

The Boston Red Sox Monday, October 8, 2018

*** *The Boston Globe***

The Red Sox have dealt with minimal adversity this season — until now

Peter Abraham

NEW YORK — The Red Sox had their resilience tested this season to the greatest extent in June when they fell two games out of first place following back-to-back losses at Minnesota.

They were back on top of the American League East six days later and moved into first place for good on July 2.

The 108-win Red Sox were such a strong team that all obstacles were quickly pushed aside. That little dip in June was all the adversity they encountered.

That's what will make Games 3 and 4 of their Division Series against the Yankees so interesting. The Sox are in a corner despite the series being tied, 1-1.

They need to win one of the two road games to force a deciding Game 5 at Fenway Park on Thursday. Or the Sox could further validate a record-setting regular season by eliminating their rivals at Yankee Stadium.

The Sox shifted their rotation and will start Nathan Eovaldi on Monday night. Rick Porcello, who pitched in relief on Friday, was bumped back until Tuesday.

It will be Eovaldi's first postseason start.

"It's definitely probably the most important game I've ever pitched in," he said. "We need to win."

As they did during the season, the Sox plan to focus on what's in front of them.

"Nothing changes," manager Alex Cora said on Sunday.

It's what Cora has preached since the early days of spring training. He set the expectations for how he wanted the Sox to prepare and play and made each game a single unit of measurement. Win or lose, the next day was fresh out of the box.

"I think we've had a lot of success during the season on winning the game on that specific day and not worrying ahead," shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. "So I think we'll just go out and take the same approach. We know how important it is to win [Monday], and we're looking forward to that."

Bogaerts was one of about 14 players who turned out at Yankee Stadium on Sunday's off day. Both teams passed on working out.

"Regular off day," Cora said. "Some guys showed up, they took some hacks. They got treatment, had a good dinner in New York City. Come tomorrow and play the way we can play."

The difference of course is what's at stake and the degree of difficulty. The Yankees won 53 games at home this season, second only to the Red Sox. They also are undefeated in seven postseason home games over the last two seasons, winning those games by an average of four runs.

The first home playoff game against the Red Sox at the new Stadium could threaten attendance and decibel records.

“I think it’s going to be amazing, I really do,” Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. “I think the atmosphere [Monday] night is going to be special, electric, whatever you want to put on it. I think it’s going to be there, and hopefully we can go out there and give them reason to keep building as the game unfolds.”

The Sox were 3-6 at Yankee Stadium this season. They know it’ll be tough.

“They make it difficult for opposing teams to play,” Matt Barnes said. “We’ve played quite a few games here over the last few years with this group of guys.

“By no means is it going to be easy to win ballgames here, but we have the absolute confidence that we can do that. If we can go out and control everything we can and play the way that we know we’re capable of, I think everybody in that locker room is confident that we’re going to win.”

The Sox scored only seven runs and hit .213 with four extra-base hits in the first two games of the series. But Cora does not seem inclined to make significant lineup changes.

Second baseman Ian Kinsler is 2 for 8 with five strikeouts. Third baseman Eduardo Nunez is 0 for 7 and catcher Sandy Leon 0 for 5.

But it’s not that easy. Backup second baseman Brock Holt is 1 for 15 with six strikeouts against Yankees starter Luis Severino. Backup third baseman Rafael Devers is 0 for 12 with five strikeouts. Christian Vazquez is 2 for 8.

“I knew that question was coming. I’ll go to experience from the World Series last year,” Cora said. “That’s something I learned. Be patient. It’s such a small series that people get caught up on the whole small sample sizes.

“I always said that the difference between a .300 hitter in the postseason and a .200 hitter is 2 for 10 and 3 for 10. One swing. So we go with the quality at-bats. We know we have to swing the bat better.”

It’s just common sense to call on Nathan Eovaldi in Game 3

Nick Cafardo

NEW YORK — When you’re 1-1 and it feels like 0-2, you have to make decisions that will get you out of that malaise. And so Alex Cora made the right one by naming Nathan Eovaldi his Game 3 starter.

In this situation, after your \$30 million pitcher couldn’t get out of the second inning and you’re heading to the enemy venue, you have to go with the surest thing you can. Eovaldi isn’t exactly Nolan Ryan or Tom Seaver or Pedro Martinez, but he could act that way Monday night.

