seven-hour, 20-minute game. He told his players how proud he was of them. He singled out Eovaldi. The room stood up and applauded. Porcello wiped away tears. They would not be his last.

"Tonight we got that final out and kind of let it all come pouring out," Porcello said Sunday. "I'm sorry. I can't stop crying. It's just so cool."

The performance drew praise from all corners. There was reliever Joe Kelly, another of the unsung heroes of this championship, pulling his aching body out of bed Saturday morning and chastising himself for even thinking he was sore.

"I thought about Nate," Kelly said later, "and Nate's probably even more sore. Just try to get some momentum off that guy and come in the game, thinking to myself, 'If I could pitch half as good as Nate, it might go well.'"

"He grinded out there. And that was very, very impressive. And I don't think I've ever seen it on a baseball field before. It was awesome."

Eovaldi was the talk of the Series.

From Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw: "You don't have to be an expert to appreciate that. It was really, really impressive. Just pitching in Games 1 and 2, one day off. I know he's pitched in the bullpen some, but he's basically a starter this year. So to do that, it's incredible."

"I played with Nate over here for a little bit [2011 and '12], and he's just freakishly strong. Obviously has an incredible arm. But just to be able to do that says a lot about him. It's really impressive."

From Dodgers manager Dave Roberts: "I appreciate everything about what he did. I'm on the other side, but I'm a baseball fan, I'm a sports fan. And when you see people like that perform at the highest level and to stay focused, appreciating that that was three out of four [games] for him, to go 90-plus pitches, hold his stuff, use his mix and take three at-bats, I think, last night and still keep going and give his team a chance to win, those are moments that don't come by very often."

From his own manager, Cora: "Effort-wise, I don't know, World Series, that was one of the best performances probably in the history of the World Series. I told him how proud I was of him. The effort was amazing . . . probably one of the best, if not the best, game I've ever been a part of. The effort from both sides. What Nate did tonight, that was amazing. That was amazing."

And from his teammates too.

Chris Sale: “That was nothing short of incredible. I don’t know if there’s anybody that’s ever done what he’s done, given the scenario. We’re in Game 1, Game 2, and Game 3 of the World Series, freezing cold weather in Boston, worse the second night than the first night. And then we have a six-hour travel day, where there’s not a whole lot of movement.

“And then he threw seven innings in the most high-leverage game of the year. Check the book, I don’t know, but that’s incredible by any standard. I don’t care who you are, what you’ve seen, that’s impressive.”

Jackie Bradley Jr.: “Can’t put it into words. Tremendous. Amazing. Spectacular. I want him on my side 10 out of 10 times. Nothing but love. Nothing but love. That was pretty special, for him to be able to put up zero after zero after zero on the board. He wasn’t even scheduled to pitch. But we had that all-hands-on-deck mentality, and unbelievable. Unbelievable.”

Ian Kinsler, whose earlier error had cost Eovaldi the win: “He picked us up so big, he picked me up after that play. Working that late into the game and that many pitches, it’s extremely impressive.”

And from Porcello: “The most incredible pitching performance I’ve ever seen.”

The only one who didn’t seem so impressed? The man himself.

“Everybody had my back and my support tonight, that means a lot to me as a player,” Eovaldi said after the game, standing on the field until the last question was asked. “That’s pretty much all you can ask for is your teammates have your back. It’s special.”

The cap and spikes Eovaldi wore are on their way to Cooperstown, a fitting Hall of Fame home for a forever hall of fame moment.

This Red Sox championship was largely homegrown

Alex Speier

On the field at Dodger Stadium, on a night when Mookie Betts’s first career playoff home run offered one of many punctuation marks to a Red Sox championship, Ethan Faggett laughed at the memory of Betts’s first game in professional baseball. The team’s assistant director of Florida operations was present at the extended spring training complex on Aug. 26, 2011, when Betts fielded a ball at shortstop and fired to first.

“He had a ball hit to him, a ball in the hole, fielded it, set his feet, threw it a little wide of first,” recalled Faggett. “It should have been caught – it was catchable. [The first baseman] didn’t catch it. And he stares him down and throws his hands up.

“Our field coordinator calls him over and says, ‘Hey, bud, this is pro ball. We don’t do that. You’re supposed to uplift your players, not show them up.’

“Ever since then, he did a wonderful job of adjusting. But it was interesting.

“I just remember that play. It was kind of startling because he was so good, so talented. The way that it developed, it was interesting that it happened that way, and that he sort of was pulled by the collar a little bit.”

Betts was just 18 at the time; early this month, as the playoff run was beginning, he turned 26. He has grown up in the Red Sox organization, absorbing those early-career lessons and emerging as a leader of a championship team, one who does indeed uplift teammates (he was a mentor to Rafael Devers, for instance) and who blossomed into the best player in the game this year.

For so many in the Red Sox organization — scouts, coaches, front office members — the World Series brought up similar memories of the early-career moments of a homegrown core, and with good reason. The composition of this team was drastically different from the ones that preceded it this century.

The 2004 team pulled together mostly players who'd been acquired by trade and free agency. The pillars of the 2007 team likewise were paired with outside talent, but they were complemented by a homegrown wave (Rookie of the Year Dustin Pedroia, Jacoby Ellsbury, Jon Lester).

In 2013, the team had a few homegrown veterans in their last run together but otherwise was built chiefly on a raft of free-agent signings while waiting for the next championship core to form.

