

The Boston Red Sox Sunday, October 7, 2018

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Red Sox hitters didn't do their part either

Nick Cafardo

You can certainly blame it on David Price if you'd like, but when he exited in the second inning the Yankees had scored only three runs. That should be easily surmountable with the type of high-octane offense the Red Sox have had this season.

But if there was a subplot in this game it was the lack of offense coming from a team that has produced big numbers.

Price didn't do much to support the lineup, but what a difference from what happened in Game 1, when J.D. Martinez set the tone for Chris Sale with a three-run homer in the first inning. The Sox offense didn't score after the third inning in Game 1, nearly squandering Martinez's first-inning offensive prowess when they couldn't do anything against the Yankees' bullpen.

A similar thing happened in Game 2. Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka pitched five solid innings and the bullpen — predominantly Dellin Betances — again kept the Sox offense at bay. This lack of production has to be an issue for the Red Sox because it was thought coming in there was little chance the Yankee pitching could contain the Sox offense. But guess what? The Yankees have been able to contain them enough to send this series to New York tied, 1-1.

It's not like the Red Sox have been shut down completely. They have scored seven runs in two games. But Xander Bogaerts's solo homer and Ian Kinsler's RBI double was it in the 6-2 loss in Game 2. The Red Sox may not admit it, but they let a great opportunity slip away.

"We expanded [the strike zone] tonight," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "His [Tanaka] split was a lot better. He made some pitches early in the game and compared to the last one that we had against him, we were very disciplined in New York, [but] not tonight.

"We expanded and he did a good job. It seems like when had him on the ropes when the counts were in our favor, he got back in the count and he threw a split or a slider and we expanded," Cora said.

We all thought J.D. Martinez's first-inning three-run shot that set the tone for the 5-4 Game 1 victory was a sign of things to come, but the offense has sputtered since. The Red Sox are hitting only .213 in the first two games and they've struck out 13 times with two homers and two doubles.

It would appear Cora will have to not only manage his pitching staff after Price's brief outing, but he'll also have to do something about the lineup.

While Martinez did his part in Game 1, MVP candidate Mookie Betts has had two unproductive games (1 for 7) and has yet to drive in a run in nine postseason games. Yes, it's only two games, but in a five-game series, two games is like an eternity.

The Sox were the best offensive team in the majors. So where has that team gone?

Cora has tried to emphasize defense, which is why Eduardo Nunez started at third base over lefthanded-hitting Rafael Devers against Tanaka. However, Nunez made some shaky throws, which negated his value in the lineup for defense.

The Red Sox have also been content to use Sandy Leon as the starting catcher even though he's been an easy out. Leon is the favorite catcher of the pitching staff and his defensive work in Game 1 was about as good as you'll see from a catcher. Leon has done great work with Sale but was unable to spin his magic with David Price and then Eduardo Rodriguez, who allowed a three-run homer to turn a 3-1 deficit into a 6-1 cushion for the Yankees.

The popular narrative on the Red Sox is that they are a team that can beat you in many different ways. Well, we saw the long ball, we saw Andrew Benintendi's nice drag bunt for a base hit in Game 1 and Bogaerts's solo homer in Game 2. But with five hits on Saturday night the Red Sox were never able to mount any sustainable rally that might have challenged the Yankees, particularly when the game was within reach at 3-1. That's not an insurmountable lead for the Red Sox, who 17 times this season erased a three-plus run deficit, the most comebacks by any team in the majors.

The Red Sox also had to take Mitch Moreland out of the game with a hamstring tweak, which means the Sox likely will go with Steve Pearce at first unless Cora feels compelled to start either Brock Holt or Blake Swihart there.

Two games in, the Red Sox already need an offensive boost. You never want to sacrifice defense for the sake of offense, but in this case the Red Sox know they're facing a prolific home run-hitting team. The Red Sox have to score runs to offset what the Yankees have the potential to throw at them, especially now that Gary Sanchez has awoken to go along with Aaron Judge. And if Giancarlo Stanton awakens, then the Sox are really in trouble.

Yes, the main story Saturday night might have been Price's poor outing, but the offense right now isn't doing anyone the team any favors, either.

Was the 108-win season a mirage? Or will Game 3 prove the Red Sox are the team we know they are?

Chad Finn

Nine thoughts on the Red Sox' 6-2 loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the ALDS . . .

1. David Price was greeted with a warm ovation when he walked out to the bullpen before his Game 2 start against his nemesis Yankees. When he departed the mound for the night after less than two innings of work, let's just say the response was considerably colder. The pregame cheers were optimistic, and ultimately wishful. Price was horrible once again in the postseason, horrible once again against the Yankees, and wholly deserving of the cascading boos that accompanied him back to the dugout after giving up three runs, allowing two homers, and recording just five outs in what would be his 10th postseason start without a win. Maybe you expected this – it certainly wasn't a shock considering that in four previous starts against the Yankees this year, he had a 10.34 ERA, with nine home runs allowed in 15 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. I remained the sucker. I've figured some form of redemption would eventually come for a pitcher of his ability, but right now that feels like expecting October success from him is the silly daydream of a damn fool.

2. The one thing we should all agree on right now is that Price should just direct Gary Sanchez to first base and move on to the next hitter up any time he has to face him in the near future. Intentionally walking a guy who hit .186 this season might seem a counterproductive approach, but it doesn't seem that way if you're familiar with the history of Price vs. Sanchez. Sanchez came to the plate 17 times in his career against Price entering Saturday's game. In those plate appearances, he walked four times, struck out twice, singled once . . . and hit five home runs, good for a .462/.588/1.615 slash line and a 2.204 OPS, which is mathematically possible but does not seem humanly possible. Naturally, Sanchez homered in his first at-bat in the second inning, making it six home runs in 18 plate appearances.

3. In his career, Sanchez doesn't have much of a platoon split. In 844 plate appearances against righthanders, he owns an .839 OPS and 51 homers. Versus lefties: 20 homers in 286 plate appearances and .872 OPS. But in this year's regular season, he's been significantly better against lefties (.872 OPS) than righties (.636 OPS, and a .171 batting average). That's my way of saying it's hardly an unfair second-guess to wonder whether Alex Cora should have brought in a righthander to face Sanchez in the top of the seventh, when he launched a three-run homer off of lefty Eduardo Rodriguez to break it open at 6-1.

4. The Red Sox had managed to keep the game close thanks to superb relief work from Joe Kelly — honest, he was great! That Joe Kelly! — and Ryan Brasier, who provided one of the rare satisfying moments of the night when he cursed at Sanchez and waved him to get back in the box before striking him out. Rodriguez had done his part in the bottom of the sixth, when he came in with two runners on and retired Andrew McCutchen and Brett Gardner to escape the jam. But leaving him in to face Sanchez, who entered with a career 1.065 OPS against Rodriguez, was a case of Cora pushing his luck. Perhaps Heath Hembree, who came on for the eighth, would have been the better option there, though that also doubles as an indictment of the Red Sox' bullpen depth.

5. I'll admit to skepticism about the Red Sox' now-ruined plan to use Steven Wright in a significant relief role in the postseason, with my general rule of thumb being: "Knuckleballers . . . eh, can't trust 'em." Blame Tim Wakefield and the old nemesis the Yankees dugout for that. But upon further consideration, losing him to injury again is a legitimate blow. Wright made 20 appearances during the regular season, pitching to a 2.68 ERA in 53 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. In 19 of those appearances, he gave up two or fewer runs. In the other appearance, June 22 loss to Seattle, he allowed 10 runs in 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings. Remove that start from his ledger and he would have had a 1.07 ERA in 50 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings. He was quietly extraordinary and underestimated here. Imagine he would have had a meaningful role in Saturday night's game had that troublesome knee not ruined the plans.

6. The first Yankees' first homer off Price came via the second batter of the night, when the immense Aaron Judge annihilated Price's offering for his second home run of the series. At last check, the ball was still in flight and reportedly nearing New Zealand airspace. At some point, I should probably retract my two-year old take that Andrew Benintendi will be better overall in the long run than Judge, an exceptional slugger who also happens to be a complete player. He has more home runs in the postseason (3) than Benintendi has since July 8, a span of 286 plate appearances.

7. Price melting like a discount-store candle is the story of the night, as it should be. But it cannot go unacknowledged that the Red Sox are struggling at the plate. Xander Bogaerts (who must produce with all of the attention on J.D. Martinez and Mookie Betts) hit a solo homer in the fourth inning to cut the Yankees lead to 3-1. That was the Red Sox' first run since the third inning of Game 3. When Ian Kinsler doubled in their second run in the seventh, that still left them four runs behind the Yankees. Right now it feels like they are waiting for Martinez to hit a three-run home run even when he's not the batter and the bases are empty.

8. Then there's Mookie, struggling in an unfamiliar way. The potential if not probable American League Most Valuable Player is enduring the cruel tricks that a competent opposing pitching staff and the small statistical sample size of a playoff series can play. Betts, still searching for his first career postseason RBI, went 0 for 4 Saturday night and is now 1 for 7 in the series. He's usually the picture of poise, but he barely resisted Gronk-spiking his bat after popping out on a rare fat pitch from Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka in the third inning. In his next at-bat in the fifth, he got nothing out of a bullet caught at the wall in dead center. Betts punished the Yankees in 17 games during the regular season (.415/.506/.738, 3 homers, 15 RBIs), so it's not like they have him solved. At least we can say this: He's due.

9. I'm not drawing any conclusions now, but I do know this. We're going to find out more about this team in Game 3 than we have in any of the Red Sox' 109 wins or 55 losses so far this season. They shouldn't feel bad about where they stand in the series — the Yankees won one here, and it's not unreasonable to expect the Red Sox to win one there. But they are heading to the Bronx to play in front of their aggressively loud fans, with a frustrating loss fresh in their minds and a starting pitcher (either Rick Porcello or Nathan Eovaldi) who isn't exactly reminiscent of '07 Josh Beckett. The decibels will be high. So will the degree of

difficulty. But as obvious as their flaws are right now — how can they ever allow Price to pitch in New York again? — this is a talent-rich, record-setting team. All they need to do is play like the team they have been all year. I expect them to do it. And if they don't, then we must ask if they are who we thought they were, and whether some of this season was a mirage. Not yet, though. They've stockpiled at least that much faith through the summer. We're about to find out if they plan to reward it in the fall.

Odds have shifted in Yankees favor in this series

Alex Speier

It seemed hard to imagine that David Price's torturous postseason history could get any worse. And then, Game 2 of the American League Division Series against the Yankees happened.

Price warranted a raised eyebrow when he threw a 91 mile-per-hour fastball in the dirt on his first pitch of the game. Things got little better in the Red Sox' 6-2 loss to New York once he started throwing pitches in the strike zone.

In a shockingly awful performance, Price was pulled after just 1⅓ innings after allowing three runs on three hits and two walks, with two of the hits coming as solo homers by Aaron Judge (445 feet, exit velocity: 113 m.p.h.) and longtime Price nemesis Gary Sanchez (7-for-14 with 6 homers against Price after a 108-m.p.h., 399-foot rocket).

The lefthander joins Al Leiter as the only pitchers in postseason history without a win to their names in 10 or more career playoff starts. Price's ERA of 6.03 as a starter is the third worst among the 70 pitchers who have made at least 10 starts.

And his struggles against the Yankees this year — a dominant outing in August notwithstanding — are almost unfathomable, as he's yielded 11 homers against them in just 17⅓ innings. Against the rest of the big leagues this year, Price allowed 16 homers in 160⅓ innings.

Price has said repeatedly that nothing in his career record will matter until he wins a playoff game as a starter. If so, then the weight of his career struggles just increased exponentially with the worst playoff start of his career.

The dud shifted the odds against the Red Sox as the series moves to New York. In Division Series history, the home team has won 13 of 35 series (37 percent) in which it split the first two games.

Other observations:

- Pitching coach Dana LeVangie has described the key to beating the Yankees as keeping them in the park, a notion borne out by a regular season in which New York went 63-15 (.808) when hitting two or more homers. The Red Sox failed in that effort on Saturday, with Price allowing two homers and Eduardo Rodriguez giving up a massive, 479-foot, three-run homer to Gary Sanchez in the seventh that sucked all drama out of the game.

- The Yankees have done a number on Eduardo Nunez (0-for-7 with a walk), Ian Kinsler (2-for-8 with a double but also five strikeouts), and Sandy Leon (0-for-5 with a sacrifice bunt) through the first two games of the series. The Red Sox are sitting two of their hottest hitters down the stretch — Rafael Devers and Brock Holt — in deference to that trio. With just two runs in the team's last 15 innings, it's fair to wonder whether manager Alex Cora will have to adjust to generate more offense for Game 3 against righthander Luis Severino.

- The Yankees bullpen has come as advertised thus far in the series, allowing one run in 11 innings.

- The Red Sox may have nightmares about Aaron Judge. He's homered in each of his three playoff games thus far this year, with no lingering effect of the broken wrist that sidelined him for August and much of September.

- Joe Kelly was one of the final choices for the Red Sox pitching staff, his uneven performances raising questions about his reliability in October. But Kelly's track record in the postseason is as good as that of any Red Sox pitcher, and the righthander continued that pattern by following Price into the game and throwing 2½ scoreless innings of relief — his longest outing of the 2018 season. Kelly's now thrown 8⅔ shutout innings of postseason relief for the Red Sox, and in 16⅓ career playoff innings as a reliever (dating to his time with the Cardinals), he has a 1.10 ERA.

- Xander Bogaerts, who typically struggles to pull the trigger on the first pitch of at-bats, gave the Red Sox their lone run by blasting a Masahiro Tanaka fastball to center. It was the eighth first-pitch homer of the shortstop's career. He later grounded out on a Zach Britton first pitch, reinforcing the sense that he is making a concerted effort to be more aggressive in hitter's counts.

Yankees rough up David Price and Red Sox to even series

Peter Abraham

David Price was the first player out of the dugout when the Red Sox took the field for Game 2 of their Division Series against the Yankees on Saturday night.

It was a path to redemption for the lefthander, an opportunity to all at once banish the twin demons of career-long misery in the postseason and not being able to pitch well against the Yankees since joining the Sox.

Instead it got worse.

Price could not survive the second inning and the Yankees went on to beat the Sox, 6-2, on the strength of two home runs by Gary Sanchez that traveled a combined 878 feet.

Now the best-of-five series is tied at a game apiece with the next two games at Yankee Stadium. Game 3 is Monday at 7:40 p.m., with Nathan Eovaldi or Rick Porcello facing Luis Severino. The Yankees have won their last six postseason home games.

For a 108-win team, this is their first real taste of adversity.

"We lost one game," J.D. Martinez said. "This battle's been back and forth. I don't think anyone thought we were going to come in here and sweep."

Said Porcello: "Did anybody honestly expect it to be a wipeout series? This is going to be a dogfight. We all know it."

But will the Sox have some bite? They have hit .213 and scored seven runs in the series, two in the last 14 innings. They have four extra-base hits.

Masahiro Tanaka pitched five strong innings for the win. The Yankees then launched their bullpen, sending Dellin Betances, Zach Britton, and Aroldis Chapman at the Red Sox. They allowed one run over the final four innings.

For the Sox, 2-7 in the postseason the last three years, the day off is needed after the bullpen was needed for 11 innings in the first two games of the series.

First baseman Mitch Moreland also needs the time after straining his right hamstring in the seventh inning and leaving the game. He hopes to be available Monday.

Price's first pitch was a two-seam fastball that bounced to the plate. It wasn't a fluke given the rest of his brief start.

The lefthander came back to get an out and the crowd supportively applauded. But the next batter, Aaron Judge, belted a 445-foot home run to center field. The ball zoomed between the light tower and the flagpole, a mammoth shot after Price left a cutter over the plate.

Sanchez led off the second inning with a home run to left field. That also was off a cutter, although one that was down and away.

It was Sanchez's sixth home run in 14 career at-bats against Price. It was why Yankees manager Aaron Boone moved Sanchez up to fifth in his lineup.

After getting two outs, Price walked Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner, the bottom two hitters in the order.

Andrew McCutchen then lined an RBI single off the wall in left field and Sox manager Alex Cora came out of the dugout to get Price.

The crowd booed loudly as Price walked slowly back to the dugout and down the stairs to the clubhouse.

"It's the playoffs. You see it happen all the time, especially over the past couple of years," Price said. "Managers go into bullpens extremely early. If I don't like it, I need to pitch better, period."

Price has a 5.38 earned run average in 18 career playoff games — 6.03 in 10 starts.

Of the 70 pitchers with at least 10 career postseason starts, only Price and Al Leiter are without a win as a starter.

Price has a 7.95 ERA in 12 games against the Yankees as a member of the Sox and this season allowed 21 earned runs over 17½ innings in five starts. The Yankees have 11 home runs in those games.

"My spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't down. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity," Price said.

Perhaps that will be in relief. Price threw only 42 pitches, so he could return later in the series.

"We'll talk about it," Cora said.

Joe Kelly replaced Price and threw 2½ scoreless innings to keep the Sox in the game.

Down 3-0, the Sox got a home run to center field by Xander Bogaerts in the fourth inning. That snapped a scoreless streak of eight innings going back to Game 1.

But Tanaka was otherwise strong against a Red Sox lineup that during the regular season scored 16 runs on 29 hits over 19 innings against him. He allowed just the one run over five innings.

"We expanded [the strike zone] and he did a good job," Cora said. "It seems like when we had him on the ropes, when the counts were in our favor, he got back in the count and he threw a split or a slider and we expanded."

Tanaka has a 1.50 ERA in five career postseason starts.

The Yankees took a 6-1 lead in the seventh inning when Sanchez hit a three-run homer off Eduardo Rodriguez. That squashed any comeback hopes for the Sox.

Rodriguez, all too often inattentive, was fully to blame. Judge reached on an infield single when Rodriguez failed to cover first base. Rodriguez then walked Luke Voit.

With one out and a chance to escape with a groundball, Rodriguez left a fastball high in the strike zone and Sanchez hit it 479 feet to center.

As the Yankees celebrated, Fenway began to empty out. Now the Sox need to win on the road to play at least one more game at home.

After another colossal playoff failure, what's next for David Price?

Dan Shaughnessy

LeBron James will cry to the officials. The first penalty in any hockey game in Montreal will be called against the visitors. And David Price will spit the bit in the playoffs.

Of this, you can be sure.

Price was hoping to get back in your good graces against the Yankees in Game 2 of the AL Division Series Saturday night. He was going to make you forget all about his \$217 million contract and the ambush of Dennis Eckersley and Fortnite and the rest of the nonsense. He was going to win a playoff game. Against the Yankees.

He was prepared to do the Full Lackey to the tune of Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" and finish the night like Sally Field at the Oscars squealing, "You like me! You really like me!"

No.

In the big moment, Price came up small again. It was worse than ever. In 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of the latest, biggest game of his life, Price gave up two monstrous homers and three runs, walking two and surrendering a wall-ball single to Andrew McCutchen before he was mercifully lifted by manager Alex Cora. The Sox lost, 6-2. Price is 0-9 as a postseason starter. His team has lost all 10 of his postseason starts. This is a major league record.

He was contrite and polite after this latest implosion, sounding like a man in complete denial.

"I know I'm more than capable of winning games as a starter in October," he said quietly. ". . . To throw the baseball the way I did is tough. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting an opportunity?"

How? When? Bullpen? In New York? At Yankee Stadium this season, Price was 0-2 with a 12.46 ERA and he allowed eight home runs in 8 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. Here is Price's 2018 season against the Yankees: 17 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings, 23 runs, 24 hits, 11 homers, 11 walks.

That leaves the fifth and deciding Game 5 in Boston.

Seriously?

Price in a deciding game in the playoffs?

Cora did not rule out using Price in relief.

"We'll talk about it and see where we're at," said the manager.

There's no need to pile on Price anymore. It is simply sad. He is a Cy Young winner, one of the best pitchers of his generation. He is wildly rich and liked by his teammates. But his performance anxiety

renders him hopeless in the big moments. If you want to be loved by Boston baseball fans you have to pitch well in the playoffs and you have to beat the Yankees. Price has done neither.

Price was at his halting, fidgeting worst. Reluctant to deliver pitches. Always a bad sign with him.

With one out in the first inning, Aaron Judge hit one of the longest home runs you'll ever see at Fenway Park. Teeing off on a 1-and-2 fastball, Judge crushed a shot to deep left-center. It landed in the Monster Seats, just to the left of the flag pole. Hitting a ball out of Fenway to the right of flag pole was considered Ruthian back in the day. Harmon Killebrew and Jim Rice did it in the days before the big scoreboard has made it almost impossible. This was a shot almost like those. Exit velocity: 113 miles per hour.

Leading off the second, Gary Sanchez hit a rocket into Monstertown to make it 2-0. Sanchez batted .186 in 2018, but he has hit six homers in 18 plate appearances against Price.

Price induced a couple of ground ball outs after the Sanchez blast, then walked the Nos. 8 and 9 hitters, and yielded the wall-ball single (it would have been a homer in any other park) to McCutchen.

Like the rest of us, Cora had seen enough. This was a night when the Sox at the very least needed a long outing from Price. They got 1½ innings. Five outs on 42 pitches.

“It’s the playoffs,” Price said when asked about the quick hook. “If I don’t like it, I need to pitch better.”

Price has been on his best behavior this season and came into the night acknowledging that he needs to pitch better in October. In September he told WEEI, “I could go 35-0 in the regular season with a 0.00 ERA and it wouldn’t matter. I need to win in October. That’s that.”

The numbers are staggering. Price has now pitched 75 playoff innings, compiling an ERA of 5.28. In 10 playoff starts he is 0-9 with a 6.03 ERA. In baseball history, 70 pitchers have made 10 or more playoff starts and Price and Al Leiter are the only ones without a victory.

Two years ago in Cleveland, Price got the ball in Game 2 and lasted only 3½ innings of a 6-0 loss. He gave up six hits and two walks.

His failures against the Yankees while pitching for the Red Sox are even worse. Price is 39-19 overall since joining the Sox in 2016. But in 12 starts against the Yankees since 2016 he has an ERA of 7.95. This season against New York: 17½ innings, 23 runs, 24 hits, 11 homers, 11 walks.

The Yankees really are his daddy.

In September, Price told the Wall Street Journal, “. . . the bottom line is going to be, ‘But will he do it in October?’ I know that, and that’s something I’m ready to move past.”

Now this. Still no answer.

Time for an opt-out for Price.

Or a trade.

Or an exorcism.

These pictures tell a story — about a 108-win season

Owen Pence

Every picture tells 1,000 words. That means 108 pictures generate, well, a whole lot of words.

Excitement, too, if the area beyond the Red Sox clubhouse in the concourse under Fenway Park is any indication. That's where a mural of sorts has been erected, commemorating each and every win in Boston's record-breaking 2018 regular season.

After each Red Sox win this year, first-year manager Alex Cora pasted a photo he felt was representative of the victory to a wall in his office. The collection grew rapidly and when the season wrapped, the team decided to display the spread for all to see.

Saturday evening before Game 2 of the ALDS at Fenway Park, fans stopped to admire the collection of snapshots, many posing for a picture themselves next to the recreated wall.

"I think it's fantastic," said Mary Norcross of Somerville. "It gives a lot of cache to the whole season and makes them feel special."

The wall features a wide array of photo types, from in-game action shots to dugout candid.

Brenda Kellman, a photographer from Amherst, was particularly partial to the pictures taken after walkoff wins.