He’s the surest thing Cora has right now because of his past success against the Yankees, which includes four very good starts this season — three of them with the Red Sox and one with the Tampa Bay Rays, from whom the Sox acquired him. Why Eovaldi over Rick Porcello, who will pitch Game 4? Cora spun it as Porcello being better off with an extra day after his two-batter relief appearance in Game 1. But while this decision wasn’t an anti-Porcello narrative, it was which of the two gives you the most confidence against the greatest single-season home-run hitting team.

In four starts vs. the Yankees this season, Eovaldi is 1-1 with a 1.93 ERA. He’s allowed just one home run in 23⅓ innings and 87 batters faced.

“It definitely gives me confidence just knowing that I’ve had recent success against them,” Eovaldi said. “I’m trying to do the same thing that I have been doing; stay aggressive and try to get that first-pitch strike

out of the way. I'll be trying to keep the ball in the ballpark. Try and get quick outs. Try not to let the crowd get too crazy and get behind them and get them going. Again, I feel like the key to that is working ahead and staying ahead and not really giving them the free bases and little things like that."

Eovaldi has employed different strategies against the Yankees in each of his four starts. In his first start vs. the Yankees when he was with Tampa Bay, he threw more sliders (42 percent) than any other pitch to their righties. In his Red Sox debut, he was quite judicious with his four-seamer (25.5 percent) and his cutter (43.1 percent). In his second Red Sox start vs. the Yankees, he threw 49.2 percent four-seamers against the righties. In his final outing, Eovaldi was content to throw a lot of fastballs (64.3 percent).

There had been talk that Eovaldi would be the starter used as a reliever in Game 1 if that was needed, but Cora and pitching coach Dana LeVangie flip-flopped. Eovaldi wasn't even an option out of the pen. He had to have an inkling, after not being used in relief, that he might be the guy in Game 3.

"I found out [Saturday] night once we had landed that I was going to start Game 3," said Eovaldi. "A.C. had already told me ahead of time, like prepare as if I'm going to start Game 3 but expect Game 4. Just the fact that we faced the Yankees so many times, if you're not prepared for them now, you're in trouble. I feel like I'm prepared for them."

Eovaldi called what will be his first postseason game "exciting. This is what we play for, coming out of spring training and preparing for this moment. I'm excited, ready to go. It's definitely probably the most important game I've ever pitched in. We need to win and that way we can be ready to go for Game 4."

Let's face it, Eovaldi's 97-100-mile-per-hour fastball has been bothersome to the Yankees' big righthanded hitters. If Gary Sanchez is waking up and becoming the slugger who has been MIA most of the season, then Eovaldi gives the Red Sox the best chance to overpower him. The same holds true for the other righthanded sluggers — Aaron Judge, the heart, soul, and muscle of the Yankee lineup, and Giancarlo Stanton. The Red Sox have to neutralize those hitters. If they don't, the Yankees will advance and the Red Sox will go home.

And from a purely selfish point of view, Eovaldi has a chance to make significant money this winter as a free agent. His postseason performances will be a huge selling point for his services and whether the Red Sox want to hold on to him and offer him a deal. Eovaldi has undergone two Tommy John surgeries so he's been through major injuries.

"I feel like with those injuries, it's helped me grow a lot as a player, in a lot of different ways as well," he said. "But to come back and kind of be in this situation again, I'd hurt my arm against the Red Sox, and now I'm on this side of it and back in Yankee Stadium in this situation. I think it's kind of cool."

Who knows if the decision will be a complete bust. You could argue that with it being the fifth time around this season, maybe the Yankees might be able to figure him out. And the Red Sox are likely thinking, well, after seeing him four times they weren't able to figure him out.

All I'm saying is the thinking to go with Eovaldi was sound and based on common sense. The Red Sox need an exclamation point on Monday and this decision just might be it.

Red Sox need to be tougher to beat the Yankees

Dan Shaughnessy

NEW YORK — The Red Sox are playing scared.

They need to put on their big boy pants and start playing like the team that won 108 games this season.

They need to start playing like the team that effectively ended the American League East race in early August by sweeping the Yankees four straight at Fenway Park.

They need to start playing with the swagger and idiocy of the 2004 Red Sox, who beat the Bronx Bombers four straight times after falling behind, 3-0, in the ALCS.

The Sox need to rediscover their mojo. They've been looking over their shoulders at the Big Bad Yankees since taking a 5-0 lead in the third inning of Game 1. They've been outscored, 10-2, over the last 15 innings.