In that sense, 2018 was very different. While the signature offseason acquisitions of the last three years — David Price in December 2015, Chris Sale in December 2016, and J.D. Martinez in February 2018 — all had enormous impact, the foundation was laid by a still-young homegrown core that grew up together.

In 2012, the Red Sox featured a wildly talented team in High A Salem. Xander Bogaerts, Jackie Bradley Jr., Christian Vazquez, Matt Barnes, and Brandon Workman all were teammates on that club, just as they were on the 2018 major league team. That season, at a time when the Red Sox were on the road to a train wreck of a last-place finish in the big leagues, team officials drew some solace from what they were seeing in Salem.

The same was true of the Double A Portland Sea Dogs in 2014 (a team that featured Betts and Blake Swihart) and the Single A Greenville Drive in 2015, where it wasn't hard to see big leaguers everywhere, with Andrew Bentinendi and Devers the holdovers from a group that included several high-ceiling prospects who were traded for key pieces of the 2018 club (Yoan Moncada and Michael Kopech went to Chicago in the Sale deal; Javy Guerra was part of the package for Craig Kimbrel; Jalen Beeks landed Nathan Eovaldi).

The 2018 Red Sox were the most homegrown Boston championship club this century. It was not a group thrown together but one that has grown up together, was supplemented with a few key players, and now has won it all together.

"It's awesome," said Barnes, who was drafted in 2011 along with Betts and Bradley. "It makes it a little bit sweeter when you're doing it with guys you've been with for years and years, guys you were drafted with or you kind of come up with.

"Those are my boys. Those are the guys you've been through the grind with."

Members of the organization who watched the core grow up took a special joy in this group. They'd seen the acute growing pains in 2014 and at times 2015, which gave way to steps forward in 2016 and 2017, and then the final leap this year.

"I don't know if you can have any stronger sense of gratification or feeling of pride than when you see the guys who you knew as really kids — 16, 17, 18 years old — working their way, seeing their struggles, then develop as players and as humans, maturing, getting families, meeting their families, and then having them put together a year like this, it's hard to put into words," said assistant general manager Eddie Romero, who has known Bogaerts since he entered the organization as a 16-year-old and who first met Devers as a 14-year-old, two years before signing him. "There are special feelings. It goes further than baseball."

Vice president of amateur scouting Mike Rikard can recall the scouting work done by Danny Watkins in Tennessee to follow Betts, by Quincy Boyd following Bradley at the University of South Carolina, by Willie Romay in identifying Santiago Espinal — the player traded to Toronto in June for World Series MVP Steve Pearce — in the 10th round of the 2016 draft.

"I always think back to the scouts, the guys that don't make a whole lot of money, put 70,000 miles on their cars each year, spend 150 nights away from their families," said Rikard. "Each one of them played, in some form or fashion, a role in this as well. Those are the guys that I'm thinking about right now."

Through scouting and player development, the Red Sox built something solid upon which they saw an opportunity earlier this decade to anchor their future. Then-GM Ben Cherington committed to it through the last-place finishes of 2012 and 2014 (and during the championship campaign of 2013), and his successor, president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, recognized it when he arrived in Boston in August 2015.

"[Former GM] Mike Hazen, Ben Cherington, [former VP of amateur scouting] Amiel Sawdaye, you tip your cap to all of them and everybody else that's part of the organization," Dombrowski said.

After he joined the Sox in 2015, Dombrowski said, "It was easy to see that Mookie Betts was a good player, Jackie Bradley Jr. was a good player. You look at Bogey as a good player. It looked like we might need some pitching at the big league level, but you had a chance to do that.

"It didn't take long to look at those guys [and see championship potential]. It's a tribute to everyone who's been here."

So many of the Red Sox who celebrated on the field Sunday night were players to whom the organization was willing to entrust the future. It proved a winning proposition in 2018, and will remain one, the team hopes, for seasons to come.

"Hopefully," said team president Sam Kennedy, "we can keep these guys together for a few more years."

*** *The Boston Herald***

No surprise: Red Sox pick up Chris Sale's 2019 option

Michael Silverman

In a move that comes as no surprise but will likely quell speculation that Chris Sale's shoulder will require a major procedure, the Red Sox picked up the lefty starter's 2019 option.

The Red Sox inherited the club option when they traded for Sale from the White Sox before the 2017 season. The base salary is \$13.5 million but Sale triggered a bonus clause worth \$1.5 million at the end of last season when he finished second in Cy Young voting. His salary next season will be \$15 million, still a bargain -- David Price will make \$31 million next season -- as long as Sale is healthy and can pitch to his potential.

Bouts of "mild" left shoulder irritation hampered Sale's second half of this season. He finished the season with a 12-4 record and 2.11 ERA over 27 starts and 158 innings. He led the majors in strikeouts per nine innings (13.5) and WHIP (0.86). He had the longest scoreless streak (35 innings) and homerless streak (74 innings) in the majors this season.

Sale pitched twice in relief and made three starts in the postseason. He earned the win in Game 1 of the Division Series against the Yankees and he struck out the Dodgers side for the final out of the World Series on Sunday night.

Sale's start in Game 5 Sunday night was pushed back to Game 6 because the club felt he would pitch better on more rest. The decision was made suddenly, the night before the game, sparking speculation that Sale is more seriously hurt than the club has let on. Manager Alex Cora said that Sale did not suffer a setback.