"I like the Gatorade pictures," she said. "There was also one with a big hug and a smile. I'm a photographer so I like more of the emotional ones."

Kellman attended Saturday's game against the Yankees with her son, Wyatt. The two have attended playoff games before, including Game 6 of the 2013 World Series against St. Louis. The last time New York and Boston faced off in the postseason however, back in 2004, Wyatt was just 2 years old.

Now he's getting to see the rivalry at its best — firsthand and in October — but not before digesting what's on the first base side of the Fenway Park concourse.

"I just think it's really cool," said the younger Kellman. "I think it's great that we can display all the success that they've had in a single season in an interesting mural and display like this. It's a great way for the fans to visualize what happened."

At the right edge of the mural are 10 empty frames. The number was 11 — how many wins are required to claim a World Series — before Boston squeaked past New York in a 5-4 thriller Friday.

"I think it's bold," said Wyatt Kellman of the decision. "It's confidence and I love it but I hope it doesn't come back to bite us."

Added Brenda, "We don't need any more jinxes!"

David Price implodes again, lasts only 1⅓ innings in Game 2

Peter Abraham

The postseason nightmare continues for David Price.

The Red Sox lefthander lasted only 1⅓ innings in Game 2 of the Division Series against the Yankees on Saturday night, leaving the mound to loud booing after allowing three runs.

Aaron Judge belted a 445-foot home run to center field in the first inning for the Yankees. Gary Sanchez then led off the second inning with a home run to left field.

After getting two outs, Price walked Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner, the bottom two hitters in the order. Pitching coach Dana LeVangie came to the mound and appeared to speak harshly to Price.

The next hitter, Andrew McCutchen, smacked an RBI single off the wall in left field and Sox manager Alex Cora came out of the dugout to get Price. The crowd at Fenway Park booed loudly as Price walked back to the dugout.

Price now has a 5.38 earned run average in 18 career playoff games — 6.03 in 10 starts.

Through two innings, the Yankees had a 3-0 lead.

Steven Wright's knee injury is a blow to Red Sox bullpen

Nick Cafardo

The Red Sox spent most of the season without Steven Wright, so they'll be OK without him. Yet, given the tumultuous status of the Red Sox bullpen, Wright was a savior, posting 13 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of relief work and allowing just one earned run in September as his fellow relievers were falling apart.

It was always tricky as to when to use Wright. Manager Alex Cora tried him out toward the end of the regular season with runners on base and that didn't go too well, but Wright was clearly a guy the manager could bring in late in a game for a clean inning. Given the contrast between his 77-mile-per-hour knuckleball and the 95-100 m.p.h. most Sox pitchers throw, the Red Sox sported a nice advantage with baseball's only knuckleballer.

Wright was found to have inflammation and a loose body in his surgically repaired left knee and was taken off the Sox' postseason roster Saturday. Wright was replaced on the roster by Heath Hembree, clearly a downgrade given how poorly Hembree has pitched.

Cora explained why he had left Hembree off the postseason roster in the first place.

"The way it went with Heater [Hembree] throughout the season with traffic, he was doing a good job throughout the season, but towards the end it didn't work out," Cora said. "Actually, he wasn't keeping the ball in the ballpark, which is the No. 1 goal against these guys. You have to keep the ball in the ballpark. And he struggled with his slider, his offspeed pitches, and he paid the price."

So the Red Sox activated a reliever who can't keep the ball in the park against a team that hit it out of the park better than any team in major league history (267 home runs). So the trade-off doesn't seem like a good one.

"We felt that [Hembree's] fastball was a good one," Cora said. "As you know, he lost his slider, the feel for it, the last few weeks, but it's still 97 and 98 [m.p.h.]. I think with a team like that [Yankees], you have to attack them in different ways. He gives you another look."

Hopefully, not toward the Monster.

Wright had the same restoration surgery that Dustin Pedroia had and it was thought Wright was turning the corner and not having to think about his knee.

I had a long conversation with Wright on Thursday and he said his knee felt fine and that it had held up well despite all of the relief pitching he had done in September. Then came word on Friday that Wright was in pain, and an MRI revealed he had a loose fragment in the left knee. What happened in 24 hours?

"He worked out [before Friday's game] and he has to do all these exercises and activation," Cora said. "He actually has to jump on this thing and that tests where he's at as far as balance and everything. He was fine. And then after that he was doing something else — a medicine ball and started doing some exercises. That's when he felt it."

“He went to the trainer’s room and told them he wasn’t feeling right. Had the MRI and we got the results. We had to make a decision. And now we have to move on.”

Said Wright, “I was doing my warm-ups like I normally do every day. All of a sudden I turned around and something just grabbed. I don’t know what it was. What we think is there are loose bodies in there, and that small movement moved the particle that’s floating around into a crevice. That’s where the pain started coming from.

“I didn’t think it was anything big until I couldn’t walk. There’s just a lot of questions that still need to be answered. There’s definitely something going on as far as loose bodies and there might be something else.”

Wright, said Thursday he was looking forward to a normal offseason and building up to be a starter again. That’s why the announcement was surprising. Wright had become an important piece of the bullpen and Cora and pitching coach Dana LeVangie had big plans on how to use him. Cora pointed out he was wanted to use him in the seventh inning of Game 1, where “it seemed like that game was perfect for him. He could have given us three outs, maybe six and maybe nine. You never know.”

At one point, the Red Sox experimented with Wright in a three-inning stint, and he pitched three shutout innings and felt OK afterward. So Wright’s usage could have been anything from a long relief stint following a hard thrower, such as Chris Sale, or a seventh-inning role before Matt Barnes.

The Sox will have to adjust. Cora said last season was a series of adjustments with the Houston bullpen. The Astros intended to use Chris Devenski, Ken Giles, and Will Harris as their late-inning relievers, but wound up using starters Charlie Morton and Lance McCullers. It led them to a World Series championship. So similar alterations must be made now for the Red Sox and how effective those alterations are will go far in determining how well the bullpen responds. After all, the Sox can’t keep using Craig Kimbrel for four outs. That will eventually backfire.

Wright was almost a secret weapon in the Sox bullpen because for as much as there are scouting reports on a knuckleballer, the pitch reacts differently every time hitters see it.

Wright rarely struggled with the knuckleball, so there weren’t many times he was completely off with it. Most often he was tough to pick up and pitched effectively.

“He’s very disappointed. I know he’s down,” Cora said.

The only other person more down than Wright is Cora.

Cora had a great trust for what Wright could bring to the late innings. And trust is huge between manager and reliever at this stage of the season.

Yes, this is a blow for the Red Sox, but nothing that can’t be cured by starters Rick Porcello, Nathan Eovaldi, and/or Eduardo Rodriguez giving them a little help along the way.

Red Sox Game 3 starter Rick Porcello put team over self in Game 1

Tara Sullivan

The conversation started during batting practice, with Alex Cora approaching Rick Porcello with an unusual bullpen plan. This wasn’t about the manager’s Plan A, which would look something like a complete game by starter Chris Sale, or even his Plan B, which would involve a quality start by Sale, a short bridge to the ninth, and a save from closer Craig Kimbrel. Rather, as Cora would describe it later, this was something more like “Plan C and a half,” which would involve Porcello, a career starting pitcher with a Cy Young Award in his past and a Game 3 start in the American League Division Series in his future, being available for relief in Game 1.

“I told him I needed a couple minutes to think about it,” Porcello would say later, trying, but failing miserably, to keep a straight face.

By then, the veteran righthander already had proven just how quick he had been to say yes, just how ready he was to do anything to help his team win, and really, just how important it is for championship-caliber postseason teams to have the type of players willing to take that approach. With an eighth-inning relief appearance resulting in two crucial outs, Porcello took the role of quiet hero in the Red Sox’ 5-4 Game 1 win, earning praise from all corners for putting team over self in this nail-biting opening series against the rival Yankees.

“Of course it was instantaneous,” Porcello said of his assent, his smile already having ruined his own attempt at the joke. “I was looking forward to an opportunity and I’m happy I got it. Any time he asks me to pick up the ball and step on the mound, I’ll do it.”

Never mind that he’d already thrown his scheduled bullpen session Friday afternoon, guessing he’d tossed between 20 and 25 pitches. Never mind that 307 of his 311 regular-season major league appearances have been as a starter. Never mind that he couldn’t yet predict how, if at all, his 15-pitch stint in the game would affect his scheduled start at Yankee Stadium. Remember instead that he was out on the mound in Game 1 of last year’s ALDS against Houston, and that he’d made seven previous postseason relief appearances in his career.

Remember instead that as much well-earned grief as the Red Sox bullpen has taken this season, the combination of Porcello and four regular relievers (Ryan Brasier, Brandon Workman, Matt Barnes, and Kimbrel) did just enough to hold on for victory. Remember instead that Porcello is a consummate team player inside a locker room full of like-minded teammates, all of them professing a clear understanding that when the stakes change in October, individual needs change too.

“Rick is one of the pro’s pros I’ve been around in my time in the big leagues. That guy’s a class act. He’s willing to do literally whatever it takes for this team and I think everybody kind of saw that tonight with him coming in in a relief role,” Barnes said. “It’s definitely tough. I did it a little bit a few years ago and it’s a completely different routine. It’s something that you’re not accustomed to, not used to going out there, up and downs, you’re used to having the time to warm up.

“The ability to kind of get ready quick and pitch in a two-run game in the eighth is much different. He’s a guy that can handle any situation, whether it was this one, a one-run game in the ninth, or going out there and pitching seven shutout [innings]. He’s the kind of guy that can do all of it. Like I said, he’s a pro’s pro. That’s exactly what [the playoffs] is. It’s all hands on deck, it’s win at all costs. You have to win 11 games to win a World Series.”

Porcello helped the Red Sox get one. As soon as he emerged from the bullpen, as soon as he jogged toward the mound to start the eighth, 39,059 nerve-racked fans reacted to his arrival with a hero’s greeting, surprise fueling their cheers, gratitude making those cheers overflow into a sustained roar. They were so happy to see him, so confident he would fill the gap Cora had asked him to fill. Even if he didn’t know he’d be doing it until he got to Fenway on Friday.

“No, but I was definitely ready for anything,” Porcello said. “[Cora] came up to me before the game and asked me to go down to the pen and said he was going to try not to use me but to be ready to go. I said OK. Went down in the eighth and he said I was in the game. I was definitely a little surprised but excited for the opportunity.

“Absolutely. What am I going to say, no? The clichés match up to it. It’s whatever it takes. We needed somebody to cover that inning and get the ball to Craig and that was my job.”

Kimbrel would finish off a four-out save, three straight strikeouts across the heart of the Yankee order — Nos. 3-4-5 batters Brett Gardner, Giancarlo Stanton, and Luke Voit — silencing the panic that had

descended over Fenway after Aaron Judge's home run led off the ninth. Who knows what might have happened without Porcello's key outs.

"It's about getting 27 outs, having the lead, and we did it," Cora said. "I mean, one thing I learned last year to win a World Series is it's going to take 25, 27 guys to do it, regardless of their roles. In a perfect world the starter goes six. You have the seventh-inning guy, eighth inning, and ninth inning, and you move on. To get 27 outs at this stage right now is very difficult. And sometimes you have to go to Plan B or Plan C."

Or, in the case of Porcello, "might say C and a half probably."

For Porcello, take it all the way to Plan Z. He'll be there.

"This is the biggest stage. This is what we play for," he said. "I'll do whatever we need. So, yeah. Until my arm falls off, yeah."

*** *The Boston Herald***

Red Sox offense goes missing as Yankees pound out a win

Stephen Hewitt

The Red Sox' offense has always been there when they've needed it this season. But when it mattered most last night, it went missing.

Now, this record-setting club heads to New York in desperate need of a jolt if it doesn't want this season to become a failure.

On a night when David Price again couldn't get the job done in the playoffs, the Red Sox' league-leading offense went silent. Price was pulled before the second inning was even over, and he put the Red Sox in a hole they couldn't come back from in a 6-2 loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the divisional series.

The Red Sox now head to New York for Monday's Game 3 at Yankee Stadium, where they'll need to get at least one win to bring the series back to Boston and keep the season alive.

"We lost one game, you know what I mean?" said J.D. Martinez. "The battle's been back and forth. I don't think anyone thought we were gonna come here and sweep, really. Just look at the record, what are they about even, wins and losses versus them? So it's going to be a battle."

The Red Sox had to feel confident about their chances against Masahiro Tanaka, but the Yankees starter kept them quiet.

The righty had a 7.58 ERA in four starts against the Red Sox this season, which included a start two weeks ago in the Bronx when he gave up five earned runs in a loss. But beyond Xander Bogaerts' solo homer to center in the fourth, the Sox bats couldn't do any damage. Tanaka allowed just three hits in five innings before handing the ball to a star-studded bullpen that shut it down.

In all, the Red Sox produced just five hits, and their top three hitters of Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi and Martinez combined to go just 1-for-11. And after putting up five runs in the first three innings of Friday's Game 1 win, the Red Sox have scored just twice in the 15 innings since.

"We expanded tonight," Cora said. "(Tanaka's) split was a lot better. He made some pitches early in the game, and compared to the last one that we had against him, we were very disciplined in New York, and not tonight. We expanded and he did a good job. It seems like when we had him on the ropes when the counts were in our favor, he got back in the count and he threw a split or a slider and we expanded."

The Red Sox were behind the eight-ball from the beginning as Price was again shelled by the Yankees. The lefty gave up a monster home run to Aaron Judge in the first before surrendering another to Gary Sanchez in the second. He recorded just five outs before getting the early hook in the second, and he was booed mercilessly as he exited.

The bullpen, at least initially, buckled down and kept the Red Sox in it, and of all people, Joe Kelly led the charge. He pitched 2 1/3 innings of scoreless relief before handing it to Ryan Brasier, who bounce back from a rough Game 1 to strike out the side in the fifth.

But after a clean sixth, the Red Sox ran into trouble in the seventh. Eduardo Rodriguez failed to cover first in time as Judge singled to open the frame, before he walked Luke Voit. Two batters later, Sanchez cranked another homer — this time a 479-foot blast to left-center — that sealed the deal.

"I'm going to talk to him about it," Cora said of Rodriguez not covering first on Judge's single. "It seems like he went for the ball and then he slowed down. I haven't talked to him about that play."

"2-0 change-up, he swings and misses," Cora said of the Sanchez homer. "We try to come in and he missed right down the middle. Sanchez is a guy that fastballs down in the zone he crushes. He didn't miss that one."

Either Rick Porcello or Nathan Eovaldi will get the ball to start Monday's Game 3 to oppose New York's Luis Severino, who was 2-2 with a 3.56 ERA in five starts against the Red Sox this season.

The Red Sox said the key to coming out of New York — where the Yankees have won their last seven playoff home games — is staying within themselves.

"Keep it simple," Martinez said. "Not try to do too much. Not try to go out there and win a game on one swing. I think we just gotta get back to what makes us us offensively and that's grinding out at-bats, finding ways to get traffic on the bases and causing mayhem on the bases."

Added Betts: "Just going in and being us. Don't change. We're in this position for a reason and we know that, understand that, so we just have to continue to do what got us here."

David Price should not start in October anymore

Michael Silverman

No more excuses for David Price.

Not another word about Fortnite, nothing about the cold or about the Yankees or the media or Boston or even the playoffs.

Instead, let's try this: no more David Price starts in October.

We can deal with the larger issue of Price's place on the Red Sox but right now the immediate issue is a sad and pitiful one with an uncomplicated and uncontroversial solution.

Put both Price and the Red Sox out of their mutual misery by placing him back in the bullpen – hey, he was really good there a year ago and he's still super fresh after lasting only 1-2/3 innings Saturday.

Just do not place a ball in his hand to start a playoff game.

Not again, not after his Saturday night massacre and not if the Red Sox want him to embarrass himself and, more importantly, them again.

I had to look this up to be sure, but I discovered that the point of winning a division is to win a Division Series, and then win four more and then four more games. Saturday night, Price reminded us that he is a menace to the concept of the Red Sox winning in October.

The thought of allowing Price to start any more games this month actually feels more like a luxury now, considering how the Red Sox have to win at least once in Yankee Stadium in order to have a shot at a Game 5 back here on Thursday.

The ALCS feels a long, long way away from the Red Sox now that they are tied at 1 with the Yankees after their 6-2 loss. There's a reason level ground looks like a hole, and believe it or not, it's not the Red Sox bullpen's fault this time.

This time, we can blame Price for that predicament.

There are barely words, never mind excuses, to explain how Price turtles in the playoffs when he's granted permission to throw a first pitch in October.

The god-awful effort he put forth Saturday night – three hits, three runs, two homers, two walks, zero strikeouts – was the 10th postseason in a row where Price led his team to a playoff loss. This one was worse than any that came before.

The 1-2 cookie he threw down the pike to Aaron Judge, the second batter he faced, was nearly hit out of the ballpark in the deepest possible part, the area between the flagpole in center field and the left-center field light tower.

It was a batting practice pitch, which is fitting since that's how Price pitches as an October starter.

And while Price did retire the next two batters, his incomplete second inning was equally brutal. It began with a home run by Gary Sanchez, the sixth of his career against Price. The 2-0 lead was bad but not definitive – not yet. Price retired the next two batters but then it was back-to-back walks to the Nos. 8 and 9 hitters.

Then Andrew McCutchen rifled a ball off the wall for an RBI single and Alex Cora walked-ran out of the dugout to pry the ball from Price's useless left hand.

Now it's true that Price's ERA as a postseason starter is now 6.03.

And it's also true that Price posted a 10.34 ERA over four regular-season starts against the Yankees this season, giving up nine home runs with nine walks and only 11 strikeouts.

That's why no excuses were needed Saturday night.

There was a reason to hope but no earthly reason to believe that anything would change.

Price can't start in October.

The plan for David Price has to change, now ... right?

Jason Mastrodonato

It happened again. This time, worse than ever before.

David Price got knocked around in the postseason, and the Red Sox think it was nothing more than just one bad start.

One bad start that followed nine other bad starts in the postseason.

One bad start that his team lost, after his team lost his nine other starts in the postseason.

“Look around the league, it happens,” Red Sox pitching coach Dana LeVangie said after the worst playoff start of Price’s career led to the Sox’ 6-2 loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the American League Division Series last night. “It doesn’t define your season. It doesn’t define who you are. He’s going to be better next time. We all believe in that. That’s why we’ve had 108 wins, because he’s helped us get to this point. He’s going to help us get to where we want to get to.”

This can't go on like this, can it?

Will the Red Sox keep Price in their rotation if they find a way to knock out the Yankees and win a playoff series for the first time in five years?

Manager Alex Cora said he’ll talk to him, and maybe Price will pitch out of relief this series -- Rick Porcello and Nathan Eovaldi can pitch Games 3 and 4 (the order has yet to be decided), and then Chris Sale is on normal rest in Game 5, so there’s no need for Price to make another start in the ALDS.

Price said he’d be ready to pitch as soon as Monday after throwing 42 pitches and allowing three runs before Cora pulled him after just five outs last night.

"My spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't down," he said. "I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

But the idea of putting Price in the bullpen for the rest of the postseason, one that might seem like a given if the Sox advance, wasn’t even something on Cora’s radar.

“No, no, he's one of our starters,” Cora said. “Just a bad outing today. It just so happened it wasn't his day. He didn't make pitches. We trust him. He's bounced back before. We'll talk to him to make a few adjustments. And we'll go from there.”

This is the definition of insanity.

This is the Red Sox version of banging their heads against the wall over and over and over with the same result. Just like the Toronto Blue Jays did before them, and the Detroit Tigers did before the Jays, and the Tampa Bay Rays did before the Tigers.

It’s time for the insanity to end.

If the Red Sox are determined not to let this 108-win season go waste, they have to figure out a new plan for their \$217-million starting pitcher who was good enough to post the second-best ERA in the American League in the second half of the season (2.25), but couldn’t get a single strikeout in his playoff start.

Maybe Cora will find a way to rectify this before it's too late. The rookie skipper has been a creative problem solver all season. He’s taken the obvious choice in front of him, twirled it around a few times and discovered something even better.

How about going with an “opener” for an inning or two? Can’t somebody else set the tone in the first inning, get the Red Sox out to a good start and then let Price come in out of relief, where he’s actually been a dominant pitcher in the playoffs, throwing 15-½ innings with a 2.35 ERA over eight outings?

Entering his start last night with a career 5.74 ERA as a playoff starter, Price had a chance -- yet another one -- to change the narrative.

Unfortunately, he was bland and hittable from the first pitch of the game, which he spiked into the dirt some three feet before home plate.

He got ahead 0-2 on the second batter, Aaron Judge, but threw a non-competitive pitch to make it 1-2. Sandy Leon set up low and outside for a cutter, and Price let the pitch sail back over the plate for a cookie that Judge demolished 445 feet to the third row of the Green Monster seats in section 10, the last row before the flagpole.

Has anybody ever hit a ball in that spot?

In the second inning, Gary Sanchez hammered another cutter over the Green Monster, his sixth homer off Price in 14 at-bats against him.

Price then walked the 35-year-old Brett Gardner, missed his spot again to Andrew McCutchen, who smoked an RBI single off the Monster, and Cora came out to take the ball as Price was booed off the mound.

“Kind of thought he was overthrowing a little bit, trying to get beyond his velocity,” LeVangie said. “This time of year you make mistakes against big hitters, unfortunately it comes back to haunt you.”

Maybe there was something off with the preparation before the game. Did LeVangie feel the need to say anything to Price or give him something to focus on?

“No, not necessarily,” the coach said. “He’s pretty prepared about how he wants to go about it. He does his homework, at times without us seeing him, but he’s prepared about how he wants to go about it. The biggest thing is you go back to executing pitches, making pitches. When he does, he wins. He’s proven that.”

It seemed like Price look like a different guy last postseason, when he was pitching out of relief.

“Same guy,” LeVangie said. “He executed good (last year). He’s going to have another one for us. He’s going to have a few more for us. And I expect him to be able to do what he normally does. We’re not concerned because he didn’t execute a couple pitches.”

“We’re going to be fine. Our team is going to be fine. We’re not going to die on this one. We keep playing.”

The Red Sox will live and die with David Price, no matter how many times this story has been told before.

One of these times, the ending is going to change.

They really believe that.

News and notes: Brasier finds groove a day late

Jason Mastrodonato

A day late, Ryan Brasier looked like the dominant set-up man the Red Sox were hoping for.

Brasier rebounded from his disappointing performance in Game 1 of the American League Division Series on Friday with a brilliant inning last night, when he struck out the side in the fifth inning of the Sox’ 6-2 loss to the Yankees.

But it wasn’t only his strong outing that had people talking in Game 2.

Brasier took issue with Yankees catcher Gary Sanchez, who kept calling time and stepping out of the box during their battle in the fifth inning.

Finally, Brasier got mad and appeared to yell, “get back in the (expletive) box, (expletive)!”

“It was a heat of the moment thing,” Brasier said afterward. “Adrenaline going and crowd was up. I just kind of got, was ready to go. That’s it, just one of those things — just a big moment and I was ready to throw the pitch.”

Catcher Sandy Leon pushed his hands down to signal Brasier to relax. Brasier then channeled his anger into a 97-mph fastball that Sanchez swung at and missed for strike three.

“He stepped out of the box three times in a row and felt like it was time to do it regardless of whether he was ready or not,” Brasier said.

Asked if Sanchez said anything after the strikeout, Brasier said, “I couldn’t tell you. I wasn’t looking at him. I was going back to the dugout. If I had to go back out for the next inning I was ready to go.”