Mookie Betts needs to start playing like the MVP. Betts has been a silent 1 for 7 over two games while mastodons Aaron Judge and Gary Sanchez have been rounding the bases after hitting prodigious homers. In nine playoff games over three years, Betts is a .242 hitter with no homers and no RBIs. That's not Mookie Betts. He's better than that.

The young Yankee sluggers are flexing their muscles while the Red Sox stars are turtling. Did you see what Judge did Saturday night at Fenway after hitting a homer in his third straight playoff game? He walked out of Fenway, right past the Sox clubhouse, to the tune of Sinatra's "New York, New York."

Ouch. Them's fighting words. That would be like David Ortiz parading past the home team clubhouse in Yankee Stadium while blasting "Dirty Water," or "I'm Shipping Up To Boston," on a John Cusack boom box.

John Cusack from the 1989 movie, "Say Anything."

The Sox need to stop whining about the loss of Steven Wright. Wright pitched 53 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings and went 3-1 for Boston in 2018. When did he become the key to the pitching plans for October? Why has the loss of Steven Wright upended Boston's entire mound strategy? How did Rick Porcello end up in the bullpen in Game 1? What other 100-win team doesn't know the identity of its Game 3 starter until the day before Game 3? Why does it suddenly look like the Red Sox are making it up as they go along in these playoffs?

Alex Cora needs to get Rafael Devers's bat in the lineup. Devers is the guy who hit a 100-mile-per-hour Aroldis Chapman fastball over the wall in New York. Stop worrying about Devers's defense and pretending that Eduardo Nunez is Brooks Robinson.

While we're at it, it's probably time for Brock Holt to replace Ian Kinsler.

Cora should have his "Winning Wall" of 109 photos shipped to the Bronx and put it right in the middle of the Sox clubhouse. Remind these guys who they were this year.

The Sox need to start stealing bases — something they did way better than the Yankees this season. Everybody knows it's easy to run on the Yankees. Start running.

They need to bunt on CC Sabathia when he starts Game 4. Sabathia hates that. Good. Get him off his game.

While we're at it, some Sox pitcher needs to come up and in on Sanchez. Put him on his butt. He's way too comfortable up there.

Oh, and Eduardo Rodriguez needs to cover first base on a ball hit to the right side.

Dave Dombrowski needs to pick up another reliever (whoops, too late for that one).

The guys in the Sox bullpen need to stop throwing pitches that hit the dirt after traveling only 58 feet.

Chris Sale needs to pitch on short rest if that's what it takes. Porcello needs to come out of the pen every day if that's what it takes. Craig Kimbrel needs to be ready for a six-out save. Every day. These are the playoffs. These are the Yankees.

David Price? If he ever gets in any other playoff game he needs to stop flexing his Fortnite hand and tugging at his uniform, and simply throw the ball hard to home plate, without hesitation. Price needs to do what Pedro Martinez told him to do — stand on the mound, look at the guy at the plate, and remind yourself that you are better than him. Then pitch that way.

This series is not over. So why is everybody in Boston so scared? Why does a 1-1 series bring doom and gloom to New England?

Two games will be played at Yankee Stadium this week. There's no reason that — at the very least — the Sox can't square this thing and bring it home to Fenway for an epic fifth and deciding game Thursday night.

Start spreading the news.

Red Sox will start Nathan Eovaldi against Yankees in Game 3 Monday night

Peter Abraham

NEW YORK — Nathan Eovaldi has faced the Yankees three times since the Red Sox acquired him from the Tampa Bay Rays in July. He has allowed one unearned run over 16 innings.

Now the righthander will face the Yankees in Game 3 of the Division Series on Monday night, the Sox making that decision late Saturday night.

Rick Porcello was the scheduled starter but facing three batters in relief on Friday pushed him to Game 4 on Tuesday.

“We felt like one more day is going to benefit him,” manager Alex Cora said on Sunday. “Nate hasn't pitched in a while. He's rested, had a good week, and we're going with him.”

Eovaldi last pitched on Sept. 29, a two-inning, 37-pitch tune-up for the postseason against the Yankees at Fenway Park.

“It definitely gives me confidence just knowing that I've had recent success against them,” Eovaldi said. “I'm trying to do the same thing that I have been doing: stay aggressive and try to get that first-pitch strike.”

For the 28-year-old Eovaldi, it would be the first postseason appearance of his career, a considerable achievement considering he twice underwent Tommy John surgery on his elbow.

The former Yankee had a 3.81 earned run average and 1.13 WHIP in 22 games this season.