*** *The Providence Journal***

Red Sox exercise Sale's 2019 option

Bill Koch

Chris Sale will call Boston home for at least one more season.

The Red Sox announced Tuesday they have exercised their 2019 club option on the left-handed pitcher. Sale will earn \$15 million in his third year with the defending World Series champions before hitting free agency for the first time prior to the 2020 season.

Sale recorded the final out Sunday at Dodger Stadium as Boston clinched its ninth championship in franchise history. The Red Sox closed out Los Angeles thanks to a 5-1 victory, capturing their fourth title since 2004. Sale fanned the side in order, including a swinging Manny Machado, to end one of the most dominant single seasons authored by any team in the game's history.

Sale bordered on unhittable at times while being selected to his seventh consecutive All-Star Game and making his third straight start for the American league. He topped all qualifying big league starters in strikeouts per nine innings (13.5) and WHIP (0.86) while going 12-4 with a 2.11 earned-run average. Sale enjoyed a scoreless string that reached 35 innings and was threatening to rewrite club record books until a pair of late stints on the disabled list due to left shoulder inflammation.

Sale signed a five-year deal with the White Sox prior to the 2013 season, gaining long-term security while the club bought out some of his arbitration-eligible years. Chicago added the pair of club options on the back end, one of which was exercised by Boston in 2018. Sale's base compensation for 2019 was set at \$13.5 million, a figure that received a bump of \$1.5 million when Sale finished runner-up in the 2017 A.L. Cy Young Award voting.

It was a combination of Sale's performance and three potential years of team control that forced the Red Sox to part with a strong package of prospects to obtain him after the 2016 campaign. Among the four players Boston traded were infielder Yoan Moncada and right-handed pitcher Michael Kopech, both considered future stars by talent evaluators throughout the industry. Moncada was the No. 1 overall prospect in baseball at the time per MLB Pipeline.com and Kopech turned heads with a fastball that comfortably topped 100 mph.

Sale now joins a star-studded 2020 Boston free agent class that includes Rick Porcello, Xander Bogaerts, Mitch Moreland, Brock Holt and Tyler Thornburg. He moves out of a 2019 group featuring World Series MVP Steve Pearce, closer Craig Kimbrel, playoff pitching standouts Nathan Eovaldi and Joe Kelly, Ian Kinsler, Drew Pomeranz and Brandon Phillips.

David Price and Eduardo Nunez are also among Red Sox players who could be considering their near futures. Price has an opt-out clause in the seven-deal he signed prior to 2016, one that includes an additional four years and \$127 million through 2022. Nunez has a player option for \$5 million that he could exercise for 2019.

*** *MassLive.com***

David Price opt out: Boston Red Sox LHP must decide if he wants to return before midnight deadline

Chris Cutillo

BOSTON -- On the day he'll celebrate his first World Series championship with a parade in Boston, Red Sox lefty David Price also has some business to take care of.

Price must decide by midnight ET on Wednesday whether he will remain with the Red Sox or opt out of his contract and test free agency. His deal calls for him to be paid \$127 million over the next four years if he decides to remain with Boston.

Price said throughout the season that he was unlikely to opt out, telling our Chris Smith back in September that he wanted to "continue to be good" in Boston.

Price, 33, had his best season in a Sox uniform in 2018. After posting a 16-7 record and 3.58 ERA in 176 regular-season innings, he was pivotal to Boston's World Series run, allowing just three earned runs in 19.2 innings over his last four appearances in the ALCS and World Series (three starts and one relief appearance).

Price signed a seven-year, \$217 million deal with the Red Sox before the 2016 season. In total, he owns a 39-19 record and 3.74 ERA in 480.2 innings with Boston.

Chris Sale contract: Boston Red Sox pick up star pitcher's 2019 club option

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox exercised their club option on lefty Chris Sale, the team announced Tuesday.

The move was a no-brainer for the Sox, who will pay Sale \$15 million in his last year before free agency. Sale's option had a \$1 million buyout if it was declined.

Sale will enter 2019 as Boston's ace, headlining a rotation that will likely include David Price (assuming he doesn't opt out), Rick Porcello and Eduardo Rodriguez. Nathan Eovaldi will hit free agency and is a candidate to be re-signed.

Sale, who turns 30 in March, was 12-4 with a 2.11 ERA in 158 innings in 2018. He recorded the last out in Boston's Game 5 victory over the Dodgers on Sunday night, clinching a World Series title.

Boston now awaits two option decisions from players. Price must decide by the end of Wednesday whether he will forego the remaining four years and \$127 million left on his deal or test the free agent market. Eduardo Nunez owns a \$5 million player option for 2019.

*** *RedSox.com***

Cue the duck boats! Parade set for today

Manny Randhawa

The Red Sox will celebrate their 2018 World Series championship with a duck boat parade this morning at 11 ET in Boston.

The parade will travel down Lansdowne Street, take a right onto Ipswich Street, left onto Boylston Street to Tremont Street and onto Cambridge Street and New Sudbury Street.

The parade and a 10 a.m. pre-parade rally will both be streamed live online at redsox.com.

"This is an all-time great team that we had," said Boston mayor Martin Walsh. "Everybody contributed. ... Congratulations to the entire team for your resilience and your positivity, and the way you carried yourself on the field and off the field. These players are role models and we want to celebrate them in Boston style."