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While Brasier and Joe Kelly (2- $\frac{1}{3}$ scoreless innings) provided some much-needed relief after David Price’s poor start last night, Eduardo Rodriguez could not.

Rodriguez appeared to be pitching well at first, when he got the final two outs of the sixth inning, but he failed to cover first base in time to start the seventh inning and Aaron Judge reached first base safely on a slow roller.

Rodriguez stepped off the bag as if he was going to cover first, but didn’t gain any speed on his way to first and Judge beat him to the bag easily.

“I was OK, I just like, I just slipped on the mound and when I realized he was beating me already, I just let him get to the base,” Rodriguez said.

Manager Alex Cora said he planned on talking to him about it.

“It seems like he went for the ball and then he slowed down,” Cora said.

Rodriguez then allowed a three-run homer to Sanchez that put the game out of reach.

“We try to come in and he missed right down the middle,” Cora said. “Sanchez is a guy that fastballs down in the zone he crushes. He didn’t miss that one.”

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Rodriguez is playing an important role as the only long man in the Sox bullpen.

Steven Wright was supposed to join him as a multi-inning option, but the knuckleballer was injured and taken off the playoff roster yesterday.

Shortly after the Red Sox submitted their final roster for the American League Division Series on Friday morning, Wright was doing some medicine ball exercises when he felt something in his surgically-repaired left knee.

“I was talking with the media and when I came out, (trainer Brad Pearson) told me, and it was a mess here, everybody running around, trying to see what was going on,” Cora said.

The Sox put gave him an MRI and the results were discouraging: inflammation and loose body in the left knee, a similar diagnosis to that of Dustin Pedroia earlier this season.

“It’s a nightmare scenario,” Wright said.

MLB approved the roster change, and the Red Sox replaced Wright with right-hander Heath Hembree.

Wright will visit a doctor in New York and is not eligible to return to the Red Sox until the World Series, if the Sox make it that far.

Wright is unsure if he would even be ready by then.

“It sucks because he was throwing the ball well and we had big plans for him,” Cora said.

The Sox could’ve chosen Hector Velazquez or Brian Johnson instead of Hembree to provide the team more length in case they don’t get much from their starter or one of these games goes extra innings, but Cora said he liked Hembree’s ability better.

Hembree walked three but didn’t allow a hit in two scoreless innings last night.

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Rick Porcello was available out of relief last night, but did not pitch.

Cora said Porcello is still scheduled to pitch Game 3 on Monday, though Nathan Eovaldi is also an option.

“We’ll talk about it tonight and tomorrow and we’ll make a decision,” Cora said.

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Mitch Moreland left the game in the eighth inning with hamstring soreness and is questionable for Monday’s game.

“When I rounded between third and home, felt it grab a little bit,” Moreland said. “I came out and we’ll see how it feels tomorrow. Hopefully we caught it early enough.”

*** *The Providence Journal***

Red Sox need to find a way to cool Bombers

Kevin McNamara

BOSTON – So will New England’s baseball fans see their heroes again this season at Fenway Park?

Not if the Bronx Bombers keep knocking the ball over the fence.

There isn’t a lot of mystery in scouting the Yankees’ offense. They hit home runs – tons of them. If you can’t slow the power parade, you’d better be ready to score a bunch of runs.

That scenario played out in Game 2 as the Bronx Bombers pounded three homers and the Red Sox couldn’t keep pace in Saturday’s 6-2 win that evened the ALDS series at a game apiece.

Before the series even began, Boston manager Alex Cora sounded the alarm about an opponent that set a record for the most home runs (267) in a season.

“We have to keep them in the ballpark. That’s the most important thing,” Cora said. “I think from top to bottom they can hit the ball out of the ballpark. It’s a tough lineup.”

Through the Wild Card game and two ALDS tilts, the Yankees keep mashing. They have six homers in the three games with Aaron Judge responsible for three and Gary Sanchez two.

Sanchez struggled at the plate (.186 average) for long stretches of this season but as he showed Saturday with his two home runs, he can certainly make pitchers pay.

“You know he’s capable of that,” said manager Aaron Boone. “That’s kind of what we’ve been waiting for to some degree where he can take over a game on offense. He was huge, obviously, tonight.”

PRICE WOES CONTINUE

The disappointment on David Price’s face when he met the media after yet another playoff loss told the story.

Price said he lacked command on a few critical pitches and the Yankees took advantage. He certainly lacked command on the 445-foot homer Judge crushed in the first inning and the 399-footer Gary Sanchez stroked in the second.

“I’m not sure. I didn’t execute enough pitches, and that was that,” Price said. “They make it tough for me. Knowing that, you have to go out there and execute pitches in big spots in counts. And that’s something I wasn’t able to do tonight.”

This was Price’s first career post-season start against the Yankees but far from his first as a pro and it’s clear the sight of the Pinstripes make him quake. In 42 starts against the Yanks, Price is just 15-15 and has surrendered 37 home runs.

Price’s postseason troubles are quickly becoming legendary. Of the 70 pitchers with 10 or more playoff starts in their careers, Boston’s \$30 million man is the only one without a victory on his resume. In 10 postseason starts, his ERA is a whopping 6.03.

After throwing only 42 pitches, Price said he’d be able to go again as soon as Game 3 in a relief role. It’s unclear if Cora would go that route or save Price for another start in this series. Clearly sending him out to start a Game 5 would test some serious faith by Cora and nerves for Red Sox fans.

Before his start, Price said he’s only concerned about winning, not stopping his post-season slide.

“Yeah, but if I lose the entire playoffs and we win a World Series, I’ll take that. That’s what I’m here for,” he said. “I don’t want this to be about me and me not winning. I want to go out there and throw the ball well, and help the Red Sox win. That’s what I worry about.”

BULLPEN BETTER

After struggling badly in Game 1, several Boston relievers settled down in their second stab at the Yanks. One was Ryan Brasier.

His second relief stint in as many games certainly unfolded much more smoothly. The hard-throwing righty struck out the side in the fifth. Two of the K’s came after an Eduardo Nunez throwing error and a walk and at the expense of Giancarlo Stanton and Gary Sanchez on 97 mph heaters up in the strike zone.

TWEET THAT

The coolest tweet of the night came from Lindsay Berra, the grand-daughter of Yankee Hall of Famer Yogi Berra. She typed “Tonight @ElGarySanchez became the first #Yankees catcher to hit two home runs in a postseason game since Gampa did it in Game 7 of the 1956 #WorldSeries.”

Sanchez didn't know about such history and said "I can tell you it's an honor to be mentioned in the same sentence as that man, a legend of baseball," he said.

PERSPECTIVE

There are two thoughtful, well-spoken managers in this series who own loads of experience playing in Red Sox-Yankee battles. One is, of course, Aaron (insert your verb of choice) Boone.

He knows what playoff baseball feels like both at Fenway and at Yankee Stadium where the series resumes Monday and Tuesday nights.

"In looking back, you know, you can't ask for much more as a professional athlete to be playing on this kind of stage in this kind of environment, whether it's at home in front of our fans or coming on the road in a hostile environment against your rival," Boone said. "I mean, this is what it's all about in a lot of ways. To be able to play in these kinds of games is a privilege, and you also understand that this time of year it's a tremendous opportunity to chase the ultimate prize. That's now begun. To get to play here in this venue is special."

Yankees 6, Red Sox 2: Trio of New York homers sink Boston, even series

Bill Koch

BOSTON --- Joe Kelly recorded two more outs than David Price on Saturday night at Fenway Park.

Perhaps that's all you really need to know to surmise the outcome of Game 2 of the American League Division Series between the Red Sox and Yankees.

Taming the powerful New York lineup and enjoying a first taste of postseason success as a starting pitcher remain twin riddles that Price has yet to solve. Boston finds itself headed to the Bronx two defeats away from a premature end to what has been a historic season to date.

Price allowed a pair of solo home runs and retired just five of the 10 batters he faced, Eduardo Rodriguez was roughed up in relief and the Yankees stole the home field advantage that the Red Sox worked for six months to build. New York powered its way to a 6-2 victory on a spectacular fall night, one that left a season-high crowd of 39, 151 fans skulking their way to the exits.

"It's tough," Price said. "After we won Game 1, to go out there and have that opportunity to go up 2-0 and to throw the baseball the way that I did, it was definitely tough."

Gary Sanchez's titanic three-run blast to left center was the final indignity in the top of the seventh, as the Yankees doubled their offensive output on one swing. It was the third round-tripper of the night for a club that set a Major League record for homers during the regular season, with Aaron Judge going deep in the first and Sanchez following suit leading off the second. Boston responded with just five hits against four New York pitchers.

"I think you know the series is capable of going the distance," said Red Sox outfielder Mookie Betts, who finished 0-for-4. "I don't think we expected to sweep. We've got two great teams here and it's best of five. We know it's going to be fun."

Price was booed to the home dugout as manager Alex Cora came to take the ball from his pitcher's left hand in the top of the second. Price threw just 42 pitches in what was by far the shortest of his 10 postseason starts to date – indeed, four of Price's last five playoff relief appearances have been longer. It was an even briefer stint than in Price's Game 2 loss to Cleveland in the 2016 ALDS, a night where he finished just 3 1/3 innings for the Red Sox in a 6-0 shutout.

"Just a bad outing today," Cora said. "It just so happened it wasn't his day. He didn't make pitches."

Judge started the trouble against Price with one out in the first. He pounced on a cut-fastball out over the plate and hammered it to deep left center, a 445-foot blast into the boxes above the Green Monster to make it 1-0. Sanchez was next to visit the seats above the wall in left, hooking another cut-fastball down and away into the second row to double the New York lead.

Price retired the next two men before issuing back-to-back walks to Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner at the bottom of the Yankees' order. Andrew McCutchen followed by lashing an RBI single off the Monster, making it 3-0 and prompting Cora to take early action. The only Red Sox responses came on a solo homer to center by Xander Bogaerts in the fourth and an Ian Kinsler RBI double to left in the seventh.

Price remains the only pitcher without a victory among the 70 men who have started at least 10 career postseason games. Saturday marked the first time in 299 career starts overall in which he's failed to record a strikeout. Price's nine starts against the Yankees with the Red Sox have now resulted in 18 home runs and an ugly 7.95 earned-run average.

"I didn't execute enough pitches, and that was that," Price said. "They make it tough for me. Knowing that, you have to go out there and execute pitches in big spots and counts. And that's something I wasn't able to do tonight."

Boston's much maligned bullpen – a group that walked a tightrope in Friday night's 5-4 victory in Game 1 – was further besmirched by a converted starter the following night. Rodriguez failed to cover first base on a Judge chopper to the right side leading off the seventh, resulting in an infield single. Luke Voit drew a walk, Giancarlo Stanton bounced into a fielder's choice and Sanchez unloaded on a 2-and-1 fastball, crushing a drive 479 feet onto Lansdowne Street.

"We tried to come in and he missed right down the middle," Cora said. "Sanchez is a guy, fastballs down in the zone, he crushes. He didn't miss that one."

Kelly escaped the second on a Judge liner to right and flashed triple-digit heat while allowing a lone single over his next two frames, throwing 20 of his 25 pitches for strikes. Ryan Brasier struck out the side in the fifth and Rodriguez bailed Brandon Workman out of a jam in the sixth before buckling the following frame. New York's relievers tossed four scoreless innings behind Masahiro Tanaka, who improved to 3-2 in five postseason starts.

"We've been able to come from behind numerous times this year," Kelly said. "We've won so many different ways from leading the game the whole entire way to a loss – we usually play well the next game. It's something we're looking forward to – turning the page on this one, traveling and getting ready for the next one."

Red Sox Journal: Knee soreness forces Wright off the roster, replaced by Hembree

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Alex Cora was confronted with some bad news as he exited his press conference prior to Game 1 of the American League Division Series.

Red Sox head athletic trainer Brad Pearson was waiting just off the media room at Fenway Park. Steven Wright's surgically repaired left knee was ailing, and Boston was about to be short a relief pitcher entering the Friday night opener against the Yankees.

Major League Baseball has approved Wright's removal from the 25-man roster submitted by the Red Sox ahead of the series. The knuckleballer was replaced by right-hander Heath Hembree prior to Saturday night's Game 2.

“You go through the rehab processes, the DL stints and you finally feel like you’re in a place where you can contribute,” Wright said. “To not be able to do that, it’s tough. It hit me pretty hard yesterday.”

“Hopefully he’ll be back,” Cora said. “It sucks because he was throwing the ball well, and we had big plans for him.”

Wright’s three scoreless innings of relief in the A.L. East clincher at Yankee Stadium in September had Cora encouraged about the chance to utilize what he regarded as a true bullpen weapon. But Wright complained of soreness in the knee to Pearson after a Friday workout that included routine strength testing and medicine ball work. An MRI revealed inflammation and loose bodies in the joint, and Wright will see surgeon Riley Williams III on Monday after Boston travels for the middle games of the series.

“When I came out Brad told me, and it was a mess here,” Cora said. “Everyone was running around and trying to see what was going on. Obviously we had already submitted the roster.”

“I still feel like this is something I’ve dealt with before and it’s going to kind of go away — I’m still hoping for that,” Wright said. “But the fact that we got the MRI and it showed something, it feels like a nightmare to be honest with you.”

Wright allowed just one earned run over 10 games and 13 2/3 innings of relief in September. Hembree sputtered to the finish over his last 21 games, pitching to a 6.14 earned-run average and allowing 10 of his 17 inherited runners to score. His strikeout rate of 11.4 batters per nine innings was fourth on the team during the regular season, and Cora is hopeful Hembree can locate with fastballs up in the strike zone against the powerful New York lineup.

“He was upset that he didn’t pitch the way he’s capable of, and now he’s back,” Cora said. “Like I said to all of those guys — Hector [Velazquez], [Brian Johnson], [Bobby] Poyner, Drew [Pomeranz] — just be ready. You never know.”

Mixing, matching

Cora, bench coach Ron Roenicke and pitching coach Dana LeVangie maintained a running dialogue in the Red Sox dugout during the sixth, seventh and eighth innings on Friday night.

Boston made five pitching changes after Chris Sale recorded the game’s first 16 outs, with its coaching staff attempting to mix and match the rest of the way against the Yankees.

“It’s about getting 27 outs and having the lead,” Cora said Friday. “And we did it.”

Consider the decision to replace Ryan Brasier with Brandon Workman in the sixth inning. New York had two men on with two outs and Gary Sanchez was the tying run coming to the plate in a 5-2 game. Gleyber Torres waited on deck as the go-ahead run, and Cora was already thinking ahead.

“Workman is here for a reason — because of his breaking ball,” Cora said. “We felt that was a good matchup for us. Torres, he hits breaking balls in the zone but not out of the zone. We can expand with him.”

Torres made contact on 70.9 percent of his swings this season, but that number dipped to 55.4 percent on pitches outside the strike zone. Workman started Torres with a cut-fastball off the outside edge that induced a swing and miss and then dropped a breaking ball on a full count that got Torres swinging to end the inning.

“I just kind of had to take a deep breath and get back to executing,” Workman said. “I was able to get that first pitch strike swinging at the cutter and it kind of settled me in a little bit. I was able to work from there.”

A different look

Each team made lineup changes for Game 2, with the Yankees shuffling the deck considerably.

Aaron Hicks (right hamstring) was left on the bench after being removed in the fourth inning on Friday night. Hicks saw 17 pitches in two at-bats against Sale, drawing a walk and lining a single to right field. Luke Voit moved from fifth to third, Sanchez jumped from eighth to fifth and Torres came up one spot from ninth to eighth in the batting order. Brett Gardner played center field and batted ninth.

"Hicks put great at-bats," Cora said. "The last one before he came out was (11) pitches. That was a good at-bat. That kind of changed everything."

Voit (3-for-5, two home runs) and Sanchez (6-for-13, five home runs) both had enjoyed significant career success against Red Sox starter David Price into Saturday. Gardner had logged 52 at-bats against Price over the past decade, most in the New York order.

Cora made just one change, swapping out Steve Pearce at first base in favor of Mitch Moreland. Rafael Devers missed out on a potential start at third base against Masahiro Tanaka, with Eduardo Nunez playing his second straight game. Nunez is believed to be the surer hand on ground balls hit within his limited range, and the right-handed Tanaka's slight reverse splits — .242/.285/.425 against right-handers, .237/.273/.401 against left-handers — were enough to sway Cora.

"[Devers], he has more range and he can make the great play, but there's something about the routine play," Cora said. "Throughout the season we didn't see it obviously. With David pitching there are a lot of ground balls to that side, so we just went with (Nunez)."

*** *MassLive.com***

How Eduardo Rodriguez's lack of hustle covering first base might have changed the complexion of Game 2 loss

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- David Price and the Red Sox' offense will get their fare share of blame for Saturday's Game 2 loss to the Yankees, but a certain play by Eduardo Rodriguez deserves a harder look as well.

After getting out of a jam in relief of Brandon Workman in the sixth, Rodriguez came back out for the seventh with the Red Sox trailing, 3-1. Rodriguez worked Aaron Judge to a 1-2 count before inducing weak contact on a ground ball to first base. What should have been an easy out turned into a base hit because Rodriguez failed to hustle to first, instead lightly jogging toward the bag as Mitch Moreland fielded the ball.

Rodriguez, who seriously injured his ankle covering first base on a play in July, said after the game that risk of injury was not a factor on the play. He conceded that he let up, believing that Judge was going to be safe.

"I just slipped on the mound and when I realized he was beating me already, I just let him get to the base," the lefty said.

It's impossible to know if Rodriguez would've beaten Judge to the base if he had run at full speed or how the game would've been different if the Sox had gotten Judge for the first out. But looking back, getting an out in that spot might have changed the complexion of the entire game.

Right after Judge's hit, Rodriguez momentarily lost his command, missing badly with three straight pitches to Luke Voit. After walking Voit, he got Giancarlo Stanton to ground into a force play before allowing a three-run homer to Gary Sanchez that effectively ended Boston's comeback chances.

If Rodriguez had gotten Judge out, he would have faced Voit with one out and no runners on. He likely wouldn't have been flustered enough to completely lose his command for three pitches, either. The potential third out of the inning would have been Giancarlo Stanton, who struggled badly in both games at Fenway, instead of Sanchez, who had homered earlier in the night.

Yes, those are a lot of hypotheticals. But it's a good lesson that in October, teams can't take any plays off.

In a tight series in which the margin between winning and losing is extremely small, Rodriguez can't completely take a play off, even if its impact seems minor at the time. Alex Cora has talked about how hard it is to get 27 outs time and time again, so the idea that the Sox appear to have given one away for no reason in a postseason game can't sit well with him.

Cora, who was candid in his displeasure with Rodriguez's performance in the penultimate game of the regular season against the Yankees, said after the game that he had not yet talked to the young lefty about the play. He surely will before Games 3 and 4 in New York, ensuring that each of his players lays it all on the line on every play for the rest of October.

As Rodriguez learned Saturday, you never know what might happen if you don't.

Ryan Brasier yells at Yankees' Gary Sanchez as rivalry heats up in Game 2

Matt Vautour

BOSTON - With one out and two on in the fifth inning of Saturday's ALDS Game 2, Red Sox reliever Ryan Brasier was ahead of Yankee catcher Gary Sanchez 1-2 and he set himself to go after his third strikeout of the inning.

Sanchez stepped out late and Brasier didn't like it.

He motioned for Sanchez to get back in. It didn't take an expert lip reader to understand his message.

"Get the (expletive) back in the box," Brasier yelled, staring in.

Sanchez looked surprised and stepped back in. Brasier promptly blew a 97 mph fastball by him to end the inning.

"He stepped out of the box before I could even throw the pitch. It was a heat of the moment thing," Brasier said. "Adrenaline was going. The crowd was up. I was ready to go. It was one of those things. It was a big moment and I was just ready to throw the pitch."

He said the exchange didn't add anything extra to his punch-out pitch.

"The plan was attack him with fastballs up," Brasier said. "I just made a good pitch right there."

It was a good bounce back outing for Brasier, who struggled in his first postseason appearance on Friday.

"Every time you have a bounce back outing or a good outing after a so-so outing the confidence comes back a little bit," Brasier said. "I was behind the ball a little better, around the zone. Slider was a little bit better today. Obviously my fastball was around the zone a little better."

On Friday, starter Chris Sale and Rick Porcello, a starter making a bullpen cameo pitched well, while the regular relievers faltered. The script flipped Saturday as David Price and converted started Eduardo

Rodriguez struggled, while Joe Kelly, Brasier and Heath Hembree delivered encouraging efforts to build on.

Kelly said they group was simply trying to keep it close enough that the offense could have a chance to come back.

"Relievers make careers on trying to save runs, whether for another reliever or starter," Kelly said. "At that point in the game, I was just trying to keep the score the same and get as many pitches as I can. We have a great offense. If we keep it within four, we can strike at any time."

Aaron Judge blares 'New York, New York' walking by Red Sox clubhouse after ALDS Game 2 win

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- If the Red Sox needed a reminder of where their championship hopes would either flourish or die after losing Game 2 to the Yankees, they got it from Aaron Judge shortly after the game.

As he was leaving the park, Judge walked through the concourse (and by the Red Sox' clubhouse) loudly blaring Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" from a speaker. The Red Sox were set to depart for New York after Game 2, with Game 3 scheduled for Monday night at Yankee Stadium.

David Price's life as Red Sox's \$217M pitcher got much tougher with Game 2 disaster vs. Yankees

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- David Price's 10th postseason start ended with the Fenway Park crowd booing him off the mound after just 1.2 innings.

Price remained winless as a postseason starting pitcher. He's 0-9 with a 6.03 ERA (40 earned runs, 59.2 innings) in his 10 starts.

This marked the worst start of them all. By far. It was an epic meltdown against the archival Yankees in Game 2 of the ALDS.

Aaron Judge and Gary Sanchez both homered against Price who allowed three runs and left with two men on base in the second.

New York won 6-2 here at Fenway Park. The best-of-five series is tied 1-1. Game 3 is Monday at Yankee Stadium.

"My spirits aren't down," Price said. "My confidence isn't down. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

Can it get any worse for the Red Sox's \$217 million starting pitcher?

The lefty received one of the three loudest ovations during pregame introductions before Game 1 on Friday. Of course he did. He went 6-1 with a 2.25 ERA, 0.97 WHIP, 68 strikeouts and 16 walks in 11 starts during the second half.

But Red Sox fans turned on him quickly here Saturday. That's how it works when a pitcher continues to lose big games in this city.

It's pretty straightforward.

The Red Sox, Patriots, Celtics and Bruins have combined for 10 championships the past 17 years. Fans expect Boston athletes to perform. Tom Brady and David Ortiz set a high standard.

Price hasn't won. He hurled 6.2 scoreless innings out of the bullpen during the 2017 ALDS. But he has allowed eight earned runs in five innings in his two postseason starts with Boston.

The lefty better hope the Red Sox win this series so he receives another opportunity to start a playoff game and redeem himself this October. Or else he'll experience another long winter full of scrutiny from Boston sports radio show hosts, columnists, fans, twitter trolls -- all the David Price doubters. Check out Twitter where the word "choke" and phrase "please opt out" were commonly used last night in tweets about Price.

We've seen this story before. The twitter trolls came out in full force the offseason after Price lost Game 2 of the 2016 ALDS to the Indians. They relentlessly reminded him of his winless postseason record as a starter in replies to his tweets.