“I think his cutter this year has probably been the main reason,” Yankees center fielder Aaron Hicks said. “When he was here, he didn't have that cutter. He was more of a fastball/splitter guy. That cutter that he throws from 88 to 94 miles an hour, it's a big jump, and that's kind of something new for us that we've never seen him do before.”

Said Sox reliever Matt Barnes: “He's got electric stuff. He's gone out there and had multiple dominant outings against them. I think he's very confident pitching here. We're very confident in him and expect him to have a good one [Monday].”

Relief for Price?

You may be aware that David Price has not pitched well as a starter in the postseason. But he has a 2.93 ERA in eight relief appearances with 16 strikeouts over 15½ innings.

Price threw only 44 pitches in his disastrous 1⅓-inning start on Saturday night and said afterward he would be ready to pitch on Monday if needed.

“We’ll talk,” Cora said. “Obviously, we need outs.”

Cora said pitching coach Dana LeVangie picked up a few things Price could correct. That could open the door to Price coming out of the bullpen.

“I know physically he’s fine and we know where we’re going. So most likely we’ll use him in some spot,” Cora said.

Price has allowed 21 earned runs and an astonishing 11 home runs in 17 innings against the Yankees this season.

Moreland recovering

Mitch Moreland, who strained his right hamstring in the seventh inning on Saturday, was at Yankee Stadium on Sunday working with the athletic trainers.

“He’s OK. He’s getting treatment, aggressive treatment,” Cora said. “We’ll know a little bit more after all his rounds of . . . whatever.”

Cora said he expected Moreland to stay on the roster.

Moreland is 7 of 20 against Yankees Game 3 starter Luis Severino. If he does not start, the Sox could use Brock Holt, Steve Pearce, or Blake Swihart at first base.

Rodriguez admonished

Cora spent some time on Sunday talking to Eduardo Rodriguez about a mental mistake in the seventh inning on Saturday.

When Aaron Judge grounded a ball to the right side, Moreland made the play but Rodriguez did not cover the bag.

Judge reached on a single and scored when Gary Sanchez homered three batters later.

Rodriguez compounded his mistake by telling reporters he slipped. Cora didn’t buy that excuse.

“I’m like, ‘Man, if you don’t break right away, just be accountable, that’s all we ask,’ ” Cora said. “And he’s like, ‘Yeah, my fault. I just didn’t break.’ That’s it. Hey, I get it. Next time just bust your ass to first base. That’s all you’ve got to do.”

Replays showed that even if Rodriguez had covered the base, Judge could have been safe. But that’s not the point.

“Where we’re at right now at this stage, we can’t take plays off,” Cora said. “We didn’t do that the whole season. It just happened [Saturday]. But I talked to him, and we’re in the same page. Hopefully, the next groundball to first, he goes to first, and we get him.”

Birthday Betts

Mookie Betts turned 26 on Sunday. He was 1 for 7 in the series as a 25-year-old . . . The Red Sox bullpen allowed five runs on 10 hits and seven walks over 11 innings in the first two games of the series . . . When 36-year-old Ian Kinsler stole third base in the seventh inning on Saturday, he became the oldest Red Sox player to steal a base in the postseason since 35-year-old George Whiteman had one in Game 3 of the 1918 World Series.

With Ian Kinsler struggling, should the Red Sox go with Brock Holt?

Alex Speier

As the trade deadline entered its final 24 hours, anticipation grew. The Red Sox had moved swiftly in late June to add a complementary righthanded bat in Steve Pearce. At a time when Eduardo Rodriguez was on the DL, the team moved to solidify its rotation and provide some righthanded balance with the acquisition of Nathan Eovaldi. Just one checkbox remained: A bullpen arm.

Instead, on July 30, the team added second baseman Ian Kinsler from the Angels. Though the veteran had relatively modest numbers for the season (.240/.301/.380), he'd been resurgent in July, hitting .316/.386/.456.

"He was in such a groove," said Red Sox hitting coach Tim Hyers. "It was just clicking for him."

The Red Sox acquired him as a potential two-way upgrade, viewing him as someone who could shore up their leaky infield defense and also deliver competitive at-bats from the lower half of the lineup that would make an excellent lineup even deeper.

The cost seemed relatively modest at the time. The Sox parted with a pair of relievers on the 40-man roster — righthander Ty Buttrey and lefty Williams Jerez — who had flashed interesting stuff but who, despite good velocity, seemed somewhat too fastball-reliant to profile as potential bullpen weapons. They'd remained in Pawtucket while the Sox gave opportunities to other minor leaguers — not just Ryan Brasier and Brandon Workman, but also William Cuevas and Justin Haley — as depth options.