The city is encouraging fans to leave their cars at home and use public transportation. The MBTA will have added service on all branches, as will the commuter rail. The parade route will be closed to traffic starting as early as 5 a.m. ET today. A complete list of parking restrictions is available online at Boston City Hall.

"Boston has certainly set a new tone around celebrations," said Walsh. "We are a city of champions, so let's celebrate like champions."

With the parade also falling on Halloween, some fans may choose to dress up, but the Boston Police Department is asking that fans be respectful.

"If you're in costume, we just ask you to act respectfully and please no costumes with replica firearms. It won't be tolerated," said Boston Police Commissioner William Gross. "It doesn't bode well for the festive atmosphere that we expect to enjoy."

The Dropkick Murphys, who performed during the 2007 and '13 celebrations, will be leading the parade this year.

There is no rain in the forecast, but after a chilly start in the morning, temperatures will rise into the 50's.

The victory clinched the franchise's fourth World Series title since 2004 following an 86-year championship drought. First baseman Steve Pearce was named the Willie Mays World Series Most Valuable Player after hitting a game-tying homer and a game-breaking double in Game 4, followed by a pair of homers in Game 5.

Alex Cora led the Red Sox to a franchise-record 108 regular-season victories and a World Series title in his first year at the helm, becoming only the fifth rookie manager in MLB history to win a championship.

Sale's 2019 option picked up by Red Sox

Daniel Kramer

In a transaction that was merely a formality, the Red Sox announced on Tuesday that they've exercised the \$15 million option for 2019 on left-handed starting pitcher Chris Sale.

Sale's salary could increase to \$16 million if he wins the American League Cy Young Award, which he is among a small handful of candidates for. The winner will be revealed on Nov. 14 on MLB Network.

Sale is coming off his seventh straight All-Star season, and he was on the mound when the Red Sox clinched the World Series title in a 5-1 win in Game 5 against the Dodgers on Sunday.

The 2018 season was arguably Sale's most trying, most notably relating to the lingering effects that he experienced in his pitching shoulder that sent him to the disabled list twice in the second half of the regular season and limited his availability in the postseason. Sale finished the regular season 12-4 with a 2.11 ERA, and he went 1-0 with a 4.11 ERA in the postseason. The Red Sox are 44-22 in games Sale has pitched during his two seasons with the club, including the playoffs.

Acquired in a blockbuster trade at the Winter Meetings two years ago, Sale came to Boston to help fortify its pitching staff and chase a chance at October, which had been elusive to him over his first seven seasons, all with the White Sox. He was dealt for Minor Leaguer Luis Alexander Basabe and touted prospects Yoan Moncada and Michael Kopech, who immediately became Chicago's top two prospects, according to MLB Pipeline. Moncada and Kopech were both in Boston's long-term plans before its aggressive pursuit of Sale.

Sale, who will be 30 on March 30, is entering the final season of the five-year, \$32.5 million contract (plus two option years) he initially signed with the White Sox in 2013, which at the time, gave Sale financial security and the club a long-term commitment. As Sale blossomed into one of the Majors' best pitchers, his

contract has been viewed as one of the more club-friendly, particularly for an elite starting pitcher. The contract was another significant factor in why he was so coveted as a trade chip.

Sale has been mostly mum on discussing contract extensions, repeatedly reiterating that those matters aren't on his immediate palate.

On Monday, Red Sox infielder Eduardo Nunez exercised his \$5 million option for 2019. The club's impending free agents include right-handers Nathan Eovaldi, Joe Kelly and Craig Kimbrel, lefty Drew Pomeranz, second basemen Ian Kinsler and Brandon Phillips and first baseman/designated hitter Steve Pearce.

*** *WEEI.com***

Hard to imagine David Price will opt out, even though that would be best for everyone involved

John Tomase

The Red Sox owe their World Series championship to David Price as much as any other player. Once he solved the riddle against the Astros, he pitched lights out.

He easily could've won World Series MVP over Steve Pearce – Price would've gotten my vote – for winning Games 2 and 5 against the Dodgers, the latter with one of the best playoff starts (7 IP, 1 ER) in Red Sox history, all things considered.

He then gloated, "I hold all the cards now," in a petty and not altogether unsurprising postgame press conference that I suppose he had earned, although there's something to be said for winning graciously. But whatever – who cares what he said when his actions spoke so eloquently. He manned up on the biggest stage and will forever be associated with this title.

He's also at a crossroads. He must decide by Wednesday whether to opt out of the final four years and \$127 million remaining on the seven-year, \$217 million deal he signed before the 2016 season.

While it's borderline impossible to imagine Price leaving nine figures on the table to test a free agent market that has recently proven hostile to aging starters, this is Price, and his postgame comments made it apparent that whatever animosity he harbors towards Boston, it didn't just magically disappear with a World Series trophy.

While it would be reassuring to claim that Price's feelings of disenchantment trace solely to the media, it would also be false. He has never shared a warm relationship with the fans, and if you don't believe me, just consider the words of his father, Bonnie, in an interview with Jeff Passan of Yahoo Sports after the clincher.

Here's the relevant passage:

"He got a ring. He fulfilled his commitment," Bonnie said. "The day they signed him, he said he wanted to win a World Series. He's done that. Now they can leave him alone. Fans can."

Bonnie doesn't think they will. He knows baseball. He knows Boston. He knows the marriage of the two supercharges emotions. He knows his son will have bad games, bad stretches, and that loyalty goes only so far. He's cynical because he saw what baseball and Boston had done to his son. "Wouldn't it have worn on you?" Bonnie asked. "Yeah. It did. But he's a good man. He's a good man."