One fan tweeted to him in October 2016, "I'm going to dress up as a 'playoff start' for Halloween.that should scare u more than any other costume." Price quoted the tweet, "Hatred from Boston fans...that never happens ...thanks for your support I'll train hard to make you happy."

Then came the Nov. 22, 2016 photo he posted on Twitter from Hawaii during his Honeymoon. "Aloha! Can't lose a playoff game in Hawaii! #thankGod."

The Twitter notifications. The scrutiny. The questions. The columns. It seemed to get to him. That's when things took a turn for the worse in Boston.

He returned the next season and his feud with the media began. He didn't handle the situation well. Being sidelined with an injury also didn't help.

He has handled things much better this year. He speaks with local beat reporters again. He almost always is available to media members pregame. He sits in front of his locker and answers any question. Several of his teammates never are around pregame.

He hardly ever tweets anymore. That means he no longer replies to trolls. He hasn't tweeted since May 19. He said recently that he bought a new phone and didn't know his Twitters password to sign in.

He's had a smile on his face most of this season. But he looked absolutely dejected after Saturday's game while sitting in the interview room.

Life as Boston's \$217 million pitcher could get tough again. It could get really tough if the Red Sox get bounced the ALDS and Price doesn't pitch again here in October.

Radio show hosts will have a field day talking about how he choked on the big stage yet again. It will start Sunday morning.

The lefty has an opportunity to opt out of the remaining four years of his contract this offseason. But he told MassLive.com in September he plans to stay here.

"Why would I leave here to go to a team that's not as good as this team?" Price said back in September. "I came here to win. I don't worry about all the other stuff."

He'll need to deal with all the scrutiny in the best way possible if he remains in Boston.

He better hope his teammates win two more games and he has an opportunity to start in the ALCS. That would allow him another chance this season to change his playoff narrative.

He could pitch before a potential ALCS. He might get another chance in this series considering he threw only 42 pitches in Game 2.

Price has a 7.95 ERA (53 earned runs, 60 innings) in nine starts vs. the Yankees as a member of the Red Sox. He has allowed 85 hits, including 18 homers.

But Red Sox manager Alex Cora said he's confident using Price again vs. the Yankees.

"He's part of what we're trying to accomplish and we count on him," Cora said.

Price said he'll be available to pitch Monday if needed.

"I just want to win," Price said. "That's it. My main goal is to win in the playoffs, to win a World Series. Whatever I have to do to help us do that, I'm fine with. I said it last year and I'll say it again, I want to win. I want to win a World Series. And whatever I need to do to help us do that, I'm fine with. But I know I'm more than capable of winning games as a starter in October. That's what I look forward to doing."

David Price implodes in ALDS Game 2 as Boston Red Sox fall, 6-2, to Yankees

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- David Price had the chance to exorcise two personal demons Saturday night. Instead, his performance in Game 2 of the ALDS against the Yankees only made the burden of those demons heavier.

Price lasted just 1.2 innings, giving up two home runs and exiting to a booing Fenway Park crowd with the Red Sox down 3-0 in the second inning. New York would go on to win, 6-2, tying the best-of-five series at one game apiece.

Aaron Judge hit a mammoth 445-foot solo homer in the second at-bat of the game to give New York an early advantage before Gary Sanchez (who is 7-for-14 with six homers in his career against Price) added a shot of his own in the second to make it 2-0. Back-to-back walks to Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner set the table for Andrew McCutchen, who gave the Yankees a 3-0 lead with an RBI single.

Xander Bogaerts' solo homer in the fourth cut the lead to 3-1, with Joe Kelly, Ryan Brasier and Brandon Workman holding the Yankees scoreless for four straight innings. New York would rally again in the seventh, when Eduardo Rodriguez allowed a leadoff single to Aaron Judge (on a grounder where he was slow to cover first) before walking Luke Voit and allowing a game-sealing, three-run homer to Sanchez that gave New York a five-run lead.

Ian Kinsler drove in Eduardo Nunez with an RBI double in the seventh but the Sox' rally stalled when pinch-hitter Rafael Devers struck out and Jackie Bradley Jr. grounded out to second to end the inning. Zach Britton and Aroldis Chapman shut down the Sox in the eighth and ninth, with Chapman forcing Nunez to ground into a double play to end the game.

Price's outing was his worst in a long history of bad postseason outings, raising his ERA to 6.03 as a starter in the postseason. With Boston's loss Saturday, Price's teams are now 0-10 in playoff games he has started.

Price's struggles keeping the Yankees in the ballpark this year continued, as the homers by Judge and Sanchez were the 10th and 11th homers the lefty has given up to New York in 17.1 innings in 2018. His ERA rose to 10.91 against the Yankees on the year and 7.95 since joining the Red Sox in 2016.

Boston mustered just five hits on the night, with Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka pitching five innings and allowing one run on three hits while striking out four. Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi and J.D. Martinez were a combined 1-for-11 on the night.

With the series tied 1-1, are off Sunday and will play Game 3 at Yankee Stadium on Monday night. Righty Rick Porcello will take the mound for Boston against Luis Severino, with first pitch schedule for 7:40 p.m.

Bullpen performs well in extended stretch

Outside of the three-run homer Rodriguez gave up to Sanchez, the Red Sox' bullpen showed some encouraging signs in an extended stint Saturday. Tasked with getting 22 of 27 outs, Boston's relievers allowed five hits (two against Rodriguez) while striking out seven in 7.1 innings.

Joe Kelly and Ryan Brasier were especially impressive, as Kelly held New York scoreless for 2.1 innings in relief of Price and Brasier struck out the side in the fifth. Heath Hembree, who was added to the ALDS roster Saturday morning due to Steven Wright's injury, pitched two scoreless innings in his first career postseason performance.

Remaining ALDS schedule (all on TBS):

Game 3: Mon., Oct. 8, 7:40 p.m. at Yankee Stadium (RHP Rick Porcello vs. RHP Luis Severino)

Game 4: Tue., Oct. 9, 8:07 p.m. at Yankee Stadium (RHP Nathan Eovaldi vs. LHP CC Sabathia)

Game 5 (if necessary): Thu., Oct. 11, 7:40 p.m. at Fenway Park (LHP Chris Sale vs. LHP J.A. Happ)

Steven Wright injury: Boston Red Sox knuckleballer says, 'This feels like a nightmare to be honest'

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- The Red Sox removed Steven Wright from their ALDS roster Saturday after he underwent an MRI on his sore left knee Friday.

Boston replaced Wright with right-handed reliever Heath Hembree.

"This feels like a nightmare to be honest with you," Wright said. "It sucks. But it is what it is. I'm trying to stay positive to move forward. I've gone through a significant injury. This isn't the first time I've had something go wrong."

Wright's knee began to bother him around 4 p.m. Friday while warming up for Game 1 of the ALDS.

"All of a sudden I turned around and something just grabbed," Wright said. "I don't know what it was. So what we think is there's loose bodies in there."

He felt the pain immediately when he turned.

"I thought it was nothing big until I couldn't walk," he said.

Wright will visit with Dr. Riley Williams III on Monday in New York. Williams is the surgeon who performed his surgery in May 2017. The knuckleballer underwent a cartilage restoration procedure in his left knee, the same surgery Dustin Pedroia underwent last October.

Riley will compare this most recent MRI to the one taken in July.

"The biggest question now is still trying to figure out what's going on," Wright said. "We still don't know. We got the MRI yesterday. It definitely showed that there's something going on."

The knuckleballer spent 85 days during the regular season on the DL. He began the season sidelined. The Red Sox reinstated him April 28. He returned to the DL with left knee inflammation June 26. He didn't return until Sept. 1.

Wright posted a 1.52 ERA and 1.21 WHIP in 16 relief outings (29.2 innings) overall.

He is extremely disappointed he won't pitch in the ALDS.

"That's probably the hardest thing is that you go through all the rehab processes, the DL stints. You finally feel like you're in a position to help contribute," Wright said. "And to not be able to do that, it's tough, man. It hit me pretty hard yesterday. The hardest thing right now is trying to stay as positive as possible just to get through it."

Wright is ineligible to return for the ALCS. He could return for the World Series if the Red Sox make it there and his knee is healthy.

"I can't speculate on how quick I'll be able to come back," Wright said. "Obviously I'm always hopeful. It's hard to say. Until we get some more information from the doctors on Monday, it's hard to say how long this is going to take."

*** *The Cape Cod Times***

Red Sox rivalry with Yankees like no other

Paul Bowker

BOSTON — More than two hours before Saturday night's baseball showdown at Fenway Park, Cape resident Peter Gammons, a longtime baseball writer and commentator, stood behind the batting cage as the Red Sox took batting practice.

Within just a few minutes, Red Sox star shortstop Xander Bogaerts wandered over and the two had a one-on-one.

Maybe they were talking about hitting.

Or maybe they were chatting about the best place on the Cape for chowdah.

Or maybe something simpler: Red Sox versus Yankees.

Few things fire up Red Sox Nation — including those of us on the Cape — like a Red Sox and Yankees playoff battle. The last time it happened, in 2004, the Sox overcame a three-game deficit and blasted the Yanks in four straight games. They went on to win a historic World Series championship. It became part of a movie, "Fever Pitch."

Welcome to the 2018 version, where Sox fans and Yanks fans can be seen roaming Jersey Street and Lansdowne Street outside Fenway, proudly wearing Chris Sale and Aaron Judge jerseys (both former Cape Leaguers, by the way) and giving each other a glaring eye as they pass on the sidewalk.

Gammons, certainly coming up on the Sox side of it, knows the rivalry perhaps better than anybody.

"It means so much to the cities and their fans," said Gammons, a year-round resident of Cataumet who will be inducted into the Cape Cod Baseball League Hall of Fame in December.

It means everything.

Ask anybody.

The battle cries began Friday night, when the Red Sox pulled out a 5-4 victory over the Yankees in the first game of the best-of-five American League Divisional Series.

"All right! Let's get this weekend started!"

Those were the words bellowing out from a concessions staff member as he paraded through the underbelly of Fenway Park a few hours before the Grand Show began Friday night.

Even before a single fan stepped into the famed ballpark for the first Red Sox-Yankees postseason meeting since that historic showdown in 2004, a buzz was blasting its way around Fenway.

An usher happily obliged a pair of Air Force members by snapping their photo with the Green Monster in the background.

Outside the ballpark, a group of guys wearing Yankee jerseys were given a hard time by a parking lot attendant. The rest of the street was dominated by men and women wearing Sale and David Ortiz shirts.

Saturday afternoon, a group of Sox fans stood outside the Green Monster on Lansdowne Street with alternating cheers: "Let's go, Red Sox" and "Yankees suck!"

Indeed, this is no ordinary playoff series.

It's the Sox and the Yankees. The good guys and the bad guys. It's Luke and Darth, the rebel and the evil empire.

Friday night's game even included a Sox fan jumping out of the stands down the right-field line and running onto the field. He was quickly run down by three Fenway security types, killing the drama in a matter of seconds.

Still, the crowd loved it.

And this one is just beginning.

The Red Sox lost game two Saturday night and now the series moves to Yankee Stadium for Games 3 and 4 on Monday and Tuesday. If a fifth game is needed it will be played Thursday night at Fenway.

When would there ever be a bigger night?

The rivalry is among the biggest in all of professional sports. It has produced a famous bloody sock (Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling), home runs we'd rather forget about (Bucky Dent), home runs we celebrate (David Ortiz), players who switched sides (Babe Ruth, Roger Clemens, Wade Boggs) and countless memorable brawls.

That's the thing about this year, Gammons said. The rivalry is strong, but don't expect the all-out brawls that happened in 2003 and 1999 and 2000 and, well, you get the picture.

"The players on these teams, they're good people. ... These players respect each other," he said.

The respect will certainly be tested over these next few days. And that's what the rivalry is all about. So buckle in. This is one great ride.

Under Cora, the Sox are ready for whatever comes their way

Paul Bowker

BOSTON — Alex Cora jumped on a platform behind the batting cage and watched every last swing late Saturday afternoon.

The Red Sox were getting ready to play the New York Yankees in the second game of their American League Divisional Series at Fenway Park, and at this moment you might find other managers for other teams in their office working on lineup cards.

Not Cora. It's not his style.

When batting practice ended, he ran onto the field and began picking up baseballs just like the other players did as a part of their housekeeping duties.

As the Red Sox head into their first playoff series with their first-year manager (and former Red Sox player), Cora has changed the rules.

That became evident Friday night, when Cora chose to use Rick Porcello, his scheduled Game 3 starting pitcher, in a relief role in the eighth inning.

It is a lesson that Cora learned last year with the Houston Astros, who not only defeated the Red Sox in a playoff series in 2017 but went on to win the World Series.

"One thing I learned last year, to win a World Series is going to take 25, 27 guys to do it, regardless of their roles," said Cora, who has seen 209 regular-season wins in two years as manager of the Red Sox and bench coach of the Astros in 2017.

It is a strategy, or an outlook, that the Red Sox have embraced all season.

"If they want me to throw 150 (pitches), I'll throw 150," said former Cape League pitching star Chris Sale, the Red Sox starter in Friday night's 5-4 win. "If they want me to pitch tomorrow (Saturday), I'll pitch tomorrow.

"I think that's the mindset for every person in this clubhouse. Up and down the lineup and the pitching staff, we are fully prepped for everything thrown our way. We're not going to shy away from it."

Saturday night, Cora didn't hesitate in pulling starter David Price from the game in the second inning after the Yankees torched Price for three runs and three hits. Aaron Judge, a former Brewster Whitecap, launched a homer in the opening inning.

The Red Sox won a franchise-record 108 games during the regular season and won the AL East title for the third consecutive year. A number of players were in multiple roles during the season.

"This is a team without any egos," said J.D. Martinez, whose three-run home run on Friday night got the Sox out to an early lead in the opening inning. "Everyone here is just a humble group of guys. And everyone is just kind of pushing for each other. And it's just an easy fit."

Among those is center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr., a former Cape Leaguer in Hyannis who shared the outfield on Friday night with a bird.

"I'm like, 'What are you doing?' " Bradley said. "I just got a feeling it's going to be hit right there and I'm going to have to dive. ... I'm almost trying to kind of carom my body around it so I make sure I don't hit the bird. I like animals."

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

David Price remains confident despite another post-season flameout

Bill Doyle

BOSTON — David Price's postseason misery must be psyching him out, even if he won't admit it.

The veteran southpaw lasted only 1 2/3 innings of a 6-2 Red Sox loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the ALDS on Saturday night at Fenway Park. He allowed three runs, including long home runs by Aaron Judge and Gary Sanchez. It was the shortest outing of his career and he was booed as he left the field.

Price fell to 0-9 as a starter in the postseason. His only two playoff victories have come in relief. His earned run average in 10 career postseason starts is 6.03. Of the 70 pitchers who have started at least 10 postseason games, Price is the only one without a victory.

The Sox head to New York on Monday with the best-of-five series tied, 1-1.

"It's tough," Price admitted. "Just after we won Game 1 to go out there and have that opportunity to go up 2-nothing and to throw the baseball the way that I did, it was definitely tough. But my spirits aren't down, the confidence isn't down. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

Sox manager Alex Cora said he might use Price in relief in New York, but insisted he hadn't given up on him as a starter.

"No, no," he said. "He's one of our starters. Just a bad outing today. It just so happened it wasn't his day. He didn't make pitches. We trust him. He's bounced back before. We'll talk to him to make a few adjustments and we'll go from there."

Price said he'd be ready to pitch again as soon as Monday.

"I want to win a World Series," Price said. "Whatever I need to do to help us do that, I'm fine with. But I know I'm more than capable of winning games as a starter in October. That's what I look forward to doing."

The 33-year-old Price has gone 0-2 as a starter in the postseason for the Red Sox since they signed him to a seven-year, \$217-million contract, the richest ever for a pitcher, in December of 2015.

In five starts against the Yankees this year, he's allowed 11 home runs in 17 1/3 innings and has an ERA over 10.

Judge homered in the first off a cutter and Sanchez led off the second by homering off another cutter. After Price walked two with two outs in the second, Andrew McCutchen doubled in another run and Joe Kelly relieved Price who was booed as he walked off the field.

"If I don't like it," Price said of being lifted early, "I need to pitch better."

*** *The Portland Press Herald***

For a tied playoff series, this sure feels one-sided

Kevin Thomas

BOSTON — Sure, this series tied. But so much momentum is on the side of the New York Yankees.

The Yankees are pitching better – holding Boston to eight hits and two runs over the last 14 innings.

New York is swinging the bats better. The Yankees would have swept the first two games in Boston if they had not left 18 men on base.

The best-of-five American League Division Series shifts to New York on Monday and Tuesday with the Yankees and Boston Red Sox tied at one game apiece. On Monday night, New York will have ace Luis Severino ... pitching in Yankee Stadium.

“They haven’t lost a playoff game (there) in a while,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “They swept the Astros last year. Tough place to play.”

The Yankees have won their last seven playoff games at home – the wild card game last week and all six postseason games last year. They beat the Astros in three ALCS games in New York last fall.

“Last year, that place was alive,” said Cora, who was the Astros bench coach in 2017. “From the get-go, it was loud.

“I know the (Red Sox-Yankees) rivalry and everything. We played some games there and it’s been loud, but nothing like the way it’s going to be on Monday.”

New York fans will be sensing blood. This 108-win Red Sox team appears wounded, and their Yankees are confident.

“Going back 1-1, going home, it’s going to be a lot of fun,” Yankees reliever Dellin Betances told reporters after Saturday’s game.

The Yankees won 53 games this season at the Stadium. Only Boston won more home games (57), but the Red Sox gave away their home-field advantage in Game 2 Saturday with a 6-2 loss.

The Yankees led the majors in home runs (267) and 54 percent of them (144) were launched in the Bronx. That’s been a point of focus for Cora, emphasizing pitching execution.

“You have to keep the ball in the ballpark – that’s the No. 1 goal against these guys,” Cora said.

David Price could not do it Saturday, nor Eduardo Rodriguez, who can look lights-out one moment and unfocused the next.

So, Job 1 is better pitching. The Red Sox will start Rick Porcello and Nathan Eovaldi in New York. Cora must fashion a relief plan after that. Joe Kelly’s 21/3 scoreless innings on Saturday were encouraging. Matt Barnes will be in there ... and likely Price, who can still be effective out of the bullpen.

Offensively, Cora needs to shake his team up. Third baseman Rafael Devers and second baseman Brock Holt need to be utilized. Holt batted .415 with four home runs over his last 15 games in the regular season. He has yet to play in the playoffs. Second baseman Ian Kinsler is 2-for-8 in the playoffs with five strikeouts.

Devers brings power, and his left-handed stroke may be just right in New York.

Catchy Sandy Leon has been praised for his defense. He’s a .177 hitter and is 0-for-5 in the playoffs.

Boston is in a mini-slump, but no slump is small in a short series.

The Red Sox say they are not worried.

“We know the team we are,” shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. “We can put up good at-bats ... We have 108 wins, 109 (counting the playoffs). So we know how to win games. We just have to go out there and stick to our game plan.”

Banking on their franchise-record win may instill some confidence, but it means little in the postseason. Bogaerts said the good at-bats “didn’t happen (Saturday) ... (Masahiro) Tanaka pitched well.”

But the Red Sox must find a way against good pitchers, like Tanaka, and Severino (19-8, 3.39).

Boston had mixed success against Severino in four games this season. In two of the games, Boston scored a combined nine earned runs over 10 2/3 innings.

In the other two games – a total of 12 2/3 innings – Severino allowed two runs in one start, and none in the other.

Guess where the two good starts were pitched? New York. Severino will be on the mound there again Monday night, backed by an impressive bullpen and a formidable offense.

Advantage, Yankees.

This series is tied, but slipping out of Boston's grip.

*** *RedSox.com***

Price's playoff woes continue in Game 2 loss

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The two things that have haunted David Price the most in recent years -- his inability to perform well in postseason starts and his epic struggles against the Yankees -- were right there in front of him on Saturday night at Fenway Park.

The lefty had a chance to overcome his two obstacles at the same time. Instead, they both came back to bite him again at the most inopportune time.

Price was the victim of a shockingly early knockout (1 2/3 innings) and the Red Sox suffered a 6-2 loss that deadlocked the American League Division Series between the rivals at 1-1.

"It's tough," said Price. "You know, just after we won Game 1 to go out there and have that opportunity to go up 2-0, and to throw the baseball the way that I did, it was definitely tough."

When the night started, the pressure was on the Yankees. Without question, it has switched to the Red Sox, who will go into a hostile environment at Yankee Stadium needing to win one out of two games to make sure they play another game at Fenway Park this season.

In the history of five-game series with the 2-2-1 format, when the first two games are split, the club heading home for Games 3 and 4 has gone on to take the series 21 of 33 times (64 percent).

"I think you know it's a series that's capable of going the distance," said Red Sox right fielder Mookie Betts. "I don't think you expect to sweep. You've got two great teams here, it's a best-of-five. It's going to be fun."

But Saturday wasn't fun for anyone on the Red Sox, particularly not Price. The night couldn't have gone much worse for the veteran. After giving up a mammoth solo shot to center by Aaron Judge (113.3-mph exit velocity, projected distance of 445 feet) in the top of the first, Price opened the second inning by giving up a shot to left by Gary Sanchez. If you haven't noticed, Sanchez has been devastating against Price, taking him deep six times in 14 career at-bats.

The killer for Price was when he walked Nos. 8-9 hitters Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner with two outs. Andrew McCutchen followed by ripping an RBI single off the Monster to make it 3-0. At that point, Red Sox manager Alex Cora had seen enough and went to his bullpen with two outs in the second inning.

"It's the playoffs. You see it happen all the time, especially over the past couple of years," Price said. "Managers go into bullpens extremely early. If I don't like it, I need to pitch better, period."

The early exit could make Price available out of the bullpen later in the series. In fact, Price said he could go as early as Game 3.

"I just want to win. That's it. My main goal is to win in the playoffs, to win a World Series," said Price. "Whatever I have to do to help us do that, I'm fine with."

In his 10 career postseason starts, Price is 0-9 with a 6.03 ERA. Since joining the Red Sox in 2016, Price is 2-8 with a 7.95 ERA in 12 starts (regular season and postseason) against the Yankees.

Price remained one of three pitchers in history with at least nine postseason starts and zero wins. The others are Dwight Gooden (0-4 in nine starts) and Al Leiter (0-3 in 11 starts).

Give Price credit for this: He made no excuses and expressed confidence that he will turn his October struggles around.

"I know I'm more than capable of winning games as a starter in October. That's what I look forward to doing," Price said.

While Price was hit hard from the outset, Masahiro Tanaka came up big for the Yankees, allowing three hits and a run (a homer by Xander Bogaerts) over five innings.

Unlike in Game 1, the Red Sox's bullpen came through until the seventh, when Eduardo Rodriguez served up a three-run homer to Sanchez that was even more impressive (114.8-mph exit velocity, projected distance of 479 feet) than the missile by Judge. Just like that, the Red Sox were down, 6-1.

And now they head to the Bronx on a mission to at least get a split to make sure this series returns to Boston for a winner-take-all, Game 5.

"It's not going to be easy this time of the year," said Red Sox first baseman Mitch Moreland. "Everybody's a good team and you know it's going to be a battle. Our goal is to win 11 at the end. It goes different routes sometimes, but we're still in a good spot."

As for Price, perhaps he will get his chance for redemption before this series even ends.