In his initial games in Boston, Kinsler looked like a potentially significant upgrade. He showed incredible defensive range on some plays up the middle, had good at-bats against the Yankees, and contributed via the running game. While he didn't represent the bullpen upgrade that everyone expected the Red Sox to land, the Red Sox looked like a better team with him.

But on Aug. 3, Kinsler suffered a hamstring injury — a particularly concerning injury for a player whose game relies heavily on his legs. And since his two weeks on the sidelines, he has yet to make the same kind of all-around impact he was making before the injury.

In 34 games since returning from his hamstring injury, Kinsler has hit .230 with a .280 OBP and .295 slugging mark. His average exit velocity over that time of 85.1 miles per hour is in the bottom 20 percent in the majors.

Evaluators believe he hasn't had his hitting base beneath him to drive the ball with consistency. His defensive range at second base — typically outstanding, consistent with his Gold Glove-caliber reputation — has instead been roughly average.

"After the injury, I don't think he's settled in and found that stroke yet," Hyers said. "He hasn't found that connection to be consistent and drive the baseball."

Kinsler has had a rough start to the postseason. Though he is 2 for 8 with an RBI double that he lofted off the Green Monster on Saturday night, he's struck out five times and hit into a game-ending double play. He's clearly searching, a notion reinforced when he and J.D. Martinez discussed Kinsler's mechanics in the clubhouse following the Red Sox' series-knotting 6-2 loss to the Yankees in Game 2 of the ALDS.

"We're just talking about hitting," Kinsler said. "It's what baseball players do. That's our job, to talk about hitting, try to figure out how to get better. We don't just stay still and stagnant. [But] 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, try to get to a point where I can help every at-bat. That's the key."

Yet as his quest to produce continues, it's hard to ignore the fact that Kinsler's presence in the lineup is seemingly coming at the expense of playing time for the player who was one of the Red Sox' hottest hitters

down the stretch. In September, Brock Holt hit .354/.456/.667 with four homers — his most in any month of his career.

Kinsler has yet to improve the Red Sox in the ways they anticipated when they acquired him. And at this point, there's at least a chance that Holt represents the superior option. Meanwhile, Buttrey excelled at times with the Angels in his big league debut, forging a 3.31 ERA and striking out 20 batters and earning four saves in 16⅓ innings. It remains to be seen whether his strong debut is real or a mirage, but at the least, it's forced some observers of the team to wonder whether Buttrey would have been a more valuable addition to the Red Sox this summer than Kinsler.

There is still time, of course, for Kinsler to justify the deal, for him to make his mark in the postseason. But for now, Kinsler (along with third baseman Eduardo Nunez and catcher Sandy Leon) has been part of a bottom of the Red Sox lineup that the Yankees have neutralized, raising the obvious question of whether the team should pivot away from Kinsler as the Red Sox try to jumpstart their offense in Yankee Stadium.

*** *The Boston Herald***

Red Sox need a postseason hero

Michael Silverman

NEW YORK — With this American League Division Series tied at 1-1, the Red Sox don't stand on the brink of elimination.

They might as well.

The last time such a feeling of do-or-doom hovered over the Red Sox was 14 Octobers ago, a time when most of the current Red Sox were still getting used to being double digits in age.

Barring the unforeseeable, Game 6 and Game 7 of the 2004 ALCS will forever mark the highwater mark for the Red Sox in their rivalry with the Yankees.

Down 3-0 to start the series and then 3-2 upon arrival here, the Red Sox had no choice but to win two games in a row against the Yankees at Yankee Stadium or else go home. The Bloody Sock of Game 6 and the early home run barrage and runaway win in Game 7 proved the mettle of that championship team.

This year's club, the one that won 10 more regular-season games than the 2004 edition did, stands on its own brink of delight or disaster.

We don't know a thing about its mettle. They are flying back home regardless after Game 4. If they win once, they fly back for Game 5. If they win twice, they fly back and prepare for the ALCS.

And if they lose twice, they fly into the teeth of a bitterly cold winter.

This is a team that never lost more than three games in a row during the regular season. When they did, the Sox always came back and won the next one.

There will be no next one if the Red Sox lose their third in a row to the Yankees. Their margin for error has evaporated.

They need an extra dose of the brand of resiliency that was dripping off them during the regular season, and they need it fast.