Perhaps that's true. Price's teammates swear by him and seemed to take their cue from him in a defiant postgame clubhouse. But it's also true that Price brought much of the vitriol on himself, particularly when

he embarrassed franchise icon Dennis Eckersley on a flight for no other reason than because he could, and then compounded the problem by refusing to apologize until it was way too late.

Similarly, the questions about Price's postseason struggles were entirely fair, especially after he failed to last even two innings vs. the Yankees in his 2018 playoff debut. If he wants to claim victimhood over Fortnite hysteria (I may have piled on) or the way a joke about hoping to avoid the All-Star Game were twisted, he'll get no argument here.

When you consider Price's opt-out decision through this more complicated lens, his choice suddenly isn't so obvious. Having won a title that might not have been possible without him, maybe now is a good time to make a break. His playoff performance could certainly pique the curiosity of a contender, though it's hard to imagine he'd pass a physical on a \$100 million-plus deal, thanks to a 2017 elbow injury that nearly required surgery.

Some took Price's, "I hold all the cards now," proclamation to be in reference to his opt-out, even though he was clearly discussing the narrative of playoff failure that can never be thrown in his face again. In this respect, Price does hold all the cards. "It's in his court," president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said.

So what should we want, what should the team want, and what should Price want? Deep down, the answer is probably the same for all three: opt out and leave.

From the team's perspective, Price is 33, and though he didn't like being mocked for having a magic elbow, reason and logic say he probably faces a reckoning. Injured elbows don't get healthier as a player ages. From a long-term standpoint, the Red Sox would be better off watching Price leave, even if it hurts them in the short term, to start spreading his money around to ensure this title window doesn't slam shut. Xander Bogaerts, Mookie Betts, and Jackie Bradley Jr., will need to be paid soon, and that money's going to have to come from somewhere.

From a fan perspective, Price will never be cuddly. There's too much baggage. At best, we're talking an arm's-length respect falling short of mutual adoration. Price is what would've happened if John Lackey had stuck around for more than half a season after the 2013 championship. Fans hated Lackey until they loved him, and that might work for fans, but players don't forget.

Pump Price full of truth serum and I find it hard to believe he'd suggest remaining in Boston is his first choice. I also doubt he'd seriously consider walking away from \$127 million without some assurances that he could recoup those earnings elsewhere.

The best starter on last year's market, Yu Darvish, didn't sign until Valentine's Day. He landed a six-year, \$126 million deal with the Cubs and then contributed virtually nothing, going 1-3 with a 4.95 ERA in eight starts before shutting it down with a stress reaction in his right elbow. A month later, former Cy Young Award winner Jake Arrieta earned \$75 million from the Phillies before going 10-11.

Both of them hit free agency at age 31, whereas Price is 33. If he wants to wade into similarly unfavorable market conditions, so be it, but Price isn't dumb. He'd be leaving a ton of money on the table for no good reason.

That said, let's not kid ourselves: I suspect the only thing keeping Price in Boston is cash. That's a powerful motivator, but it wouldn't be the worst thing for all parties involved if Price decided to leave on top.

Red Sox pick up Chris Sale's 2019 option for \$15 million

John Tomase

The Red Sox picked up Chris Sale's \$15 million option for 2019, checking the first and most obvious item off their off-season to-do list.

Sale just completed one of the most team-friendly contracts in baseball, a six-year, \$45 million extension with the White Sox that ran through 2018 with an option year. The Red Sox picked up that option, which jumped from \$13.5 million to \$15 million because he finished second in last year's Cy Young race. A Cy Young Award in 2018 could've increased the option to \$16 million, but Sale missing most of the final two months effectively eliminates him from contention.

Sale pitched the final inning of the World Series and struck out the side despite battling shoulder issues right into the postseason.

The real decision for the Red Sox will come at this time next year, when they'll have to decide how far they're willing to extend on a contract extension for the skinny left-hander, who will be entering his age 31 season in 2020.

It's time to rip up Alex Cora's contract

Rob Bradford

Alex Cora deserves to make more money.

I know, it's a bit uncomfortable to read or write those words when talking about any human being who is pulling down a nice \$800,000-a-year paycheck. But this is the world of professional athletics and the existence of a manager who just led the Red Sox to the World Series. There are factors to consider, some of which were surfaced by none other than the guy who should be ripping up Cora's deal, principal owner John Henry.

"He put together a clubhouse that had more unity that I had ever seen," said Henry from the Dodger Stadium field immediately after the Red Sox' World Series clincher. "It showed day to day perseverance, sense of purpose, dedication every day. He had them ready every day. On every level, he was a superior manager. He was every bit as good as our best player."

Let's run that back ...

"On every level, he was a superior manager. He was every bit as good as our best player."

Cora has two more years left on his deal, and while sources within the organization said there have been no in-season negotiations regarding a contract extension/alteration it wouldn't be a surprise if the topic is broached in the coming months. As we sit here, the guy who Red Sox ownership described as "every bit as good as our best player" is the lowest-paid manager in all of baseball.

All of this past season's first-year managers got better deals than Cora. Philadelphia's Gabe Kapler makes just \$3,000 more, but more. Mickey Callaway of the Mets and the Nationals' Dave Martinez each made \$850,000 in 2018. And, most notably, Aaron Boone, the guy the Yankees hired out of the broadcast booth, gets \$1.15 million per season.