"He pitched great the second half and down the stretch," said Red Sox slugger J.D. Martinez. "He's a huge piece of our success and why we're here. I still have confidence, I think everybody has confidence in David. It's one of those things where he made a couple mistakes and that was that, really."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

E-Rod can't get to first: In the top of the seventh, when the game was still tight, Judge hit a grounder to the right side. Moreland fielded it and looked to feed Rodriguez, but the lefty was late getting to the bag.

"Yeah, I'm going to talk to him about it. It seems like he went for the ball and then he slowed down," Cora said. "I haven't talked to him about that play."

Moreland pulls up lame: Moreland scored all the way from first on a double off the Green Monster by Ian Kinsler in the seventh, but he tweaked his right hamstring and was replaced in the eighth by Steve Pearce. If Moreland doesn't recover in time for Game 3, Pearce or Brock Holt could get the start at first.

"When I rounded between third and home, felt it grab a little bit. I came out and we'll see how it feels tomorrow," said Moreland. "I felt it grab a little bit."

Will he be ready for Game 3?

"I'm hoping so," Moreland said. "Hopefully we caught it early enough and see how it feels tomorrow."

SOUND SMART

Five runs continues to be the magical formula for the Red Sox. By scoring two runs in Game 2, the Sox slipped to 28-43 this season when they score less than five, and 8-25 when they score two or less.

HE SAID IT

"I mean, we lost one game. You know what I mean? The battle has been back and forth. I don't think anyone thought we were going to come in here and sweep really. If you look at the records, what are we about even? Wins and losses versus them? So you know it's going to be a battle." -- Martinez, after the Red Sox slipped to 11-10 against the Yankees this season, including the regular season

MITEL REPLAY OF THE DAY

In the seventh, Giancarlo Stanton spun a grounder to Eduardo Nunez, who made a throw that Kinsler had to lunge for at second base. Originally, Luke Voit was ruled safe at second. But Cora issued a challenge, and the replay showed that Kinsler got enough of the bag for the force. It wound up not making a difference when Sanchez followed by mashing that three-run homer against E-Rod.

UP NEXT

The pressure will be on a right-hander when the series shifts to the Bronx for Game 3 on Tuesday night. Rick Porcello was the scheduled Game 3 starter when the series started, but he was needed for two outs in the bullpen in Game 1. Cora said there's a chance Nate Eovaldi will make the start instead. Both righties have been terrific against the Yankees this season. Porcello (17-7, 4.28 ERA) is 2-0 with a 2.31 ERA in four starts. Eovaldi has pitched 16 consecutive scoreless innings against the Yankees since joining Boston in July. The Yankees counter with ace Luis Severino, who earned the win against Oakland in the Wild Card Game.

Brasier, Sanchez downplay incident in 5th

Anthony DiComo

BOSTON -- Gary Sanchez took a first-pitch slider for a ball and stepped out of the batter's box. He fouled off the next pitch, a 96-mph fastball, then he backed away a second time. Yet again, Sanchez stepped forward, fouled off a slider and stepped back out, and by that point Ryan Brasier had seen enough. The Red Sox reliever lifted his hands to the sky, exasperated, and yelled at Sanchez to move back into the box.

In a calmer mood later Saturday night, Brasier shrugged when asked if his emotion helped him whiff Sanchez in the fifth inning of the Red Sox's 6-2 loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the American League Division Series at Fenway Park. Whether coincidental or not, the correlation was easy to see: Brasier's next pitch crackled past Sanchez's bat at 97 mph, his fastest of the evening.

"I just think three pitches in a row, with adrenaline going and stuff, I was ready to make my pitch," Brasier said. "He stepped out of the box three times in a row, and I just felt like it was time to do it regardless of whether he was ready or not."

Throughout Game 2, Sanchez was ready to hit, going 2-for-5 with two home runs and four RBIs, including a three-run shot off Eduardo Rodriguez to put the game on ice. But his timeline did not match that of Brasier, who worked quickly upon entering in the fifth. One night after allowing a hit, a walk and two inherited runs in his postseason debut in Game 1, Brasier jogged in from the bullpen hoping to keep a two-run deficit from growing.

He struck out the first batter he faced, Andrew McCutchen, but an Eduardo Nunez fielding error and a Luke Voit walk thrust Brasier into a jam. The right-hander responded with a strikeout of Giancarlo Stanton, bringing Sanchez to the plate.

Already with one home run on the night, Sanchez stepped to the plate knowing he could "produce the same way I produced last year" as a 33-homer phenom. By that point, the crowd was roaring, trying to will Brasier out of the inning, but Sanchez said he kept stepping out because his "hands were a little numb from a foul ball."

"I saw he mentioned something to get back in the box," Sanchez told ESPN, "but you know things like that will happen in a game so no big deal."

Brasier equally downplayed the incident.

"Adrenaline going, the crowd was up, and I was ready to go," he said. "That's it. It was just one of those things, just a big moment, and I was just ready to throw the pitch."

How Sox could adjust lineup for Game 3

Anthony DiComo

BOSTON -- The Red Sox averaged a league-best 5.4 runs per game during the regular season, but that hardly makes them immune to slumps.

"It's hard to hit," outfielder Mookie Betts said after a 6-2 loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the American League Division Series on Saturday night at Fenway Park. "We have a great-hitting team, but sometimes we're going to score two."

The question for Red Sox manager Alex Cora going forward will be, in a best-of-five series defined by small sample sizes, how best to deploy his hitters. Cora has an opportunity to make several changes in the bottom half of his lineup as he seeks a spark for Game 3 on Monday at Yankee Stadium.

"I think we have a good enough team to come back from pretty much any deficit," said shortstop Xander Bogaerts, whose solo homer in the fourth inning accounted for half the Red Sox's offense in Game 2. "We know the team we are. We can put some good at-bats."

Bogaerts is the only Red Sox infielder guaranteed to start Game 3. First baseman Mitch Moreland tweaked his hamstring in the seventh inning on Saturday, and while Moreland hopes to be ready in time for Monday's game, his injury could open the door for Steve Pearce to start at first.

While second baseman Ian Kinsler provided Boston's other Game 2 run with an RBI single in the seventh, he has five strikeouts and hit into a double play in eight ALDS at-bats. In his last 11 games including the regular season, Kinsler is batting .136.

"I'm just trying to help the team," Kinsler said. "During the game, mechanics are out the door. You're trying to do what it takes to get on base, to help the team whatever it takes. I'm trying to get to a point where I can help every at-bat. That's the key. We'll turn the page and get ready for Monday."

Brock Holt could be a candidate to replace Kinsler, but may also fit at third base, where Eduardo Nunez committed a fielding error on Saturday amidst an 0-for-3 night. One of Boston's hottest hitters in September, Holt batted .415 with four home runs, three doubles and a 1.259 OPS over his last 14 games.

Before Game 2, Cora was asked about the possibility of benching Nunez in favor of Rafael Devers, not Holt.

"In the end, we decided to go with [Nunez] at third base because we feel he's been the better defensive player," Cora said.

Cora similarly praised catcher Sandy Leon, a strong game-caller who blocked pitch after pitch in the dirt -- the byproduct of the steady diet of breaking balls Sox pitchers were feeding the Yankees. But Christian

Vazquez is steady behind the plate as well. And while neither catcher enjoyed a strong offensive season, Vazquez has had a bit more success than Leon -- 2-for-8 vs. 2-for-16 -- against Yankees Game 3 starter Luis Severino.

That decision may depend on whom the Red Sox start, given Rick Porcello's comfort with Leon. If Nathan Eovaldi pitches, Vazquez may get the call as the Red Sox look for some sort -- any sort -- of offensive spark.

"We have to go out," Betts said, "and we have to score runs for them for sure."

Moreland dealing with sore right hamstring

Anthony DiComo

BOSTON -- The Red Sox had to remove Mitch Moreland from a 6-2 loss in Game 2 of the American League Division Series on Saturday night when the first baseman tweaked his right hamstring scoring from first on a double by Ian Kinsler.

The injury is not believed to be significant enough to take Moreland off the Division Series roster, but there are no guarantees he will be ready to start Monday's Game 3 against righty ace Luis Severino at Yankee Stadium.

"I'm hoping so," Moreland said. "Hopefully we caught it early enough. When I rounded between third and home, felt it grab a little bit. I came out and we'll see how it feels tomorrow."

Moreland is one of Boston's key bats in the middle of the order, though he didn't have a good second half of the season at the plate.

The Red Sox do have good depth at first base. If Moreland can't go, manager Alex Cora would be able to turn to Steve Pearce or Brock Holt. Pearce has been tremendous success against the Yankees since joining Boston in June. Holt was one of the club's hottest hitters in September, and he has yet to pitch in this series.

It was Pearce who replaced Moreland in the eighth inning in Game 2.

Moreland finished 1-for-3 on the night, after hitting .245 with 15 home runs in 124 regular-season games. He did not start Game 1 of the ALDS with Yankees lefty J.A. Happ on the mound, but he was back in the lineup on Saturday against right-hander Masahiro Tanaka.

Hembree replaces Wright on Red Sox roster

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The Red Sox were forced to make a significant adjustment to their unpredictable bullpen Saturday prior to Game 2 of the American League Division Series, as knuckleballer Steven Wright had to be taken off the roster due to injury. He was replaced by righty reliever Heath Hembree.

The move is effective for the remainder of the series. Major League Rule 40(a) dictates that Wright will also be unavailable to pitch in the AL Championship Series should Boston make it that far, though he could return if Boston qualifies for the World Series.

Wright felt soreness in his left knee during pregame warmups on Friday and underwent an MRI, which revealed inflammation and a loose body. In May of 2017, Wright underwent a cartilage restoration procedure on that same knee.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora said it's too early to know if Wright will be back for a potential World Series.

The development is stinging for this series, as Cora planned on leaning on Wright heavily. The righty was dominant after coming back from the disabled list in September, giving up just one earned run in 10 outings.

In fact, Cora admitted Saturday that Wright likely would have been the first one out of the bullpen when Chris Sale came out of the Game 1 victory on Friday night. Sale left with a 5-0 lead, and Boston barely hung on, 5-4.

Without Wright, the Red Sox had to scramble and use Game 3 starter Rick Porcello to get the first two outs in the eighth. In fact, Cora said he would use Porcello again if necessary in Game 2. If that's the case, the righty would likely have his start pushed back to Game 4.

Another pitcher who will likely get more responsibility in light of Wright's absence is lefty Eduardo Rodriguez, who spent most of the season in the starting rotation, going 13-5 with a 3.82 ERA. Though consistency has always been an issue for Rodriguez, he has some of the best pure stuff on the staff.

"He was important anyway," said Cora. "Now we have to map it out to see how we're going to use him, because obviously he can give us multiple innings if something happens, you know? We've got to be smart. We only have one long guy in the bullpen. How we're going to maneuver that, it's going to be very important for us."

Hembree was essentially the last cut when the Red Sox submitted their original roster for the ALDS on Friday. After being an invaluable setup man for Boston for the first few months of the season, particularly in stranding inherited runners, Hembree struggled in the second half, recording a 5.03 ERA while blowing three saves.

Hembree also allowed five home runs in 19 2/3 innings after the All-Star break, and he could now be called upon to face a Yankees lineup that knocked an MLB-record 265 homers in the regular season.

"Although he struggled with his slider, we feel his fastball can make a difference," said Cora. "We'll see how we use him. Obviously throughout the season, he was coming in with situations with runners on. I don't know where we're going to go, but we still feel like 97 mph with life up in the zone is OK with this team."

Boston's bullpen remains the biggest question mark in the series. Cora said that closer Craig Kimbrel, who got four outs on Friday, will generally be a "full go" by the eighth inning.

Devers sits against righty

A day after Cora said he was leaning toward starting third baseman Rafael Devers against righty Masahiro Tanaka for Game 2, he instead went to Eduardo Nunez for the second straight game. Interestingly, Devers is 4-for-10 lifetime against Tanaka while Nunez is 4-for-17.

Defense played a factor. Though Devers has superior range to Nunez, he also led the Majors with 24 errors.

"Offensively [Devers has] been swinging the bat well, but as far as what we have, it's not like a big difference the way Nunez is swinging the bat. He's been putting up good at-bats," Cora said. "Tanaka, reverse splits but not that much. Actually, righties are hitting better. Then, obviously, we feel pretty good about Nunez at third base."

"I know the kid has more range and he can make the great play, but there's something with the routine play that throughout the season, we didn't see it, obviously. With David pitching, there's a lot of ground balls to that side so I just went with him."

Bird is the word

Red Sox center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. was quite amused by the bird that was making the rounds in the outfield throughout Game 1.

"Yeah, he befriended quite a few of us," Bradley said. "I honestly don't think he cared where we were. He was just going to enjoy the grass seeding that was down there. He mixed it up -- he went from left, center to right. He enjoyed himself."

When Bradley tried to make a diving catch on a sinking liner by Aaron Judge, the bird was within a few feet of him.

"I'm just glad that on that -- I actually thought about it before the inning even started; he was directly in front of me. I'm like, 'What are you doing?' I just got a feeling it's going to be a ball hit right there, and I'm going to have to dive," Bradley said. "I'm telling you, four plays later -- actually, it was two batters later, Aaron hits a ball right there. And I'm like, the first thing off the bat I can think about is, man, that bird is about to get hit."

*** *ESPNBoston.com***

Threat of another oh-fer October from David Price puts Red Sox in tough spot

David Schoenfield

BOSTON -- After the game, David Price sat in front of his locker in a thin white hoodie, waiting for his turn in the interview room, slumped back in his chair as he scrolled through his phone. I envisioned him reading all the mean tweets about his Game 2 performance, bathing in the pain of another postseason loss, as if it were a way to cleanse his soul of his October sins..

The postseason has been Price's personal palace of misery. He lasted just five outs into Saturday's start for the Boston Red Sox against the New York Yankees, giving up two home runs and three runs. He left to a stinging chorus of boos as he trudged, head down, to the dugout. The Yankees went on to a 6-2 victory to even their American League Division Series at a game apiece.

The losing pitcher doesn't usually go to the interview room. That's reserved for the managers and the stars of the game. Price could have addressed the media in the cramped clubhouse underneath the stands at Fenway Park, answered a few question in hushed tones, but it made sense for him to give a more public assessment of his performance. He had to own up to it.

"It's tough," he admitted. "You know, just after we won Game 1 to go out there and have that opportunity to go up 2-0. And to throw the baseball the way that I did, it was definitely tough. But my spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't down. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

Everything in the postseason is a small sample of performance. The Red Sox and Yankees both won 100 games and yet a mere best-of-five series will determine which team advances to the AL Championship Series. There is no margin for error, not enough games for the luck to even out or enough starts to prove your merits over the long haul. You have a limited number of games to prove yourself. You get the ball and have to perform.

Price, in his seventh different postseason as a starter with his fourth different team, has failed to do that too many times. At some point, you are what your record says you are.

The numbers paint the picture of misery:

- Price is 0-9 in 10 career postseason starts with a 6.03 ERA, and his team has lost all 10 games.

- That ERA is third worst ever among pitchers with at least 10 postseason starts, trailing only Jaret Wright (7.77) and Tim Wakefield (6.45).
- In 299 career starts, including the postseason, this was the first one Price failed to record a strikeout.
- Then there's this stat, most relevant to 2018: The Yankees have mashed 11 home runs off Price this season, the most one team has hit off a pitcher, postseason included, in the past 10 seasons.

David Price heads back to the dugout in the second inning of Saturday's Game 2 loss. Elsa/Getty Images
Some will call this a moral failing on Price's part, maybe rip into his mental toughness and all that. That's the easy hot take. Nobody really knows the answer. Price doesn't know the answer. He simply has made too many bad pitches at too many wrong times. When he met with the media on Friday, Price talked about how he was excited to be starting again in the postseason, after pitching in relief last year when he was coming back from an injury. There's no reason to believe he didn't want to be out there.

His troubles began with Aaron Judge, the second batter of the game, who crushed a 1-2 cutter 445 feet over the Green Monster in deep left-center. Gary Sanchez -- Price's personal nemesis -- led off the second inning with line shot over the Monster off another cutter. Sanchez has six home runs off Price, remarkably in just 14 career at-bats. With two outs, Price walked Gleyber Torres on five pitches and then Brett Gardner battled for an eight-pitch walk. Andrew McCutchen knocked in the third run with a loud single high off the Monster. With that, Price was done after 42 pitches, his shortest postseason start.

Price said he didn't execute. Red Sox manager Alex Cora pointed to location. Catcher Sandy Leon said the pitch to Sanchez was actually a good pitch in the right spot, so give credit to Sanchez for a good swing. His teammates are still behind Price.

"He's been great all year," first baseman Mitch Moreland said. "This doesn't change that. He's the ultimate competitor. He'll give you everything he has."

Still, there's the question: Can the Red Sox win the World Series if Price doesn't pitch well? He's the No. 2 starter in the rotation behind Chris Sale. While teams are using more relievers for more innings in the postseason, Cora talked before the series about how the Red Sox are built a little differently: "We rely on our starters to go deeper in the game," he said. They need Price to go a lot deeper than five outs

Price isn't scheduled to start again this season, with Rick Porcello and Nathan Eovaldi penciled in for the starts at Yankee Stadium -- for now -- and Sale due back for Game 5 at Fenway if the series is extended. But the bullpen threw 89 pitches in Game 1 and 123 in Game 2. Price might be needed in relief.

Price said he'll be ready to go on Monday.

"I said it last year and I'll say it again: I want to win. I want to win a World Series," Price explained. "And whatever I need to do to help us do that I'm fine with. But I know I'm more than capable of winning games as a starter in October."

Cora said he and his staff will discuss the bullpen plans on Sunday as they prepare for Game 3.

"We'll talk to [Price] and see where we're at and we'll go from there," he said.

Maybe they'll use Price in relief before this series closes. There's an urgency to a best-of-five series two games in, and Price did pitch well in his relief stints last October. This much seems clear, however, especially given the precarious nature of the Red Sox's middle relief: If they're going to win the World Series, David Price is going to have step up and win a postseason game as a starting pitcher.

* **WEEL.com**

Alex Cora: David Price will remain starter despite poor outing vs. Yankees

Ryan Hannable

What's next for David Price?

After the left-hander allowed three runs, including two homers, in just 1 2/3 innings against the Yankees Saturday night, Alex Cora has a decision to make -- keep Price in the rotation, have him pitch out of the bullpen, which he's had some success with in prior postseasons, or just not pitch him at all.

Speaking after the game, it appears he will stay a starter.

"He's one of our starters," Cora said. "Just a bad outing today. It just so happened it wasn't his day. He didn't make pitches. We trust him. He's bounced back before. We'll talk to him to make a few adjustments. And we'll go from there."

"We're going to talk about it [Sunday] see where we're at," he added. "We extended Joe [Kelly] today and Heater [Heath Hembree], too. We'll talk to him and see where we're at and we'll go from there."

Where he lines up, remains to be seen.

Although no official announcement was made, it appears Rick Porcello will start Game 3 and Nathan Eovaldi told WEEL.com's Rob Bradford he's preparing like he's starting Game 4. The other issue for Price starting either of these games in New York is his issues at Yankee Stadium this year. In two games (8 2/3 innings), he has a ERA of 12.46 and has allowed eight home runs.

It seems like a lot is up in the air with Price and more will be known in the coming days.

Ryan Brasier breaks down confrontation with Gary Sanchez and demand he get back in box

John Tomase

Ryan Brasier was part of the problem in Friday's Game 1 because he didn't attack the Yankees and pitch with conviction.

Neither was an issue in Saturday's Game 2. Just ask Gary Sanchez.

The Yankees catcher may have been the star of New York's series-evening 6-2 victory with a pair of mammoth home runs, but neither of them came off Brasier, who exhibited more life than the rest of his teammates combined when he angrily gestured for Sanchez to stay in the box after repeated step-outs in the fifth.

Brasier's confidence proved justified when he blew away Sanchez with a high fastball.

"It was a heat of the moment thing," Brasier said. "Adrenaline going and crowd was up. I just kind of got, was ready to go. That's it, just one of those things — just a big moment and I was ready to throw the pitch.

"He stepped out of the box three times in a row and felt like it was time to do it regardless of whether he was ready or not."

Brasier wasn't sure what, if anything, Sanchez said in return, and the Yankees slugger wasn't asked about it in his postgame press conference. Brasier simply stormed off the mound after the inning-ending K.

"I wasn't looking at him," he said. "I was going back to the dugout. If I had to go back out for the next inning I was ready to go."

Did the confrontation reflect Brasier's increased confidence from his playoff debut to Game 2?

"No, I don't think so," he said. "I felt good, I was more around the zone tonight. So as far as confidence, the confidence came from making my pitches like I was supposed to."

After allowing a pair of inherited runners to score in Game 1, Brasier struck out Andrew McCutchen, Giancarlo Stanton, and Sanchez in the fifth.

"Keeping the ball in the yard," Brasier said. "These guys like to hit a lot of home runs and I think keeping the ball in the yard is the best way to get those guys off the board. All their runs tonight were from the home run and they didn't break the record for no reason. Keeping the ball in the yard and going there and doing it at their place is going to be key."

Eduardo Rodriguez needs to be better for Red Sox both mentally and on mound

Ryan Hannable

After David Price allowed three runs in 1 2/3 innings, the Red Sox bullpen actually settled things down and the team was able to climb back into the game, facing only a 3-1 deficit going into the seventh inning against the Yankees in Game 2 of the ALDS.

But, then came Eduardo Rodriguez.

Rodriguez was able to record the final two outs of the sixth inning to get out of a jam, but things didn't go well in the seventh.

It didn't start well when he got a late start covering first base on a grounder to the right side and Aaron Judge was able to get to the bag before Rodriguez was even close to getting over. The left-hander walked the next batter before getting a force out to set up first and third with one out for Gary Sanchez.

Sanchez crushed a 2-1 offering into the Monster seats for his second home run of the game, which gave the Yankees a 6-1 lead at the time.

"I would say I just missed the pitch right in the middle, and that is what happens when you leave the ball over the middle of the plate," Rodriguez said.

As for not covering first base, manager Alex Cora said he would need to talk to his pitcher.

"I'm going to talk to him about it," he said. "It seems like he went for the ball and then he slowed down. I haven't talked to him about that play."

Rodriguez said it wasn't a physical issue, he was just slow getting to the base.

"No I was OK, I just like, I just slipped on the mound and when I realized he was beating me already, I just let him get to the base," he said.

The Red Sox need more out of Rodriguez moving forward. The left-hander has great stuff, but he simply hasn't been able to put it together against the Yankees, especially this year. In five games against them during the regular season, he was 1-2 with a 6.62 ERA.

With how uncertain the Red Sox bullpen is at the moment, Cora may need more out of Rodriguez moving forward and they cannot have what they got Saturday, which was a pitcher who didn't have his best stuff on the mound and also wasn't 100 percent there mentally, either.

Alex Cora, Red Sox left searching for answers after Game 2 loss

Rob Bradford

Jacoby Ellsbury replaced Coco Crisp midway through the 2007 American League Championship Series. The situation was flip-flopped the following postseason, with Crisp ultimately taking Ellsbury's job.

In 2013 Jarod Saltalamacchia and Will Middlebrooks started their playoff run as starters, only to be replaced by David Ross and Xander Bogaerts, respectively.

And, of course, there was Jonny Gomes swooping into start the final four games of the '13 World Series (winning them all), taking over for Daniel Nava.