“Coming into the playoffs, we knew we had to win series — I think we did an outstanding job throughout the season just staying in the moment,” said manager Alex Cora just after the club’s informal non-workout gathering at Yankee Stadium yesterday.

“Nothing changes. Like today, regular off day. Some guys showed up. They took some hacks. They got treatment, have a good dinner in New York City, and come tomorrow and play the way we can play.”

You can’t pre-select postseason heroes, but in hindsight it’s not a shock that two of the biggest stars on that 2004 team, David Ortiz and Curt Schilling, showed up when they had to in that ALCS.

The Red Sox need a 2018 hero.

They had big performances from J.D. Martinez and Chris Sale in Game 1. Game 2 was not David Price’s time, only Joe Kelly’s.

Mookie Betts is 1-for-7 this series and without an RBI. Sandy Leon and Eduardo Nunez are a combined 0-for-12. Leon or Nunez would not be the first choice of many to become a postseason hero for the Red Sox, but it’s not out of the realm of possibility.

Betts would be the first choice of just about everyone, and he’s been mostly a non-factor to date. More often than anyone else on the team besides Martinez, Betts was the go-to guy for heroic moments. But in the exceedingly small sample size of this series, he has not been there.

That lends only further credence for the Red Sox to jolt themselves out of this postseason haze by pretending it’s like the regular season again.

That mindset tended to work, and it’s the mindset Xander Bogaerts said the team will be in tonight and the next night and maybe more nights.

“I think that is pretty much the same in the regular season is that we go day by day, so we just really focus on tomorrow and winning tomorrow,” said Bogaerts. “I think we’ve had a lot of success during the season on winning the game on that specific day and not worrying ahead.

“So I think we’ll just go out and take the same approach. We know how important it is to win tomorrow, and we’re looking forward to that.”

His teammate, Matt Barnes, agreed.

“We expect to win every day we come to the ballpark,” said Barnes. “I think that’s one of the reasons why we were so good during the regular season is that we don’t get kind of caught up in anything other than the next game and worrying about that game and doing everything we can to win that one.”

Nathan Eovaldi, Luis Severino to bring the heat in Game 3 matchup

Jason Mastrodonato

The Yankees will turn to their ace, but the Red Sox could have the advantage heading into Game 3 of the American League Division Series at Yankee Stadium tonight.

Luis Severino against Nathan Eovaldi might sound like a dream scenario for the Bronx Bombers, as they return home with the series tied and the momentum in their favor.

But on paper, the numbers favor the Red Sox.

“I’ve faced both of them, and I think both of them have the same stuff,” said Red Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts. “It’s electric. They throw strikes. They’re both power-dominant pitchers, and it’s going to be a fun game.”

“Obviously, we know Severino had a good outing in the last game, but we know we’re a different team, and we’re looking forward to that challenge.”

Severino’s last outing against the Red Sox was a good one on Sept. 19, though the Sox were already in spring training mode. He entered with a 6.34 ERA over his previous 12 starts, then threw seven innings of one-run ball.

It seems to have given him some momentum, because he finished strong and looked near his best in the wild card game against the Oakland A’s last Wednesday, when he struck out seven over four-plus innings, allowing just two hits and walking four.

But walks are in part how the Red Sox have attacked Severino this year, by letting him get wild with his high-90s fastball, changeup and slider, laying off the junk and taking what he gives them for singles and doubles. They’ve hit just one homer off him in five starts this season, but until that meaningless game in September, they had scored 11 runs in 23 1/3 innings off him.

They got a little chase-happy against Masahiro Tanaka on Saturday in Game 2, and they paid the price. Tanaka was sharp, his signature splitter was nasty and the Sox swung at bad pitches most of the evening.

If they can avoid doing that vs. Severino tonight, Game 3 could be a different story.

“He’s a tough one, and we’ve just got to be ready,” manager Alex Cora said. “Stay in the zone. Look for a pitch up into the zone, and do damage with it.”

Game 3 will feature a lot of Old Country Hardball, as John Lackey used to call it.

Severino and Eovaldi both averaged 97 mph with their fastball this season.

“Seems like it’s a good matchup,” Cora said. “Obviously, in the playoffs, game planning is part of it, and I know they’re going to be ready, but we will, too. We trust his stuff. He can even get away with mistakes, you know what I mean? Like when you throw 100 mph and you place it in the right spot, even if they take a good swing, you can get missed hits. So that’s a key.”