When it comes to managers in Major League Baseball there isn't a huge gap between salaries. This isn't the NFL, where a guy like Jon Gruden gets a 10-year, \$100 million deal right out of the gate. The salaries in MLB max out at \$6 million per season, with Chicago's Joe Maddon and Bruce Bochy of the Giants leading the way. Cleveland's Terry Francona is right behind at \$4 million. (Note: The average salary for MLB players is just about \$4 million.)

The point with Cora is that we should understand what he proved in his first season, and how that should be valued.

Tampa Bay's Kevin Cash got a five-year deal worth \$1 million a year right out of the gate. He did a good job and got an extension after his third season, pushing the commitment through 2024. It's been just one season, but Cora has proven he deserves something more.

The Red Sox gave John Farrell a contract extension after his second season with a World Series title under his belt after Year 1. So this wouldn't exactly be unprecedented. But why would the Red Sox be inclined to execute such a move with Cora after just one season? He earned it.

Often times it's difficult to quantify exactly what kind of impact a manager had on a winning team, but with Cora, it wasn't all that hard. Will he always get on the spot-on button-pushing spree experienced throughout the postseason? No. There will be much worse times than anything that was witnessed in 2018. That's just how it works. But this isn't about isolated decisions. This is about coming in and getting so many important things right at very important times.

Communication. Strategy. Organization. Tone. Adjustments. The list goes on.

John Farrell wasn't a bad manager, as was evident when winning it all in 2013, along with back-to-back division titles in his final pair of seasons. He was the right guy at the right time until he wasn't. That's where Cora came in. In retrospect, the perfect guy at the perfect time.

"We had a lot of the same team from last year so we knew we were doing some things wrong last year. I think we were catching up," Henry said. "These guys caught up."

Now it's time to let Cora catch up when it comes to that contract.

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Big moments, little moments and other parting thoughts on the World Series

Sean McAdam

1. There can be little doubt as to the Series' turning point. That was undeniably, unquestionably, Mitch Moreland's pinch-hit, three-run homer in the seventh inning of Game 4. At the time, the Sox were trailing 4-0 and had mustered just one hit. They were just seven outs away from having the Series tied at two, with all of the momentum on the Dodgers' side. Who knows how differently the rest of the Series plays out? At the very least, it would have sent the teams back to Boston for at least one game. In the aftermath of the Series-clinching win Sunday night, Xander Bogaerts said the middle innings of Game 4 were the only time in the entire postseason he was even a little worried. But Moreland's homer changed all of that. An inning later, Steve Pearce's solo homer off Kenley Jansen tied the game at four, and an inning after that, Rafael Devers contributed the go-ahead run with a pinch-hit single. There was another game to win, but by then, the Red Sox had succeeded in effectively killing the Dodgers' hopes.

2. One of the most heart-warming scenes from the celebration took place during the postgame festivities behind the makeshift stage, set up in the infield of Dodger Stadium. Alex Cora had left the crowded stage — filled with players, Fox personnel, MLB representatives and members of Red Sox ownership — and descended a set of stairs, where he encountered his 15-year-old daughter, Camilla. They hugged for what seemed like a couple of minutes, with Camilla sobbing with joy in her father's arms and Cora, unabashedly emotional, crying too. It was out of view of the cameras and almost all of the Red Sox fans who remained in the stands at Dodger Stadium. I felt like I was witnessing something private, but it a revealing and unforgettable moment.

3. Few Red Sox players could appreciate the Game 5 win more than Ian Kinsler. It had been Kinsler's throwing error in the 13th inning of Game 3 that had erased a one-run lead for the Red Sox. Five innings later, they would lose the longest World Series game in history. If Boston doesn't rally to win Game 4 and go on to win the World Series, Kinsler would have been the Series' goat, joining Bill Buckner in Red Sox'

lore. And Kinsler had already been part of a crushing World Series loss — this one, not his fault — when the Texas Rangers were twice a strike away from winning the 2011 in six games, but lost that game, and then again, the next night, too. Losing an excruciating World Series and contributing to another loss would be too much for one player to shoulder.

4. It's stunning to see how unpopular manager Dave Roberts is with the Dodgers' fan base. Before each game in L.A., the starting lineups would be announced and every Los Angeles player would be greeted as a hero, with loud cheers. But when the P.A. announcer got to "and the manager of your Los Angeles Dodgers, Dave Roberts," the boos would cascade from every section of Dodger Stadium. Sure, Roberts made a couple of questionable moves with his bullpen over the series. But in three years as manager, Roberts has gotten the Dodgers to the NLCS three straight years and won the N.L. pennant the last two years. That's nothing to be ashamed of.

5. Kudos to the Red Sox for chartering two additional planes Saturday to fly out hundreds of employees to watch Games 4 and 5 in person at Dodger Stadium. Clubhouse personnel, support staff, office workers, security personnel, and media relations people all got to see the Sox win the Series and celebrate on the field and in the clubhouse — an experience few will forget.

6. There are many new(er) ballparks to recommend throughout the game. If you haven't treated yourself to a game at Camden Yards, do so. The game goes for Seattle's Safeco Field and San Francisco AT&T Park and (a sleeper), Target Field in Minneapolis. But for my money, the best road ballpark in the big leagues is still Dodger Stadium. The view of the San Gabriel mountains beyond the outfield is spectacular — that is, when it's not too smoggy. And, from behind home plate, you can see the downtown skyline. There's plenty of history all over the park — a remarkable trophy case on one concourse showcases Cy Young Awards, Gold Gloves and the like, and the ballpark is impeccably maintained. It's stunning that Dodger Stadium is now the third-oldest ballpark in the game.