The point is, it happens. Teams go in with a postseason blueprint and then realize as it unfolds something doesn't feel quite right. Each manager's hope is that they can identify the issue before it's too late. It's difficult to tell if things would have been different if Rafael Devers played Game 2 in Houston instead of Deven Marrero, but we do know what happened when the Red Sox finally jump-shipped on the idea of Marrero playing at all.

Welcome to Alex Cora's current existence, one which got a whole lot more uncomfortable thanks to the Yankees' 6-2, Game 2 win Saturday night at Fenway Park. (For a complete recap, [click here](#).)

Cora put out a lineup against the most powerful team in Major League Baseball that erred on the side of defending. The thinking was that Eduardo Nunez, Ian Kinsler and Sandy Leon was the proper security blanket for David Price as he looked to weave his way through the Yankees' lineup.

But all that did leave the Red Sox' hottest hitter in September, Brock Holt (who hit .415 in his last 14 regular season games), on the bench, along with the power potential of Devers. And when there was the chance to pinch-hit for Leon with the Red Sox' trailing by two runs leading off the fifth inning, Cora let the catcher hit. That resulted in a weak groundout.

Meanwhile, the Yankees were hitting four home runs that totaled 1,734 feet. This felt like Houston all over again.

Price's postseason problems are one thing. (For more on his horrific 1 2/3-inning start, [click here](#)). And so was the uncomfortable outing turned in by Eduardo Rodriguez, who allowed Gary Sanchez to hit his second home run of the night 479 feet. But there has to be some acknowledgment that putting the Red Sox' best offensive foot forward is going to be a necessity.

Holt and Devers are a combined 1-for-27 with 15 strikeouts against Game 3 starter Luis Severino. But you know what? They should play.

They were playing the best, they can do the most right now and they are simply better players than the guys they would be replacing, Nunez and Kinsler. Moreland playing is passable because he still has potential to yank a few over that right field wall in Yankee Stadium. Leon? Start him because Rick Porcello is better with Leon behind the plate. But if you find yourself down by two in the fifth inning and the switch-hitter is leading off, Cora should start dipping into his catching depth.

The priority still has to be keeping the Yankees' hitters in the ballpark. If that doesn't happen, none of this lineup maneuvering would matter. But if they the Red Sox can find a way to cut down those homers, an offensive infusion will be impactful.

J.D. Martinez hit a three-run homer in Game 1. Xander Bogaerts managed a solo shot Saturday night. And there was a smattering of hits throughout the last 17 innings.

David Price delivers another playoff disaster and this one reeks like roadkill

John Tomase

The Fortnite, the tingly fingers, the stupidity with Eck, the carpal tunnel, the \$217 million contract, the surliness, the seeming contempt for his fan base, and of course, the history of postseason futility -- David Price dragged it all to the mound like a dead caribou on Saturday.

And there the carcass festered, stinking and rotting, as Price attempted to erase the only item on his misery index that could undo the rest.

Pitch well in Game 2 vs. the Yankees, finally win a postseason start, and all may not be forgotten, but it would be forgiven. Red Sox fans suggested as much by giving Price a standing ovation while he trotted to the bullpen before the game, and he tipped his cap in appreciation. They desperately want an excuse to love the guy, if only Price could provide it.

He could not. Price delivered the worst postseason start of his life, which is saying something. He left the mound to a deluge of boos, unable to finish the second inning on a night when the Red Sox desperately wanted to limit the number of pitches entrusted to their heart attack bullpen, but instead dropped a 6-2 decision that evened the series.

Some thought he doffed his cap towards the jeers, but he simply appeared to remove it in frustration, or perhaps as an involuntary means of distraction, since the alternative meant facing the carnage of his own making.

In nine previous winless playoff starts, Price had always at least reached the fourth inning, which isn't exactly a bar worthy of Javier Sotomayor, especially for a former Cy Young Award winner.

But there's a first time for everything, and on Saturday night, that meant Red Sox manager Alex Cora striding from his dugout without hesitation and signaling for Joe Kelly in the second after a wall-ball RBI single by Andrew McCutchen that would've been 20 rows deep in Yankee Stadium.

With Aaron Judge looming, Cora knew better than to give the slugger another shot at Price, not after his first swing had sent a baseball screaming over 113 mph to the farthest reaches of the Monster seats in left-center. And so Price trudged off the mound, his dead caribou leaving a trail of blood and viscera and putrefaction that will only continue decomposing until the redemption cycle restarts anew . . . unless the Red Sox season ends first.

It goes without saying that Price's performance leaves the Red Sox in a precarious position. With ace Chris Sale limited to 5 1/3 innings in his first start and presumptive Game 3 starter Rick Porcello already forced into a relief appearance, a case can be made that the Red Sox barely employ a single reliable pitcher. Even closer Craig Kimbrel allowed a Game 1 homer, after all.

Winning a World Series without Price meaningfully contributing rates as pretty much impossible, unless Nathan Eovaldi suddenly decides he's Kevin Brown.

And make no mistake, the Price who took the mound for Game 2 hardly looked Broadway-ready. He'll never be mistaken for Mark Buehrle in the pace department, but when he's going well, he at least keeps things moving. On Saturday, he returned to the sludge that marked his last playoff failure, a dispiriting Game 2 loss to the Indians in 2016 that saw Price take, oh, nine minutes between pitches.

Where we go from here is anyone's guess. Price's exceptional second half feels fictional. The signature moments of his season involve varying degrees of surrender to the Yankees -- leaving with frostbite or whatever in April, allowing five homers in July, extending his run of postseason futility in particularly ghastly fashion on Saturday.

This is not where David Price or the Red Sox wanted to be, back at zero, wondering how much weight he can carry to the mound before he collapses and suffocates.

Alex Cora on loss of Steven Wright for ALDS: 'It sucks'

Ryan Hannable

On Saturday, the Red Sox officially replaced Steven Wright (knee) on the ALDS roster with Heath Hembree after it was learned Friday the knuckleballer would not be available for the series.

The official release said Wright has been diagnosed with inflammation and loose body in his left knee. He's ineligible for the ALCS, but could return for the World Series if he's healthy and the team goes that far.

"He was working out [Friday], and he has to do this testing, like jumping to see where he's at, whatever, he did it and he was fine," manager Alex Cora said Saturday. "Then he was moving around with a medicine ball and he felt it. He went to a training room afterward. I was doing the media. And when I came out, Brad [Pearson] told me, and Dana [Levangie], it was a mess here. Everybody running around, trying to see what was going on, obviously. We already submitted the roster. Then he had the MRI, and it is what it is. It sucks, because, like yesterday, nobody knew but it was a perfect game for him to come in yesterday and we were short in the first game."

Added Cora: "It sucks because he was throwing the ball well and we had big plans for him."

The manager also believes Hembree's fastball is good against the Yankees hitters.

"Although he struggled with his slider, we feel his fastball can make a difference," Cora said. "We'll see how we use him. Obviously throughout the season, he was coming in with situations with runners on. I don't know where we're going to go but we still feel like 97 mph with life up in the zone is OK with this team."

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

David Price emboldens playoff reputation with poor start in Game 2

Evan Drellich

BOSTON — There comes a point where there's nothing left to say. Either you do or you do not, and in October, David Price too often has not.

He's target practice now. Not just for the Yankees hitters, either. No argument can be had, no debate undertaken until the result itself changes. Nary a defense to be found.

Highlights from the Sox' Game 2 loss to the Yankees

Price's first postseason start in two years did nothing to shed his October rep. He managed to actually make it worse Saturday night in a 6-2 loss to the Yankees. He validated the criticisms, emboldened them.

The lefty lasted just 1 2/3 innings and was pulled after 10 batters on Saturday night, with the Yankees leading 3-0 and runners on the corners as Aaron Judge came to bat. Judge had already hit a moonshot to center field.

"It's tough," Price said. "You know, just after we won Game 1 to go out there and have that opportunity to go up 2-0. And to throw the baseball the way that I did, it was definitely tough."

Saturday was the only start of Price's career, in the regular season or in the playoffs, in which he did not record a strikeout.

"But my spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't down," Price said. "I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

Manager Alex Cora didn't rule out using Price in relief this series, but there's no plan to switch him into the pen for the remainder of the postseason, however long that may be.

"He's one of our starters," Cora said. "Just a bad outing today. It just so happened it wasn't his day. He didn't make pitches. We trust him. He's bounced back before. We'll talk to him to make a few adjustments. And we'll go from there."

Could Price someday throw a gem in a playoff game? Sure. But no one will expect as much until he actually does. Price's lifetime postseason ERA rose to 5.28, in a span of 75 innings and 18 appearances, 10 of them starts.

"He's a great competitor, awesome teammate," said shortstop Xander Bogaerts, who homered as one of the few bright spots Saturday. "I mean I really can't have an idea how much it has to suck for him. 'Cause he's doing his best to go out there and put up zeroes and make sure that us, on the offensive side [have a chance], and do enough to come back in the game and hopefully win the game. It didn't happen today. But I know he's out there man. He's grinding."

"We know he is a great pitcher, especially after the second half, he's still one of the best. So I don't think a start like tonight we should worry too much into it."

That would be like worrying about whether the sun will come up, wouldn't it? You know it's going to happen. (Until it doesn't.)

Judge was the first one to do damage against Price, clobbering a moonshot to center field in the first inning for a 1-0 lead. Gary Sanchez led off the second inning with another solo shot, and Price ran into further trouble with the bottom of the order.

"I'm just looking for something in the zone," said Sanchez, who has owned Price. "A good pitch to hit in the zone, high. I've been fortunate to be patient and find some pitches like that from him, and I've been able to hit them well."

Brasier curses at Sanchez before K'ing him
Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner drew consecutive walks with two outs in the second, and Andrew McCutchen singled home Gardner with a liner off the Green Monster. That was it for Price, who allowed three hits and two walks on 42 pitches.

Price was booed as he walked off the mound, more than he ever has been at Fenway Park. There was nothing else to do or say.

Three Strikes: Can't expect J.D. Martinez and Mookie Betts to carry the load alone

Evan Drellich

The Yankees again clobbered David Price, this time in Game 2 of the American League Division Series, a 6-2 Red Sox loss to the Yankees on Saturday night at Fenway Park. Besides Price's latest postseason shortcoming, which spoke for itself, here are three takeaways from Game 2.

1. J.D. Martinez and Mookie Betts have been tremendous all season. They can't carry the load alone. Betts is 1-for-7 in the ALDS after an 0-for-4 performance on Saturday night, and Martinez is 3-for-8 after a 1-for-4 performance. Xander Bogaerts crushed a home run to center on Saturday. But the Sox through two games have just a pair of home runs with a .213/.279/.344 line. The Yankees, meanwhile, have a .257/.366/.429 line so far with four homers.

2. Red Sox manager Alex Cora knew going into the series that there'd be a spotlight on his moves. He also joked leading up to the playoffs that he might use his catching corps as team's do "opener" pitchers, that he could pinch hit for Sandy Leon early. After all, why carry three catchers? Cora's choice to stick with Leon to lead off the fifth inning was the wrong call. The Sox were already down 3-1 and needed offense. Cora, too, stuck with Ian Kinsler and Eduardo Nunez (0-for-7 in the series with a walk) through the seventh inning. Kinsler (2-for-8 with five strikeouts) doubled off the wall in the seventh facing Dellin Betances, helped a bit by the Green Monster, but that doesn't mean it was actually the right move.

Nunez got the start in part because of his defensive steadiness. Never mind that Nunez made a throwing error (and almost made another) — he just doesn't have the offensive upside of Rafael Devers. With the Sox trailing and Price out of the game, Cora should have gone to his bench early. Urgency is a postseason buzzword, and Cora showed it early by pulling Price in the second inning, commendably. Joe Kelly came in and put out a fire. But he didn't do the same thing with his lineup.

3. Homefield advantage can be fleeting. The series is effectively a best of three now, with two games guaranteed to be played in Yankee Stadium, and Luis Severino looming in the ever-pivotal Game 3. The Yankees are in better position leaving Fenway Park than when they arrived, and realistically, that was always going to be the case barring a Sox sweep of the first two.

Ryan Brasier curses at Gary Sanchez before K'ing him

Evan Drellich

BOSTON — That's one way for the Red Sox relievers to take control.

Red Sox pitching coach Dana LeVangie said after Game 1 of the American League Division Series that he expected a lot better from Ryan Brasier in Game 2. Tasked with the fifth inning on Saturday, Brasier recorded all three outs by strikeout — the last a huge punch out of Gary Sanchez on a 97 mph fastball, right after Brasier told Sanchez to "Get the (expletive) in the box."

"It was a heat of the moment thing," Brasier said following a 6-2 Red Sox loss. "Adrenaline going and crowd was up. I just kind of got, was ready to go. That's it, just one of those things. Just a big moment, and I was ready to throw the pitch."

The Yankees catcher, who homered earlier in the game, appeared to be trying to disrupt Brasier's timing by getting out of the box.

"He stepped out of the box three times in a row and felt like it was time to do it regardless of whether he was ready or not," Brasier said.

Brasier, a pleasant surprise in the Sox 'pen this season, blew Sanchez away with a fastball on the very next pitch, as Sanchez swung out of his shoes. But Sanchez homered twice on the day, so he ultimately had the last laugh on the Red Sox, if not Brasier himself.

Sanchez had a rough year for the Yankees, but they stuck with him because of his power. He hit .186 in the regular season with 18 home runs, and struggled mightily as a receiver as well.

"But I've got to tell you, there's nothing like this season," Sanchez said. "It's been a struggle. The struggle has been much longer this year. You know, a little bit of a similarity there."

There were two runners on at the time, one via an Eduardo Nunez throwing error, another a walk. The Sox were down 3-1.

*** NESN.com**

Red Sox Wrap: Yankees' Three Home Runs Doom Boston In 6-2 Game 2 Loss

Adam London

Well folks, we've got ourselves a series.

After the Red Sox claimed Game 1 of their American League Division Series against the Yankees on Friday, New York responded in a big way in Game 2 with a 6-2 victory at Fenway Park on Saturday night. David Price's struggles in the postseason (and against the Yankees) continued, as the southpaw only logged 1 2/3 innings in which he allowed three runs on three hits. Boston's bullpen performed fairly well all things considered, but the Bronx Bomber's three home runs proved to be too much to overcome. With the Red Sox's loss, the best-of-five series now is tied at one game apiece.

GAME IN A WORD

Listless.

There wasn't a whole lot to get excited about for the Red Sox, as the home team effectively lacked spark throughout the duration of the contest.

ON THE BUMP

— The Yankees wasted no time jumping on Price, as Aaron Judge destroyed a colossal one-out home run in the first inning to give the visitors an early lead. It was déjà vu for New York in the second inning when Gary Sanchez led off the frame with a missile of a solo round-tripper to boost his team's lead to 2-0. Price responded with two quick outs, but he didn't do himself any favors when he issued two-out walks to Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner. Andrew McCutchen then made the left-hander pay when he tagged a long single off the Green Monster to plate the Yankees second baseman. That would be all for Price, who forced manager Alex Cora's hand much earlier than he would have liked.

— Joe Kelly got Judge to line out to end the second inning. The right-hander stayed in the game and logged clean third and fourth innings in which he only allowed one hit.

— Ryan Brasier struck out the side in the fifth inning, capped off by an entertaining punchout of Sanchez.

— Brandon Workman got the call in the sixth but wasn't in very long for the inning. After striking out Didi Gregorius to start the frame, singles off the bats of Miguel Andujar and Torres prompted Cora to yank the right-hander.

— Eduardo Rodriguez recorded the final two outs of the sixth. The left-hander stayed on for the next inning, but the seventh wasn't nearly as kind. After allowing a leadoff single to Judge followed by a Luke Voit walk, Sanchez cleared the bases with a booming three-run homer to make it 6-1 in favor of the Yankees. Rodriguez remained in the game and posted the final two outs of the inning.

— Heath Hembree tossed a scoreless eighth inning. The right-hander stayed on for the ninth and kept the Yankees off the scoreboard once again despite allowing two straight walks to lead off the inning. IN THE

BATTER'S BOX

— Xander Bogaerts got the Red Sox on the board in the fourth inning when he walloped a solo home run to straightaway center field.

— Boston tacked on its second run in the seventh. After Mitch Moreland led off the inning with a single, Ian Kinsler brought home the first baseman with a double off the Monster.

— J.D. Martinez and Jackie Bradley Jr. were the only other Red Sox starters to log hits, both singles.

— Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi, Eduardo Nunez and Sandy Leon all went hitless.

TWEET OF THE GAME

Sometimes you just have to tip your cap.

UP NEXT

The series now shifts to New York for Game 3. Either Rick Porcello or Nathan Eovaldi will get the ball for the Red Sox opposite the Yankees' Luis Severino. First pitch from Yankee Stadium is scheduled for 7:40 p.m. ET.

* ***Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Have we seen the last of David Price after another postseason flop?

Greg A. Bedard

If it was ever going to be different for David Price when it comes to postseason pitching, Saturday night against the Yankees seemed to be the moment to change things.

The pressure was largely off after Chris Sale pitched well in Game 1 and the Red Sox survived for a 5-4 victory. It was surely better than a must-win Game 2.

It had been two years since Price's last postseason start — more than enough time to wash the stink of an 0-8 record in nine postseason starts and a 5.74 ERA to start anew.

And it certainly seemed like a different David Price entering this game. Since the All-Star break, Price went 6-1 with a 2.25 ERA over his final 11 starts. He even pitched well in an eventual 5-4 win over these Yankees at Fenway in August, when he shut out New York for six innings and allowed just three hits.

So the stars were aligned for Price on Saturday night and ... thud.

Final line: 1.2 innings pitched (shortest of his pathetic postseason career, which is saying something), three hits allowed, two home runs, two walks and three runs with 10 batters faced.

Oh, and he was booed lustily coming off the bound.

"It's tough," Price said after the game. "You know, just after we won Game 1 to go out there and have that opportunity to go up 2-0. And to throw the baseball the way that I did, it was definitely tough. But my spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't down. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

Whether that happens again in this series remains very much in doubt.

Not only do the Red Sox now have to go into Yankee Stadium (Boston was 3-6 there this season) and win one of the two games there to force a deciding Game 5 at Fenway, but Price can opt out of his seven-year, \$217 million contract with the Red Sox after this season.

After seeing Groundhog Day again in the postseason and with his extended issues against the Red Sox' spirited rival, you have to wonder what the point would be in Price returning. Of course, he's due to make \$31 million next season and \$32 million in each of the final three years of the deal — which no other team will match — so Price might be just fine with hanging around another four seasons.

But that's a discussion for another day. The focus now is where things went wrong — again — for Price in a big spot.

“Location. 0-2 or 1-2, back-door cutter to (Aaron) Judge, leaves it over on the middle of the plate. Back-door cutter to (Gary) Sanchez, he was leaning out over the plate and he extended. And McCutchen got on top of a fastball,” said Alex Cora. “It’s all about location.

“We’ll make adjustments. Like I said yesterday, it takes 25, 26, 27 guys to keep moving. He’s part of what we’re trying to accomplish and we count on him.”

Price said he would be ready to throw again in Game 3 on Monday, and would be open to going into the bullpen again — where he has had postseason success — but isn’t ready to throw in the towel on being a postseason starter.

“I just want to win. That’s it,” Price said. “My main goal is to win in the playoffs, to win a World Series. Whatever I have to do to help us do that, I’m fine with. I said it last year and I’ll say it again, I want to win. I want to win a World Series. And whatever I need to do to help us do that, I’m fine with. But I know I’m more than capable of winning games as a starter in October. That’s what I look forward to doing.”

Cora also said he wasn’t ready to just banish Price to the bullpen.

“No, no. He’s one of our starters,” Cora said. “Just a bad outing today. It just so happened it wasn’t his day. He didn’t make pitches. We trust him. He’s bounced back before. We’ll talk to him to make a few adjustments. And we’ll go from there.”

Both of the home runs allowed by Price came on cutters. The first one, to Judge with one out in the first, was right down the middle of the plate.

The one to Sanchez was a good pitch on the outside corner, but the catcher was looking for it.

“I’m just looking for something in the zone,” said Sanchez. “A good pitch to hit in the zone, high. I’ve been fortunate to be patient and find some pitches like that from him, and I’ve been able to hit them well.”

But, still, it was two runs on two hits to that point with plenty of game left. He retired the next two batters before Price started having some issues with home plate umpire Dan Bellino.

In a five-pitch walk to Gleybar Torres, only two of the pitches were out of the strike zone.

Price left the ball up several times in an eight-pitch at-bat with Brett Gardner, which ended with another walk. Andrew McCutchen then stroked a Wall Ball single to plate the third run and end Price’s night.

“It wasn’t tough,” Price said of regrouping after the Gardner at-bat. “I just tried to focus on that next pitch. And I felt like I did that. I wasn’t able to execute that pitch. You know, he took it, it was ball four. And McCutchen hit the ball off the Monster. That was the end of it.

“It’s the playoffs. You see (managers lifting starters early) all the time, especially over the past couple of years. Managers go into bullpens extremely early. If I don’t like it, I need to pitch better, period.”

The question remains, will he get that chance again?

ALDS Notebook: Moreland hobbled, but injury not thought serious; Brasier’s temper flares

Sean McAdam

After removing one player from their playoff roster Saturday — Steven Wright was taken off with inflammation in his surgically-repaired knee, rendering him ineligible to return this series or the ALCS — it doesn’t look as though the Red Sox will lose another despite having to remove a player mid-game Saturday night.

First baseman Mitch Moreland suffered a strained hamstring scoring from first base on double by Ian Kinsler in the seventh inning and was replaced by Steve Pearce in the top of the eighth.

“He felt tight rounding third,” said Alex Cora of Moreland. “I think it was his right hammy. He’s in the treatment room. (Sunday), he’ll go to Yankee Stadium and get treatment and let’s see if he’s available for Monday.”

Asked if he was worried about having to replace Moreland on the roster because of the hamstring, Cora was cautiously optimistic.

“Not really,” Cora said. “(But) we had to take care of him before it gets something worse. You know Mitch — he never wants to come out. He’ll go out there and then he’ll sprint somewhere and he probably could be worse.”

Ryan Brasier, pitching in only his second postseason game, got a little tired of Gary Sanchez in the fifth inning. Sanchez kept calling time and stepping out on Brasier, who could be seen gesturing to Sanchez from the mound and shouting at the Yankee catcher “to get in the (expletive) box.”

“It was a heat-of-the-moment thing,” offered Brasier later. “Adrenaline going and the crowd was up. I just kind of got ready to go. That’s it, just one of those things — just a big moment and I was ready to pitch. He stepped out of the box three times in a row and it felt like it was time to do it regardless of whether he was ready or not.”

Brasier was unsure of whether Sanchez said anything back.

“I couldn’t tell you,” Brasier said. “I wasn’t really paying attention.”

Brasier got the last laugh when he then got Sanchez swinging for the final out of the inning.

Cora was noncommittal when it came to naming a Game 3 starter. Originally, the plan had been for Rick Porcello to start, but that was before Porcello pitched the eighth inning in Game 1 Saturday.

Before the game, Cora said it would depend on whether Porcello was needed in relief again in Game 2. Turns out, he wasn’t, but the manager wouldn’t identify Porcello or Nathan Eovaldi — the original Game 4 starter — as his starter for Monday.

“We’ll talk about it (Saturday night),” Cora said, “and Sunday and we’ll make a decision.”

David Price only part of the problem in Game 2 loss

Sean McAdam

The easy and obvious thing to do is to hang this one on David Price.