Eovaldi has done it against the Yankees several times this year. He enters this game having allowed just one run in 16 innings against them since being traded from the Rays in July.

“It definitely gives me confidence just knowing that I’ve had recent success against them,” Eovaldi said yesterday. “I’m trying to do the same thing that I have been doing; stay aggressive and try to get that first-pitch strike out of the way. Trying to keep the ball in the ballpark. Try and get quick outs.”

Current Yankees hitters are batting just .223 with a .597 OPS and one career home run off Eovaldi in 109 plate appearances.

The Red Sox were originally planning on having Rick Porcello make the start, but he threw 15 pitches in Game 1 on Friday and the Sox wanted him to have a bit more rest.

Porcello is lined up to start Game 4 tomorrow, unless the Sox use him out of relief again.

“Obviously, we’re all in with this, so never know what can happen in Game 3,” Cora said. “Should be Nate 3, Rick 4. Rick pitched that inning on (Friday), so we felt like one more day is going to benefit him if we stay away from him.”

“Nate hasn’t pitched in a while. He’s rested, had a good week, and we’re going with him.”

Red Sox notebook: David Price could be needed bullpen boost

Jason Mastrodonato

As soon as tonight, David Price could be available out of the Red Sox bullpen. That’s a role in which he has actually thrived in the postseason.

With a 2.25 ERA in eight playoff relief outings, Price could give the Sox bullpen a much-needed lift. He said after his rough start on Saturday that he’d be ready to go as soon as tonight for Game 3 of the American League Division Series against the Yankees. The series is tied 1-1.

Manager Alex Cora said yesterday that he wasn’t sure if Price would be available tonight or tomorrow. He threw just 42 pitches in his disastrous performance in Game 2 on Saturday.

“I’ve got to talk to him,” Cora said. “He’s not here (yesterday). We’ll talk. Obviously, we need outs. . . . I know physically he’s fine and we know where we’re going. So most likely we’ll use him in some spot, yeah.”

Price might’ve been the Red Sox’ best pitcher in the 2017 playoffs, when he threw 62/3 scoreless innings over two relief outings against the Houston Astros. He never used his four-seamer, relying instead on two-seamers, cutters, curves and changeups.

He was sharp and powerful, averaging 95 mph on his two-seamer.

He averaged just 92.5 mph on his two-seamer on Saturday, when pitching coach Dana LeVangie said he thought Price might have been overthrowing to find some extra velocity.

In short stints, that could come easier.

But he’s allowed 11 homers to the Yankees this year in five outings, including the playoffs, and few could fault Cora if he was gun-shy about using Price with the short right-field porch in Yankee Stadium.

Cora remains firm in his belief that Price will be a factor for the Red Sox this postseason.

“He’s the first one to admit he’s disappointed,” Cora said. “One thing I love is the fact that he came out to the dugout. Regardless of the result, he was there for his teammates.

“I know we need him to win a World Series. He needs to pitch better, and he knows it. . . . I know he’ll be better. I know he’s going to contribute. Whenever we call his name, he has to be ready for it and perform.”

Patience is key

The bottom of the Red Sox order has not been productive through two games. Eduardo Nunez is 0-for-7, Sandy Leon is 0-for-5 and Jackie Bradley Jr. is 1-for-5.

Will Cora make any changes for Game 3?

“I knew that question was coming,” he said. “I’ll go to my experience from the World Series last year. That’s something I learned: Be patient. It’s such a small series that people get caught up on the whole small sample sizes. I always said that the difference between a .300 hitter in the postseason and a .200 hitter is 2-for-10 and 3-for-10 is one swing.

“So we go with the quality at-bats. We know we have to swing the bat better. I think (Saturday) we were too aggressive outside the zone, and we don’t do that often, credit to (Masahiro) Tanaka. We’ll see. We’ll think about it (last night). We’ll talk as a staff, and we’ll go from there.”

Hoping for best

Mitch Moreland should be able to stay on the playoff roster, despite suffering some soreness in his hamstring and being removed early from Game 2. He received “aggressive treatment” yesterday and the Sox are hopeful he can play tonight. Both he and Steve Pearce are 1-for-3 in this series. ...

Mookie Betts is just 1-for-7 so far this series and is 9-for-40 (.225) without any home runs in his postseason career. ...

In the history of five-game series that begin 1-1 in the current home/road format, the home team for Game 3 has gone on to take the series 21 out of 33 times (64 percent), according to MLB.com.