7. In the World Series — in fact, throughout the postseason — MLB arranges for beat writers who travel and cover a participating team throughout the season to have a pre-game session with the manager. It's an opportunity for us to ask more in-depth questions and get background information for our stories before the manager goes to the podium and interview room to take questions from all the other reporters. I'll never forget, in that setting, how relaxed Terry Francona was a few hours before Game 4 of the 2004 St. Louis when it was obvious (if such a thing is possible) that his team was going to win the franchise's first title in 86 years — if not that night, then surely the next. Francona had a breezy confidence about him, a quiet belief he was managing the better team and would come out on top. That was the same sense I got in those sessions this year with Cora. He hardly seemed like someone worried about the outcome that night. As it turned out, he had no reason to be.

8. If I were to pick a player for whom the Series could mean a big career jumping-off point, I'd select Rafael Devers. Let's not sugarcoat it: Devers had a disappointing season in 2018. He was prone to long slumps, he tried to pull the ball too often, and he was guilty of some sloppy play in the field. But Devers seemed like a different player in the postseason. You only had to listen to assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett break down the huge pinch-hit Devers had in Game 4 to know how far Devers has come in terms of preparation and attention to detail. It wouldn't surprise me if Devers became a 35-homer player in 2019.

9. Despite the presence of two historic, big-market franchises, plenty of star power and two iconic settings, the World Series was a huge disappointment in terms of TV ratings. I'm not here to cry about baseball being doomed, but the Series was a clear reminder that the game must make some changes. Throw out Game 3 and the 18-inning marathon that ended at 3:30 a.m. Eastern — that was an aberration and not something that happens often. But when most of the games are ending well after midnight in the East, something needs to be done. Here's hoping the players stop dragging their feet on a pitch clock; if not, here's hoping Rob Manfred exercises his power as commissioner to unilaterally impose one. If the Players Association wants to fight it tooth-and-nail, let them do so. Something. Must. Be. Done.

10. Every winning team has good chemistry. Every championship team has camaraderie. I've learned that much in covering baseball for 30 years. But the closeness exhibited by this Red Sox team was unlike

anything I've seen. Sure, the Idiots were a tight group in 2004, and the 2013 team seemed to bond and come together after the Marathon terror attacks and play with a sense of purpose. But the 2018 Red Sox were as close as any team I've ever seen, if not the closest. Think otherwise? Watch the video of Chris Sale leaving the bullpen in the middle of the ninth inning and watch how everyone — relievers, starters, catchers, coaches — applauded him as he jogged to the mound. Remarkable.

* *The Athletic*

Dancing, videos, and clutch hits: At last, the real Brock Holt came back

Tim Britton

The 2013 Red Sox had Mike Napoli strolling shirtless down Boylston Street. The 2018 Red Sox have Brock Holt dancing on armrests on the team plane home.

Yes, it's a blessing of the social-media age that we get to vicariously experience the celebration of championship teams, and thanks to Instagram and Snapchat, the Red Sox could share that plane ride across the country — complete with dancing and endless replays of a team-specific Drake remix — with the world.

This is the Brock Holt the Red Sox fan base has grown to love over his six years in the organization. He played everywhere, he became a pillar in the franchise's charity work, and his best plays could be punctuated by "Arrested Development" fans with his own symbol: \o/.

"The Brock that everybody sees right now," his wife, Lakyn, said the day the Red Sox would win the World Series, "is the Brock that I've known."

It's also the Brock that Lakyn had trouble finding the previous two seasons, when the infielder endured concussion and vertigo symptoms that pinballed him back and forth between the disabled list and rehab stints, his patience strained and his passion for the game waning.

That latter part is what was so frightening for the Holts in 2016 and 2017. It was Holt's day-to-day enthusiasm that had won Lakyn over back in 2011, when she was a summer intern and he a player at Double-A Altoona. Holt's love of the game manifested itself in being one of the first guys to the park each day, in a seemingly ever-present smile in the Boston clubhouse and in turning himself into one of the most remarkable All-Stars in club history. That Brock Holt didn't like baseball anymore?

"There were times the last couple years where I just wasn't having fun playing baseball," Holt said at the dawn of the World Series. "I didn't really want to play anymore because it just wasn't fun."

"It literally broke my heart," Lakyn said. "When you know how much someone loves this game and they don't even want to be around it, it just breaks your heart."

Since the Red Sox won their last championship in 2013, only Xander Bogaerts, Mookie Betts and Jackie Bradley, Jr. had played in more games for Boston than Holt — and we can safely say no one played more positions than he did.

That time between titles hasn't been easy for any member of this victorious squad. Some lived through a pair of last-place finishes, many a pair of Division Series exits. Bogaerts and Bradley dealt with prolonged slumps in their first exposure to the majors. David Price, Rick Porcello and Nathan Eovaldi experienced ups, downs and outs. Even Betts faced lingering questions about his postseason performance.