After all, it was Price who put the Red Sox behind 1-0 two batters into the game. It was he who threw another gopher ball to open the second. And it was he who forced the Red Sox bullpen to provide 7.1 innings, using up precious bullets in a short series.

And Price deserves a big heaping slice of the blame pie, punting away any momentum the Red Sox had earned in Game 1 and turning this series, very quickly, into a best-of-three with two of those games in New York.

The aim here isn't to let Price off the hook. When the Red Sox needed him to step on the Yankees' throats, he instead pulled a pratfall on the mound and was hounded into the dugout by a justifiably angry 39,151 at Fenway.

Now that we have that out of the way, let's also recognize that the predicament the Red Sox find themselves in is not just Price's doing.

When Price left, the Red Sox trailed 3-0 in the top of the second. That's hardly insurmountable for a team which led the majors in virtually every offensive category during the regular season and boasted not one but two legitimate MVP candidates among its first three hitters in Saturday's lineup.

But the normally explosive offense made more a popgun attack. The team aided and abetted New York starter Masahiro Tanaka by chasing pitches below (sinkers) and out of (sliders) the strike zone. Patience was hardly a virtue, as the Sox went down in order three times in the first six innings.

And unless you count the solo homer by Xander Bogaerts in the fourth, the Red Sox didn't have another baserunner in scoring position until the seventh. Mookie Betts, their best player and offensive catalyst, hit the ball hard once in his four trips to the plate and didn't reach base. J.D. Martinez, who energized the ballpark with his first-inning launch into the Monster Seats in Game 1, was 1-for-4 with a single.

In the postseason, your best players have to, well, be your best players. Betts and Martinez fit the bill Friday, but not Saturday night.

They weren't alone in coming up short. When you're 5-for-31 (.161) as a lineup, you're not going to win many games. And if you backtrack to Game 1, the offense has scored all of two runs in its last 14 innings.

During the season, that sort of offensive skid would barely merit notice; in October, and especially in a best-of-five series, it can result in your elimination.

The offense wasn't the only culprit.

The infield defense was sloppy. Eduardo Nunez, in the lineup over Rafael Devers nominally because he's more dependable on routine plays, upended that narrative when he made a fine, diving stop on a ball hit to his left, only to airmail the throw to first, enabling Aaron Judge to take second on a two-base error.

Two innings later, Nunez seemed to hesitate as he fielded a grounder with runners on first and second, and when he finally fired to second, again threw high, forcing second baseman Ian Kinsler to leap into the air. Only on a replay challenge did the Red Sox get the out call.

Then again, at least Nunez's flubs were errors of commission. The same couldn't be said of Eduardo Rodriguez.

In the seventh, Judge — there's that name again — hit a slow roller to the right of the mound. After making a token effort to field the ball himself, Nunez remained glued to the mound as Mitch Moreland ranged over and fielded the ball ... only to discover that he had no one covering the bag to take the throw.

“Yeah, I'm going to talk to him about that,” said Alex Cora. “It seemed like he went for the ball and then he slowed down. I haven't talked to him about that play.”

Said Rodriguez: “I just slipped on the mound and when I realized he was beating me already, I just let him get to the base.”

Beyond the bad optics, there was this: three batters later, Rodriguez yielded a three-run shot by Gary Sanchez, which turned a 3-1 game into a 6-1 laugher. If Rodriguez had hustled over and recorded the inning's first out, who knows how the rest of the inning — indeed, the game itself — might have unfolded from there?

This much is clear: as the Red Sox left for New York, they could look back at a Game 2 loss and know that their starting pitcher was only partly responsible.

BSJ Game Report: Yankees 6, Red Sox 2 – Yanks chase Price early, win going away

Sean McAdam

Price face-plants: Any hope that this one might go differently from all the other postseason starts David Price has made — here and elsewhere — was dashed two batters in when Aaron Judge, the second hitter of the game, hit a moon shot homer. They were obliterated when Gary Sanchez hit one even harder and farther to lead off the second. And after getting two outs, Price proceeded to issue walks to the Nos. 8 and 9 hitters, then surrendered a wall double to Andrew McCutchen and was summarily lifted after 1.2 innings. “I didn’t execute enough pitches and that was that,” said Price. “You have to go out there and execute pitches in big spots in counts. And that’s something I wasn’t able to do tonight.” This outing stretches his winless streak in the postseason to 10 and begs the question: what now? In the short term, the Red Sox might turn to him to pitch out of the bullpen at some point in the series. He was effective there last October. But long-term, with four more years remaining on his landmark deal, how viable is Price for the Red Sox going forward when he can’t seem to win in the postseason and has his worst game against the team’s chief rivals?

Offense shuttered: Nearly lost in the Price stink-bomb was an offense that was almost totally ineffectual. The quick-strike ability that the Red Sox demonstrated in Game 1 was nowhere to be found. They managed only five hits and, unless you count the home run trot by Xander Bogaerts in the fourth, didn’t put a man in scoring position until the seventh when Ian Kinsler banged a double off The Wall. Some credit goes to New York Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka, but the Red Sox didn’t exhibit much discipline at the plate. “We expanded,” lamented Alex Cora, noting that the Sox too often chased sliders or splitters out of the strike zone and allowed Tanaka to get back into good counts. The top three hitters in the Red Sox lineup — Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi and J.D. Martinez — combined to go 1-for-11 with a single and walk.

Sloppy play: The defense was every bit as guilty as Price and the offense. Third baseman Eduardo Nunez, who started at third base because he’s seen as more reliable, committed one throwing error in the fifth and made another errant throw that pulled Ian Kinsler off second base. The Red Sox challenged the play and eventually got the out-call, but their overall play lacked its usual crispness. Worse, in the seventh inning, Aaron Judge hit a chopper to the right side which Mitch Moreland gloved as he went to his right. But Rodriguez never made much of an effort to go cover the bag, and when he finally did, it was half-hearted, allowing Judge to reach. That proved big when, three batters later, Sanchez hit his second homer of the night, a three-run shot, that salted the game away for New York.

SECOND GUESS

Before the game, Cora seemed to make an unorthodox move in starting Eduardo Nunez against the right-handed-throwing Tanaka, rather than the lefty-swinging Rafael Devers, citing Nunez’s ability to provide more reliable defensive play at third. But that backfired when Nunez was charged with a throwing error after making a terrific stop to his left on a ball hit by Judge in the fifth inning. And Nunez offered little at the plate, going 0-for-3 with a walk.

TWO UP

Joe Kelly: Who knew? Called upon in the second after Price imploded, Kelly was easily the best Red Sox pitcher all night, providing 2.1 scoreless innings, allowing only one hit while not issuing a walk.

Xander Bogaerts: He got the Red Sox on the board in the fourth with a long solo homer into the center field bleachers.

ONE DOWN

Mookie Betts: Betts didn't provide his customary spark at the top of the Red Sox lineup, failing to reach base in any of his four plate appearances.

QUOTE OF NOTE

"My spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't own. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."
— David Price.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

This ALDS is the only one of the four to be tied after the first two games and the only one in which the visiting team got a win.

The Sox allowed three homers; during the season, they were 22-25 when allowing multiple homers.

Kelly hasn't allowed a run in six postseason outings with the Red Sox.

Kinsler became the oldest Red Sox player (36 years old) to ever steal a base in the postseason.

Mitch Moreland has hit safely in all of his four postseason starts with the Sox.

UP NEXT

The teams will have an off-day workout at Yankee Stadium Sunday afternoon, before resuming the series Monday at 7:40 with RHP Rick Porcello (17-7, 4.28) vs. Luis Severino (19-8, 3.39)

ALDS Notebook: Steven Wright off roster with knee injury; Sandy Leon proves his worth

Sean McAdam

It didn't take long for the Red Sox to get struck by the injury bug in the postseason. This time, it hit even before the first pitch had thrown.

Knuckleballer Steven Wright, who was expected to play a critical role in the bullpen with the ability to pitch multiple innings and offer a different look from the rest of the Sox' hard-throwing staff, felt some knee soreness and was ruled out of Game 1.

A baseball source confirmed after the Red Sox' 5-4 win over the Yankees that Wright was being taken off the roster and will be replaced Saturday. The move makes Wright ineligible for the ALCS, too, should the Sox advance from the Division Series.

"He had an MRI during the night," said Alex Cora. "We'll know more about it tomorrow."

Wright underwent major reconstructive knee surgery in May of 2016, and missed all of that season and the first two months of this one. He also was forced onto the DL in mid-season when the knee flared up on him, only to return for the final five weeks of the season.

The Red Sox have a number of options to replace Wright. If they're seeking length, they could go with either lefty Brian Johnson or righty Hector Velazquez, each of whom moved back and forth between the rotation and bullpen during the year. Or, they could go with Heath Hembree, who narrowly missed being included on the original 11-man staff.

An unsung hero for the night was catcher Sandy Leon, who was hitless in three at-bats, but also performed heroically behind the plate, managing to keep an untold number of bounced pitches from the Red Sox bullpen in front of him as the Yankees threatened to overtake the Red Sox' early 5-0 lead.

“He’s really good at blocking pitches,” said Cora. “And actually, I don’t know how he does it, but he blocks it and he keeps the ball in his hand. There was one today that was a breaking ball by (Matt Barnes) that almost bounced (short) in the grass (in front of the plate). I’ll tell you right now, he was able to block it. That’s what he brings.”

Despite that, there’s a good chance that Leon could sit Saturday, with Christian Vazquez getting the start to pair with David Price.

“(Leon), Blake (Swihart) and Christian do an outstanding job at the plate blocking pitches,” said Cora. “We’re very comfortable with all of them.”

*** *The Athletic***

Red Sox rewind: What went wrong for David Price in Game 2 loss?

Jen McCaffrey

David Price took the mound on Saturday night at Fenway Park in search of a fresh start.

Instead it was more of the same.

The lefty failed to make it out of the second inning against the Yankees after allowing three runs en route to a 6-2 loss in Game 2 of the American League Division Series.

The dual enigma of starting in the postseason and pitching against the Yankees remains for Price. Both tasks have become increasingly difficult and uncomfortable for him.

In four starts against New York this year, Price had a 10.34 ERA. This start was even worse than his only other postseason start for the Sox, when he allowed five runs over 3 1/3 innings. He’s now posted a 6.03 ERA over 10 postseason starts.

In the words of Price, Sox manager Alex Cora and pitching coach Dana LeVangie, here’s a look at what led to the starter’s early exit:

FIRST INNING

Price recorded the first out on an Andrew McCutchen ground out to third before Aaron Judge stepped to the plate.

Judge fouled off the first two pitches from Price, a fastball and a cutter, before taking a ball. Catcher Sandy Leon set up outside for the fourth pitch, another cutter, but instead Price it right over the plate and Judge crushed it to center field for a solo homer.

Cora: “Location. 0-2 or 1-2, back-door cutter to Judge leaves it over on the middle of the plate.”

LeVangie: “Mis-commanded. He didn’t locate as good as he can. Other than that, maybe he was trying to jump on it a little too hard trying to get a little extra velocity which dictated his mis-location. Other than that, what he’s done up to this point, we’ll take that guy. I think he was just trying to throw 95, 96 and it got him off his ability to manipulate the ball as good as he can.”

Price got a ground out and fly out to get out of the first.

SECOND INNING

The Yankees kept the pressure on Price. Catcher Gary Sanchez led off the inning and on a 1-1 pitch from Price, another cutter, this one on the edge of the strike zone, however, Sanchez pummeled the ball into the Green Monster seats in left.

Cora: "The pitch to Sanchez was down and away, but he was leaning out there, got the head out and hit it out of the ballpark. It's all about location. We can elevate, we've been talking about the whole season, when it's in the same plane. It seems like the velocity was very in the same range as far as like his pitches, they take advantage of it."

Price appeared to settle down after the Sanchez homer, getting Didi Gregorius and Miguel Andujar to ground out on six pitches. But then Price ran the count to 3-0 on Gleyber Torres before walking him.

Brett Gardner came to the plate next and was down 1-2, but ended up drawing a walk after eight pitches. Price had a close call on the seventh pitch, however, that looked close to the zone.

Price: "I just tried to focus on that next pitch. And I felt like I did that. I wasn't able to execute that pitch. You know, he took it, it was ball four."

With two on and two two out, McCutchen came to the plate again. LeVangie visited the mound to discuss their plan and try to gauge Price's demeanor.

McCutchen swung and missed at the first pitch before driving the next one, an elevated fastball, off the wall in left to make the score 3-0.

Cora then pulled Price in favor of Joe Kelly.

Price: "It's the playoffs. You see it happen all the time, especially over the past couple of years. Managers go into bullpens extremely early. If I don't like it, I need to pitch better, period."

LeVangie: "At this point, this is where the game has changed, that I don't think you ever assume you're out of the game, and I'm not saying that David was not going to find it, which we thought he could, but we felt like a new guy comes in, it's a new (pitcher), they have to make an adjustment to that. They may not be prepared to and I thought Alex did a great job of 'the time is now.'"

Price: "I didn't execute enough pitches, and that was that. They make it tough for me. Knowing that, you have to go out there and execute pitches in big spots in counts. And that's something I wasn't able to do tonight. And McCutchen hit the ball off the Monster. That was the end of it."

Buckley: Red Sox better served by making David Price a reliever at this point

Steve Buckley

John Farrell wasn't invited to make any curtain calls last October as the Red Sox were making another quick, uninspiring exit from the postseason.

But the soon-to-be-fired manager got this one right: He sent veteran starter David Price and his appallingly bad postseason record to the bullpen.

And now, one year later, it's Words You Never Thought You'd Be Reading Time: Rookie Red Sox manager Alex Cora needs to rip a page out of the John Farrell playbook.

Cora must send Price to the bullpen. And he must leave him there for every game of every series remaining in Boston's postseason, unless an injury to another starter forces the skipper to return to a deeply-flawed Plan A.

To roll out the numbers has long since become a wretched, tedious exercise, so let's dispatch with the update as quickly as possible: After allowing three earned runs in just 1 2/3 innings in the Red Sox' 6-2 loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the division series Saturday night at Fenway Park, Price is now 0-9 with a 6.03 ERA in 10 career postseason starts.

He was taken out of the yard by Yankees mashers Aaron Judge (first inning) and Gary Sanchez (second inning). Such was Price's unsteadiness that he couldn't even match his only other postseason start as a member of the Red Sox, when he lasted all of 3 1/3 innings against the Cleveland Indians in Game 2 of the division series on Oct. 7, 2016. He allowed five earned runs in that one, including the left-handed-hitting Lonnie Chisenhall's first home run against a left-hander all season.

We promised to keep the statistical trips down Memory Lane to a minimum, but there's also this sobering history lesson: Of the 70 pitchers who have made 10 or more postseason starts, David Price is the only one whose team has not won a game.

So let's look to the future, and to a postseason world in which Price serves the Red Sox as the highest paid middle reliever/situational lefty the game has ever seen. Why not? Look at what happened last year, when Price, pitching exclusively in relief in the Sox's division series debacle against the Houston Astros, did not allow a run in 6 2/3 innings over two appearances.

While we can't be certain if Price has the mentality of a relief pitcher, he certainly showed it in the Houston series last year.

It is true that Farrell's decision to use Price in relief last year was born of necessity, given that the lefty had missed most of the second half of the season because of shoulder woes.

But this, too, should be a decision born of necessity. This no longer is a fluke. The sample size is too big. And it has nothing to do with bad hops, balls lost in the lights and getting squeezed by umpires.

So let's talk about David Price, super reliever.

Given the quick hook in Game 2, might there be a relief outing in the near future?

"We'll talk about it," said Cora.

What about sending Price to the bullpen and leaving him there for the duration of the postseason?

"No, no," Cora said. "He's one of our starters. Just a bad outing today. It just so happened it wasn't his day ..."

There's more to that quote, but let's pause for a moment to consider what Cora is selling here: He said that the pitcher with the 0-9 record and 6.03 ERA in 10 career postseason starts "just had a bad outing today," and that it "so happened it wasn't his day."

Cora added this: "He didn't make pitches. We trust him. He's bounced back before. We'll talk to him to make a few adjustments. And we'll go from there."

Price was professional and accountable during his postgame press conference, such as when asked about the quick hook.

"If I don't like it," he said, "I need to pitch better, period."

Asked if he'd go to the bullpen, he waved the Red Sox flag by saying, "I just want to win. That's it. My main goal is to win in the playoffs, to win a World Series. Whatever I have to do to help us do that, I'm fine with."

But then: “I know I’m more than capable of winning games as a starter in October. That’s what I look forward to doing.”

Cora, you’ll recall, was universally high-fived Friday night as a man of daring and action, this after he brought in veteran starting pitcher Rick Porcello to make a surprise relief outing in Game 1. The move worked, with Porcello getting a couple of outs as a warmup act to closer Craig Kimbrel. The Red Sox won. And when the game was over a confident, eyes-on-the-prize Porcello told reporters, “I was really looking forward to that opportunity and I’m happy I got it. Any time he asks me to pick up a ball and step on the mound, I’ll do it.”

It was a fine Red Sox moment right there, with the manager thinking outside the box and the player buying in.

Now it’s time for Cora to think outside the cosmos. And if Price is serious about that World Series ring, he needs to buy in.

Jennings: Red Sox’s task gets much harder now due to Yankees’ huge advantage in the Bronx

Chad Jennings

Alex Cora remembers all too well the sound of Yankee Stadium in October, and that’s why at 5 p.m. on Saturday — long before the first pitch in Game 2 was thrown, when optimism was still the outlook of the day — the Red Sox manager made clear he wanted to go into that Bronx behemoth with as much wiggle room as possible.

“Last year, that place was alive,” Cora said. “I know the rivalry and everything, we played some games there (in the regular season) and it’s been loud, but nothing like the way it’s going to be on Monday. So, it will be good to go 2-0 there and take three shots to win one.”

Some four hours later, the optimism had faded. Cora walked to the Fenway Park mound to pull his starting pitcher in the second inning, having already suffered enough damage to keep his highest hopes from coming true. Everything that had worked in Game 1 would not work in Game 2. Fenway Park got loud, booing David Price off the field, down the dugout steps and off to the clubhouse.

The Red Sox will have to win at least one in New York, or else this season will end just like the last two.

The American League Division Series is tied at one game apiece after the Red Sox were overpowered, 6-2, in Game 2. The Yankees now have home-field advantage as the series shifts to Yankee Stadium for Monday’s Game 3. Lose back-to-back on the road, and the Red Sox are finished.

And just for the record, the Red Sox went into Yankee Stadium three times this season and lost two out of three each time. They twice lost back-to-back in that ballpark.

“We’ll reset tomorrow,” Cora said. “See where we’re at with (the rotation), and hopefully it’s a solid start, and we’ll go to the bullpen, and we’ll be in good shape.”

That’s the plan. But, then again, that’s always the plan. Right now, Cora said he’s not even sure whether Rick Porcello or Nathan Eovaldi will start the first game in New York. He’s not sure whether Price will be available out of the bullpen, either. What he does know is that Yankee Stadium is not where you want to be when you absolutely have to win a playoff game.

The Yankees didn’t lose a playoff game at home last year. They lost the first two games of last year’s division series on the road, then they won two straight must-win games at home, setting the stage for a Game 5 clincher in Cleveland. Having advanced to the ALCS to play Cora and the Astros, the Yankees again lost two in a row on the road before responding with three straight wins in the Bronx. They’ve

already beaten the Athletics in a must-win wild-card game at home earlier this month. The Yankees had a .654 winning percentage at home this season. The Red Sox had a .630 winning percentage on the road.

So, that's the doom and gloom. Here's the nuts and bolts: Whatever it takes to win a game in this series is anyone's guess at this point, because the method the Red Sox used to win the opener proved a total failure on Saturday.

They pounced on Yankees starter JA Happ for a big, early lead in Game 1, but they were thoroughly stymied by Masahiro Tanaka in Game 2. They got to play from ahead in the first game, and were perpetually trying to come back in the second.

Chris Sale asserted himself with a three-strikeout first inning in Game 1, but Price allowed a home run to the second batter in Game 2, another home run to the leadoff batter in the second inning, and was ultimately pulled after recording just five outs.

The bullpen seemed always on the verge of blowing it in Game 1, but the bullpen was the only thing keeping the Red Sox alive in Game 2. Joe Kelly went 2 1/3 scoreless innings, Ryan Brasier had three strikeouts to make up for his rocky outing the night before, and Heath Hembree — who wasn't even on the roster for Game 1 — pitched two hitless innings at the end. They were the worst part of the team on Friday and the best part on Saturday.

Bringing a starting pitcher out of the bullpen was just what the Red Sox needed in Game 1, but it was the one thing that put Game 2 out of reach when Eduardo Rodriguez failed to cover first base and then allowed a three-run homer.

So, it's onto Game 3, where the brutal reality of a five-game series now puts the Red Sox right where they don't want to be: needing to win at least one at Yankee Stadium to keep their season alive.

It's not impossible. Not by a long shot. But Saturday's 5 o'clock optimism felt cold and distant by midnight. There's no question the task just got a lot harder, and the wiggle room is suddenly a whole lot tighter.

*** *The New York Daily News***

Yankees are officially in David Price's head, and Red Sox would be bonkers to pitch him again this series

Wallace Matthews

The Yankees should be paying rent for the space they have taken up in David Price's head.

There's no longer any reason to deny it, or skirt the issue or try to pass it off as a bad outing or two. Or 10. The Yankees own this guy, physically, mentally, completely. Three years into his seven-year, \$217 million contract, the Red Sox lefthander can no longer pitch against them.

Certainly, he can't face them again in this series, not after the way he got blown off the mound once again Saturday night, in front of a Fenway Park crowd that tried to will him into at least resembling the dominant pitcher he was a half-dozen years ago as a Tampa Bay Ray.

As a Ray pitching against the Yankees, Price acquitted himself fairly well, going 10-6 with a 4.04 ERA. But as a member of the Red Sox, Price has been a miserable failure against the one team he absolutely, positively, has to beat. Since 2015, his record against the Yankees is 5-8, his ERA an unsightly 6.52. This year alone, he was 0-3 against them with a 10.34 ERA.

But that doesn't even begin to tell the tale of how woeful he was in Saturday night's Game 2 of the ALDS, a game in which Price and the Red Sox could have driven a stake through the Yankees collective heart and left them in the rather hopeless position of needing a three-game winning streak against a team that had only allowed opponents four of them all season long, and one in the final weekend of the season, when their only goal was to stay healthy for the playoffs.

Instead, the series is now a best-of-three, with two of those games at Yankee Stadium, where the Yankees had the second-best home record in the major leagues this season.

Price couldn't even make it out of the second inning, allowing home runs to Aaron Judge in the first inning and Gary Sanchez in the second, leaving his team in a 3-0 hole while getting only four outs.

The Yankees went on to win the game, 6-2, to even the series at a game apiece and send it back to New York for Monday's Game 3.

But almost as important, they also removed one player from the Red Sox roster: Price, who manager Alex Cora would have to be crazy to send out to the mound against them again in this series. He might also consider skipping his turn against the Yankees all of next season, too. That's how useless Price has become against Boston's main protagonist in the American League.

Truly, the epic flameout of Price hardly came as a surprise. It was barely three weeks ago that the Yankees lit him up for six runs, four earned, in 5-1/3 innings at Yankee Stadium. That wasn't even close to Price's worst outing against the Yankees this season; he had allowed four runs in a one-inning outing back in April, and eight runs in 3-1/3 innings in July.

Those stinkers, however, hardly mattered as the Red Sox went on to a historic 108-win season, running away with the AL East title.