Perhaps nobody on the Red Sox experienced the lows as vividly as Holt. Starting with a concussion in May 2016 — the second of his career — Holt struggled to stay on the field. The dizziness in his head lingered

well beyond his expected time frame; rehab stints were halted and restarted and halted again, his brain not yet ready for the high-level function that hitting a 95 mph fastball or tracking a ball in the outfield required.

It was the worst time of his baseball life.

“I wasn’t able to go out and perform and do what I’m capable of doing. When you’re not good at something, it’s not fun,” he said. “We’re all blessed and fortunate to be where we’re at — to have the ability and the opportunity to play baseball at this level. For me to not want to do that, it just kind of ruins the moment, ruins all of the good stuff that this is. It was all ruined for me just because I wasn’t enjoying it.”

“As a wife, there’s nothing you can do for your husband. With a sprained ankle, you can give him ice, you can have him rest, you can prop his foot up, and you have a timeframe. With this, we had no timeframe,” Lakyn Holt said. “There’s nothing you could do except be there and try to talk to him. But he didn’t really know what was going on, so it was hard to talk about. As wives we just want to fix things, and that was one thing you just can’t fix.”

Holt went from All-Star to also-ran. His production dipped in 2016 and bottomed-out in 2017, when he hit .200 with a .548 OPS in 64 games. It was bad enough to wonder whether the Sox would even tender him a contract through arbitration last winter, even with Dustin Pedroia sidelined.

“That was a hard thing to see,” Lakyn said of her husband’s on-field woes. “This is something that he’s dreamed about and worked so hard for his entire life, and you don’t want to ever see someone walk away from something that they love for an injury. You want everybody to walk away on their terms.”

A sprained ankle also doesn’t affect a player’s home life the same way vertigo can. Lakyn Holt said Brock wasn’t his typical “bubbly” self, instead coming off more as “a removed Brock.” That was particularly scary as the two prepared to welcome their first child, a son named Griff, at the end of 2016.

“I just wanted Griff to know the dad and the Brock that we have all known and loved all these years,” Lakyn said. “Don’t get me wrong: Brock was still a tremendous dad. That’s one thing that I can honestly say it didn’t affect him being a dad. But it was scary, just to not know all the what-ifs and what was in store for us.”

What was in store in 2018 was the best year of their lives. They could sense the change in the spring.

“He was so much more relaxed,” she said. “I saw him again — just being excited to go to the ballpark, being excited to be there. It was just him. He was so happy again to be doing this.”

It played out on the field. Holt saw his most action since 2015 and put together his best overall season, with a .774 OPS over 109 games. He started games at seven different positions. In October, he hit for the first cycle in postseason history, and he eventually supplanted Ian Kinsler at second base, starting the final three games of the World Series.

His double down the left-field line in the ninth inning of Game 4 started a five-run rally that altered the shape of the series.

“He’s a big part of what we do,” manager Alex Cora said during the World Series.

“I always knew that I was a productive player, a good player when healthy,” Holt said. “I just had to trust the process. That was something that I had trouble doing just because it was taking so long. It took longer than I expected.

“The last two years were tough. That’s part of my story now.”

An integral one at that. That trials have made the reward feel all the better for Holt.

“One-hundred percent. It means so much more to him going through what he’s gone through,” Lakyn said. “Not like he ever took anything for granted, but I think bad times just make you more appreciative of the good times. He’s soaking it all in.”

On the Dodger Stadium turf after Game 5’s clinching win, Holt got to celebrate with Griff. Lakyn has done her best all October to ensure Griff, just shy of his second birthday, will remember this experience.

“I have taken so many videos and so many pictures just so we do remember it,” she said. “I’m just so happy that this is the way things have turned out. It was a long two seasons. To see Brock being able to contribute to the team and for the team to have the success they’ve had, there’s no other way to describe it except it just makes you happy. It’s a dream come true.”

For Holt, these are moments he will want to remember forever, memories that will stay vivid as the uglier, unpleasant ones of the previous two years gradually fade.

“Just being healthy this year and getting back to who I am and being able to be productive on the field and just be a part of this group, it’s made it all worth it those last two years,” Holt said. “There’s nothing else I’d rather be doing and no other team I’d rather be playing for.”

The smile was back. Along with some dance moves.

*** *Associated Press***

Red Sox exercise \$15 million 2019 option on ace Chris Sale

BOSTON (AP) — The Red Sox have exercised their \$15 million option for next season on ace left-hander Chris Sale.

Sale will earn \$15 million in the final season of a five-year contract he signed with the Chicago White Sox before the 2013 season that guaranteed \$32.5 million, including a 2017 option buyout. He had a \$12.5 million salary this season in the first of two option years and will wind up earning \$59 million over seven seasons plus award bonuses.

Sale can become a free agent after the 2019 World Series.

In addition, infielder Eduardo Nunez exercised his \$5 million player option rather than become a free agent.

The 2017 AL Cy Young Award runner-up and a seven-time All-Star, Sale struck out the side in the ninth inning of World Series Game 5 against the Los Angeles Dodgers to close out Boston’s fourth championship in 15 seasons. Boston announced its decision Tuesday, two days after the finale.

The 29-year-old earned his first playoff victory in Game 1 of the AL Division Series against the New York Yankees. Sale went 12-4 with a 2.11 ERA and 237 strikeouts in 27 regular-season starts in his second season in Boston.

He was among the favorites to win the Cy Young this season before shoulder issues during the season’s second half.

Nunez hit .265 with 10 homers and 44 RBIs in 502 plate appearances, playing second base and third.