Saturday's game, however, was another story.

Price's night was two batters old when he tried to throw a fastball over the outer half of the plate to Judge. But the ball leaked back inside and Judge positively crushed it, sending it over the 37-foot-high section of the Green Monster where it begins to angle toward center field, landing an estimated 445 feet away. It was Judge's third home run in three postseason games this October, and his seventh home run out of 15 career postseason hits.

In the second, Price surrendered another titanic home run, to Sanchez, also over the Monster in left field. After he walked Gleyber Torres and Brett Gardner and allowed an RBI single to make it 3-0, even the Fenway faithful had seen enough, booing him off the mound.

Clearly, it was not just a bad night for Price, but the latest in a series of worse and worse nights for him at the hands of the Yankees.

The 3-0 lead, which at Fenway is equivalent to a tie game just about anywhere else, held up throughout Masahiro Tanaka's solid five-inning stint, in which he allowed just three hits, one a solo home run by Xander Bogaerts and left with a 3-1 lead. The Yankees tacked on three more runs on Sanchez's second home run of the night, off Eduardo Rodriguez in the seventh.

But the tone was set by Price, from which his team never recovered. His postseason record is now 2-9, his October ERA 5.30. Now, he is only a weapon against his own team.

Price's next turn would have come up on Thursday, which would be Game 5 if the series goes that far. But now, Cora must find someone else to pitch that game, assuming his ace, Chris Sale, will be slotted in for Game 4 Tuesday at Yankee Stadium.

That means either Nathan Eovaldi, whom the Yankees beat up in June when he was a Tampa Bay Ray, although he did rebound to pitch well twice against them as a Red Sox, or Rodriguez, who threw 31 pitches in his 1.2 inning stint Saturday.

Or, Cora could opt for a bullpen game, an extremely risky proposition with a bullpen that was shaky over the second half of the season.

But one thing is for certain: He can't go back to David Price again. The Yankees have declared squatter's rights in his head, and they don't seem inclined to move out any time soon.

Gary Sanchez gets back in the box and blasts Red Sox as Yankees even series, 1-1

Kristie Ackert

BOSTON — Saturday night is exactly why the Yankees have patiently stuck by Gary Sanchez through his terrible season. The catcher has struggled behind the plate and unlike last year, Sanchez hasn't been able to make up for his defensive lapses with his bat.

The Yankees' faith in him never wavered, and Saturday night that paid off.

The catcher hit his first and second home runs of the postseason as the Yankees grabbed Game 2 of the American League Division Series, beating the Red Sox, 6-2, at Fenway Park.

The best-of-five series is now tied 1-1 and heads back to the Bronx for Game 3 on Monday night.

"We know he's capable of that. And you know, first three games into the playoffs, too, you know, almost more importantly he's caught really well," Yankee manager Aaron Boone said. "I think he's been really good back there from the receiving, blocking, game-planning, all those kind of things.

"And then tonight just a monster night."

Sanchez became the second catcher in Yankee history to have a multi-home run playoff game, joining Hall of Famer Yogi Berra.

"I definitely did not know that. But I can tell you it's an honor to be mentioned in the same sentence as him, a legend of baseball," Sanchez said through the team translator. "It's an honor to me."

It was the Yankees first multi-home run game in the playoffs since Didi Gregorius hit two in Game 5 of the 2017 ALDS. This was Sanchez's first multi-homer game since May 19 at Kansas City.

Sanchez's first home run of the night led off the second inning and it came off Price, whom the Yankees have abused this season. Red Sox reliever Ryan Brasier got feisty with Sanchez in his fifth-inning at bat, screaming at Sanchez, who was stepping out of the batter's box, to get "back in the f---ing box."

Maybe that added fuel to the fire, because his second shot of the night was a monster three-run homer to center field off lefty reliever Eduardo Rodriguez. He crushed it a whopping 478 feet, hitting the light stanchion in left-center field in the seventh inning.

That one had even Aaron Judge hyped up, but Sanchez shrugged it off.

"Everybody knows that Judge has way more power than me. You know, I don't have to tell that to anybody. But a homer is a homer," Sanchez said. "And if we have the opportunity to score runs like that, you know, even if it's 300 feet, I'll take it. Anytime we score and we're helping the team, I'm going to take those."

Sanchez was hampered by a groin injury that forced him onto the disabled list for most of July and August. He never seemed to be able to get going offensively. He finished the season hitting .186 with 18 homers and 53 RBI in 89 games.

“Everybody knows that Judge has way more power than me. You know, I don't have to tell that to anybody. But a homer is a homer.”

Sanchez led all major league catchers with 18 passed balls. That's five more passed balls than Red Sox catcher Sandy Leon, who had the second most in the majors, but Sanchez accomplished that in 11 fewer games and 30 fewer innings.

With him behind the plate, the Yankees pitchers have thrown 45 wild pitches, the fifth most in the majors.

Saturday night, he seemed to be finally putting it together.

“I think he did a great job on both sides, offensively and defensively,” Masahiro Tanaka said. “You really need to be on the same page as far as the defense is concerned. And I think we were able to do that for the most part. You know, you do meetings and stuff and you go into the game, and you make adjustments, if that's necessary.”

“I think we did a really good job tonight.”

GM Brian Cashman always felt it was a matter of time until Sanchez would come around.

“I believe in the player clearly. Next season is now, hopefully it starts,” Cashman said before the start of the ALDS. “I thought he played really well in the wild card game, hopefully he'll do what Gary Sanchez is capable of doing on both sides of the plate in this series.”

“October is the second season,” Cashman added. “We're hoping we'll see what we're used to seeing from Gary, which is a great player.”

Saturday night, the Yankees got a glimpse of that great player they remembered from last season. Their patience finally paid off in a big way.

*** *The New York Post***

The Red Sox's \$127M David Price problem is only getting worse

Dan Martin

BOSTON — The Red Sox have a David Price problem.

He can't pitch in the playoffs and he can't pitch against the Yankees.

That's a rough combination for the southpaw, whose struggles in both departments were clearly on display in the Yankees' 6-2 win in Game 2 of the ALDS that evened the series Saturday at Fenway Park.

Price failed to even get out of the second inning in his first playoff start in two years. He gave up three runs in just 1 ²/₃ innings before he was yanked, replaced by Joe Kelly and booed off the mound.

Not ideal for someone who may be asked to start again this series — and has four years and roughly \$127 million left on his contract.

“I didn't execute enough pitches and that was that,” Price said. “They make it tough for me. Knowing that, you have to go out there and execute pitches in big spots in counts. And that's something I wasn't able to

do. ... But my spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't down. I'm looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

Following the latest debacle, Boston manager Alex Cora said Price would remain in the rotation, but he could be used out of the pen, since he just threw 42 pitches.

"He's part of what we're trying to accomplish and we count on him," Cora said.

Price's latest fiasco started when Aaron Judge belted a 445-foot homer over the Green Monster in left-center to give the Yankees a 1-0 lead in the first.

Gary Sanchez then opened the second with another homer. Price got a pair of groundouts from Didi Gregorius and Miguel Andujar, but he walked Gleyber Torres to extend the inning.

Brett Gardner worked another walk after being behind 1-2. Price begged for a 2-2 pitch that was inside and Gardner walked on the next pitch.

That forced Cora to get Kelly up in the bullpen, as Price faced McCutchen.

McCutchen hammered a ball off the Monster that likely would have been a three-run homer anywhere else, but went for an RBI single.

The hit ended Price's outing, with the Yankees leading 3-0.

Since the start of 2016, the lefty is 2-7 with a 7.71 ERA against the Yankees.

He also had a 10-game stretch in the postseason in which he had a 5.90 ERA. That ended a year ago with two solid outings out of the bullpen with the Red Sox, but his October issues clearly have not gone away.

"I just want to win," Price said. "That's it. My main goal is to win in the playoffs, to win a World Series. Whatever I have to do to help us do that, I'm fine with. ... I know I'm more than capable of winning games as a starter in October. That's what I look forward to doing."

Gary Sanchez blasts two HRs as Yankees even series with Red Sox

George A. King III

BOSTON — Gary Sanchez didn't erase a miserable regular season with two powerful swings Saturday night that sent balls screaming over Fenway Park's Green Monster.

No amount of home runs can make up for a season in which the Yankees' catcher landed on the disabled list twice with groin problems, led the majors in passed balls and finished with an embarrassing batting average.

What Sanchez did do was lead the Yankees to a 6-2 win over the Red Sox in Game 2 of the ALDS that was witnessed by a sold-out crowd of 39,151 and evened the best-of-five affair at 1-1.

Game 3 is Monday night at Yankee Stadium, where Luis Severino will start for the Yankees. The Red Sox are deciding between Rick Porcello and Nathan Eovaldi.

"I always stayed positive throughout the whole season. I know it was a rough season for me, it was a tough one," Sanchez said of hitting .186, leading the majors with 18 passed balls and playing in just 89 games.

"But you know, that's the regular season and that's done. We are playing the really exciting baseball. So to have an opportunity now to keep on playing and produce at this time it's actually more important."

After Aaron Judge tagged Red Sox starter David Price for a solo homer in the first, Sanchez opened the second with a blast over the Monster. Then with the Yankees leading 3-1 in the seventh, Sanchez crushed a 2-1 pitch to the right of the light tower on top of the Monster. The blast, which linked Sanchez with Yogi Berra as the only two Yankee catchers with multi-homer games in the postseason, was measured at 479 feet.

The Yankees got the series even mostly because of Sanchez's power, but he had help from Masahiro Tanaka and a bullpen that allowed one run over the final four innings.

Working with his signature split-fingered fastball that had taken a vacation in his final two regular-season starts, Tanaka allowed one run and three hits and issued one walk in five innings.

"I think it was way more consistent compared to the last two games," Tanaka said. "I say this all the time, but it really comes down to mechanics. I feel like I was able to get the sound mechanics back to be able to get that effective splitter back."

The Yankees treated Price like they usually do, and it didn't take long for Red Sox manager Alex Cora to lift the lefty with a terrible postseason résumé that includes a 2-9 ledger in 18 games (10 starts).

"After we won Game 1, to go out there and have the opportunity to (go) up 2-0 and to throw the baseball the way I did, it was definitely tough," Price said. "But my spirits aren't down, my confidence isn't down. I am looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity."

The Yankees sure hope to see Price again after he gave up three runs, three hits and walked two in $1\frac{2}{3}$ innings.

Sanchez's two-homer game overshadowed that, in three postseason games, he has handled the defensive side of the job without incident. That impressed Yankees manager Aaron Boone as much as the homers.

"Almost more importantly he's caught really well," Boone said. "I think he has been really good back there from receiving, blocking and game-planning. And then tonight was a monster night."

Again, it doesn't wash away a regular season that was terrible. But Sanchez is right: The 162-game grind across six months is finished. Now the only numbers that count are wins in October. Thanks to Sanchez, the Yankees went home 1-1 when 0-2 would have been a death sentence.

*** *The USA Today***

Yankees even ALDS with Red Sox behind Aaron Judge, Gary Sanchez homers

Ted Berg

BOSTON -- Red Sox starter David Price opened Game 2 of the ALDS at Fenway Park with a chance to shake his reputation for poor postseason performances and prove himself capable of beating a Yankees team that torched him to the tune of a 10.34 ERA over four starts in the regular season.

He did neither. Aaron Judge got the scoring started for the New York Yankees with a solo home run in the first inning. Gary Sanchez added another solo shot in the second before two walks and an Andrew McCutchen single chased Price from the game. The left-hander, in the third year of a seven-year, \$217 million deal with Boston, yielded three earned runs in only $1\frac{2}{3}$ innings. The game marked the shortest postseason start of Price's career and only the third time in his 10-year tenure in the Majors that he has started a game and thrown less than two innings.

Yankees starter Masahiro Tanaka suffered no such indignities. With his trademark splitter appearing sharper than it did in a couple of rough late-season starts, Tanaka cruised through five innings and earned

the win in the Yanks' 6-2 victory, allowing a run on a Xander Bogaerts homer in the fourth but nothing more.

After a shaky performance Friday, the Red Sox' bullpen kept Boston in the game through the middle innings Saturday. Joe Kelly relieved Price and threw 2 1/3 scoreless innings. Ryan Brasier rebounded from a bout of Game 1 wildness to strike out the side in the fifth.

But Sanchez's second homer of the night -- a three-run shot off Eduardo Rodriguez in the seventh -- provided breathing room to a Yankees bullpen that hardly needed any.

Turning point

Like in Friday night's contest, there would be no lead changes after a first-inning homer. This time it was Judge's convincing blast to deep left-center that did it. The slugger became only the third player in MLB history to homer in three straight games to begin a postseason, and now has seven homers in only 16 career postseason games.

Sanchez endured a disappointing season, missing most of July and August with a groin injury, struggling at the plate for most of the year, and exhibiting such egregious defensive lapses that some expected the Yankees would use backup Austin Romine as their primary catcher for the postseason. His homers Saturday served as a reminder of what he can do when he's healthy.

State of the Yankees

After a day off Sunday, the Yankees will send Luis Severino to the mound for Game 3 of the ALDS in the Bronx on Monday. Last seen throwing four scoreless innings in the AL Wild Card Game on Wednesday, Severino went 19-8 with a 3.39 ERA in the regular season but struggled for long stretches of the second half. Splitting the first Fenway leg of the series essentially gives the Yankees home-field advantage for its remainder and a chance to clinch an ALCS berth on their home turf if they win Games 3 and 4.

State of the Red Sox

Despite appearing in relief on Friday, Rick Porcello will likely start Game 3 for Boston on Monday. The former AL Cy Young Award winner went 17-7 with a 4.28 ERA in the regular season. If Porcello is not yet ready, former Yankee Nathan Eovaldi will take the ball Monday and push Porcello back to Game 4 on Tuesday.

After another postseason letdown, will Boston start David Price again?

Bob Nightengale

BOSTON -- It's the recurring nightmare that haunts him every time he faces them, particularly this time of year, demons torturing his soul, leaving him bewildered and disoriented.

Boston Red Sox starter David Price, the richest player in franchise history, walked off the mound Sunday night in front of a sellout crowd at Fenway Park, utterly humiliated and loudly booed each step he took toward the dugout, into the clubhouse, and as he disappeared.

The unforgiving Red Sox fans may have been hoping he'd keep on walking, to Logan Airport on his way out of town, never to be seen again.

At least not in October.

The Red Sox, 6-2 losers, are now tied at one game apiece with the New York Yankees in this best-of-five AL Division Series, but if they don't recover, and their 108-victory season is wasted, guess who's going to be vilified the entire winter?

"It's tough," Price said. "Just after we won Game 1, to go out there and have that opportunity to go up 2-0, and to throw the baseball the way I did, it was definitely tough.

“But my spirits aren’t down. My confidence isn’t down. I’m looking forward to getting back out there and getting another opportunity.”

Price, who has lost nine of 10 postseason starts in his career, has been bloodied by the Yankees since he joined the Red Sox three years ago. He woke up knowing this was his chance at redemption, truly believing this would be his night.

It took 10 pitches for that feeling to vanish. It was the moment Aaron Judge cracked a mammoth 445-foot homer that landed in the top row of the Green Monster. Price closed his eyes and screamed into the night before the ball even landed. Just like that, Judge became the first Yankee to homer in their first three postseason games of a season since Hank Bauer in 1958.

Price opened the second inning by giving up another homer to catcher Gary Sanchez, his seventh in 14 career at-bats against Price. The left-hander got two quick outs, but then walked the No. 8 and 9 hitters. Andrew McCutchen followed with a run-scoring single for a 3-0 deficit.

That was it. Manager Alex Cora couldn’t stand to watch any longer.

Cora slowly walked to the mound, and boos filled the air. Those boos got louder and louder as Price left, with the Red Sox obituary being written with every step.

Price’s postseason epitaph: 10 career starts, 0 victories, 9 defeats, 6.03 ERA.

When asked if he was disappointed he was yanked so early, Price said it was understandable, considering the circumstances.

“It’s the playoffs,” he said, “you see it all the time. Managers go into bullpens extremely early. If I don’t like it, I need to pitch better. Period.”

It’s the Yankees, more than any team in all of baseball, that have made his life miserable every time he sees them. He has made 12 starts against them since signing a seven-year, \$217 million contract three years ago, and has a 7.95 ERA. He’s 0-4 with a 10.90 ERA against them this season. He has lasted less than two innings just four times in his career; three have been against the Yankees.

It’s getting worse by the start. He has faced them five times this season, and surrendered 11 homers and 35 base runners in 17 1/3 innings. He gave up just 16 homers in 160 innings to everyone else.

He threw 42 pitches in this game, retiring only five of 10 batters. He gave up two homers, two walks, a single, and never recorded a strikeout.

“He was missing a lot, and that’s what happens,” Red Sox catcher Sandy Leon said. “They made him pay.”

Price, of course, would be available to pitch again in the series considering his workload barely qualified for more than a bullpen session between starts. Price says he’d be available for Game 3, if needed. Yet, considering the way the Yankees have manhandled Price, Cora wouldn’t dare start him again this series, would he? Maybe, when Rick Porcello or Nathan Evoldi starts Monday, he could be used in relief.

“I just want to win,” he said, “that’s it. My main goal is to win in the playoffs, to win a World Series. Whatever I have to do to help us do that, I’m fine with.

“But I know I’m more than capable of winning games as a starter in October, that’s what I look forward to doing.”

The Red Sox, from Cora to former Detroit Tigers teammate J.D. Martinez, to probable MVP Mookie Betts, to shortstop Xander Bogaerts, all said they support Price. They insist if he steps on the mound again this series, they're confident it will be a different result.

"He pitched great all year for us," Martinez said. "He's the reason why we're here. Everybody has confidence in David. We know what he can do."

Yet, even after going 16-7 with a 3.58 ERA, including 6-1 with a 2.25 ERA in his final 11 regular-season starts, Price knows all that will be remembered is October.

"I could go 35-0 in the regular season with a zero [ERA] and it wouldn't matter," Price said last month. "I need to win in October. That's that. Regular season means nothing for me."

The Red Sox need to survive this series for Price to start again in 2018, and perhaps get another shot at redemption. He'll remain in the rotation, Cora said, and not exiled to the bullpen.

"He's one of our starters," Cora said. "Just a bad outing. It just so happened it wasn't his day. We trust him. He's bounced back before."

It's possible, of course, that Price has thrown his last pitch for the Red Sox. He could walk away from a fan base that doesn't want him, and exercise his opt-out clause if he chooses, but he'd be walking away from \$127 million remaining over the next four years of his deal.

The Red Sox can't worry about that now. They've got a division series to win. They've got to win at least a game at Yankee Stadium, which promises to be loud, boisterous, and unruly, even in the luxury seats.

"We feel like we get a really big boost at home just based on our fans and our ballpark," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "I think our guys walk out there probably with a little bit of extra swagger when they take the field there."

You don't have to convince Cora, who saw it first-hand last year as the Houston Astros bench coach when the Yankees took the Astros to seven games in the ALCS.

"They haven't lost a playoff game in a while there," Cora said, "so it's a tough place to play. Last year, that place was alive, the fan base. From the get-go, it was loud.

"I know the rivalry and everything. We played some games there, and it's been loud. But nothing like the way it's going to be on Monday."

The Red Sox are bracing themselves for a torrent of hostility toward them, with all of them getting loudly booed, with the exception of one player:

David Price.

It's New York. He's liable to get a hero's welcome.

*** *Associated Press***

Sanchez, Judge power Yankees past Red Sox 6-2 to even ALDS

BOSTON -- Aaron Judge helped chase David Price early by hitting a home run to a part of Fenway Park where balls rarely travel.

Gary Sanchez did him one better.

The Yankees catcher, who tested his manager's confidence with a sub-.200 batting average and poor defense for most of the season, hit two homers, the second a 479-foot shot clear out of the ballpark that sent New York to a 6-2 victory over the Boston Red Sox on Saturday night and tied their AL Division Series at one game apiece.

"Just a monster night," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "You know he's capable of that. We all know he's capable of that. That's kind of what we've been waiting for to some degree, where he can take over a game on offense."

One night after Chris Sale earned his first career playoff victory, Price fell to 0-9 in 10 postseason starts and was booed off the field after five outs by a Fenway crowd hoping to see the Red Sox protect the home-field advantage they earned with an AL East title and franchise-record 108 regular-season wins.

Instead, Masahiro Tanaka helped the wild-card Yankees claim the first victory by a road team in a Division Series game this year and gave them a chance to advance to the AL Championship Series with a pair of wins at home, where they are 7-0 over the past two postseasons.

Games 3 and 4 are at Yankee Stadium on Monday and Tuesday nights, with Game 5 back in Boston on Thursday, if necessary.

"We can't wait," Judge said. "We know our fans are waiting for us to come back home, especially with the series tied 1-1."

Judge homered for the third straight playoff game, a 445-foot shot that landed in the back row of seats above the Green Monster, high above the 379-foot marker and about 10 feet to the left of the pole flying an American flag blowing straight out.

It was the longest home run of the postseason -- for about five innings.

That's when Sanchez aimed one in the same direction, sending it out of the park and onto Lansdowne Street. A few feet away, a plaque commemorates the six home runs in the 106-year history of Fenway Park that have cleared the back wall to the other side of the flagpole.

"Everybody knows that Judge has way more power than me," said Sanchez, who joined Yogi Berra as the only catchers in Yankees history with multihomer postseason games. "But a homer is a homer. And if we have the opportunity to score runs like that, you know, even if it's 300 feet, I'll take it."

Sanchez also had a solo shot in the second inning to give New York a 2-0 lead. Price then walked back-to-back batters with two outs and gave up Andrew McCutchen's RBI single on what could be his last pitch in a Red Sox uniform.

The 2012 AL Cy Young Award winner -- and two-time runner-up for the award -- Price signed a seven-year, \$217 million deal to come to Boston as a free agent before the 2016 season and has pitched like an ace at times in the regular season. But his postseason struggles have caused Red Sox fans to sour on him, and vice versa; he can opt out of his contract after the season, and if he can find something close to the four years and \$124 million he is owed, he might just take it.

In all, Price was charged with three runs on three hits and two walks in 1 2/3 innings -- the shortest playoff start of his career, and tied with Roger Clemens for the shortest in Red Sox postseason history. It was the first time in 299 regular-season and postseason starts that Price failed to strike out a batter.

"I just want to win. That's it," Price said. "My main goal is to win in the playoffs, to win a World Series. ... And whatever I need to do to help us do that, I'm fine with. But I know I'm more than capable of winning games as a starter in October. That's what I look forward to doing."

Tanaka allowed just three hits, including Xander Bogaerts' solo homer, before leaving after five innings with a 3-1 lead. He struck out four and walked one.

BAD BLOOD

Red Sox reliever Ryan Brasier had words with Sanchez in the fifth, when the Yankees catcher stepped out of the box to think about the 1-2 count against him. Brasier motioned impatiently for Sanchez to get back in the box, and told him so in some impolite terms.

Sanchez struck out on the next pitch, a 97 mph fastball. But when he came up again in the seventh, he broke the game open. Sanchez had three multihomer games in the regular season, none after May 19.

"Not much to talk about," Brasier said plainly. "He stepped out three pitches in a row after an 0-2 count, and I felt like it was time to throw the pitch. He just kept stepping out. I was ready to go. That's all it was."

UP NEXT

The teams have Sunday off before resuming the series in New York on Monday night. Luis Severino is scheduled to pitch for the Yankees against Rick Porcello or Nathan Eovaldi.