*** *The Providence Journal***

It’s time for Red Sox to show their mettle

Kevin McNamara

We are only two games into the postseason for one of the winningest teams in recent baseball history and already the Red Sox’ playoff plans are on shaky ground.

How can this be?

That’s one of many questions Boston Red Sox fans are asking themselves as the team’s American League Division Series shifts to Yankee Stadium for Game 3 on Monday night. The Yanks powered their way to a split of the opening two games at Fenway Park and in the process cut deeply into manager Alex Cora’s fragile pitching staff. They return to the Bronx with no plans to fly back to Logan Airport this season.

Due to an unexpected relief appearance in Game 1, Rick Porcello will move back to start Game 4 and the Sox will send Nathan Eovaldi to the hill in Game 3. This isn’t a big deal since the Sox need to win two more games, but it does speak to the team’s unsettled state. The Porcello move helped Boston’s shaky bullpen survive Game 1, but nothing could prevent a collapse in a 6-2 loss in Game 2. Facing the biggest start of his career, \$30-million man David Price fell flat. He lasted just 1 2/3 innings, five outs and 42 pitches before leaving to a chorus of boos from the home crowd. Price gave up two home runs, walked two and fell to an unfathomable 0-9 as a postseason starter.

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

Price may not see another chance this October. The Game 2 defeat wiped out the Red Sox hard-earned 108-win regular season and shifted the home-field advantage in this series back to the Yankees. Those are the same Yanks who won a wildcard game against Oakland at home and didn’t lose a playoff game (5-0) in the Bronx in 2017.

Besides flipping a coin between Eovaldi and Porcello, Cora has other decisions to make. His team managed as many strikeouts as hits (13) in the opening two games and the bottom of the order seems filled with overmatched hitters. He’s gone with Eduardo Nunez (0-for-7) at third base over power-hitting Rafael Devers due to a perceived defensive edge, but Nunez looked more like Butch Hobson than Brooks Robinson on several ground ball plays in Game 2.

The Red Sox need the real Mookie Betts (1-for-7) to show up, Ian Kinsler (8 at-bats, 5 strikeouts) to wake up and everyone else help wear down New York starter Luis Severino. Cora also needs to determine what to do with Price. The manager's decision to replace his second-best starter for Joe Kelly in the second inning of a monstrous playoff game carries waves of issues that could last well into the offseason and even further.

Now that this humiliating effort is tucked into his backpack, Price certainly can't start another game in this series as Sale will no doubt get the ball if there is a Game 5. So is he a short reliever against lefties or a long reliever if the Sox fall behind early in Games 3 or 4? Does he become the team's 25th man, permanently banished to the end of the bench?

If the Sox somehow squirm out of this spot and advance to the ALCS, Price will certainly merit a start again. But after facing just 10 batters on Saturday night, how short will Cora's leash be long-term against a lineup like the Houston Astros or Cleveland Indians?

That's a question that the Red Sox would love to deal with. Instead, they'll look to solve a lot of their issues by hanging six or seven runs on Yankee pitching in Games 3 and 4. But this series isn't going to come down to that. It's now all about keeping the Yankee bats in check, finding a way to keep the swings of Aaron Judge, Gary Sanchez, Luke Voit and Giancarlo Stanton in the park.

It won't be easy, not with the new Yankee Stadium's short porches awaiting soft fly balls. Speaking of soft, we're about to find out just how tough this Red Sox team is. If they can venture into the belly of the beast and swat down the Yanks and their loud-mouthed fans, we'll be impressed.

If they go down meekly the next two nights, we'll see their true colors and everyone will know that their record-setting regular season meant nothing.

Nathan Eovaldi gets the call for Game 3

Bill Koch

NEW YORK — Much to the consternation of some, the Red Sox eschewed the perceived need for bullpen help and opted to add starting pitching ahead of the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline.

The ultimate wisdom of that decision is in the process of being tested here in October. Boston's relievers have staggered their way through the first two games of the American League Division Series against the Yankees, but the pitcher they acquired will take the ball for Monday's pivotal Game 3.

The Red Sox are one dominant Nathan Eovaldi performance away from reclaiming home-field advantage in a series currently tied at 1-1. The right-hander also has a chance to validate the decision made by Boston president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski to pass on a reliever such as Zach Britton (Yankees), Ryan Pressly (Astros) or Brad Hand (Indians).

"This is my first postseason start," Eovaldi said. "I'm excited. This is what we play for coming out of spring training."

Eovaldi opened the season with Tampa Bay coming off the second Tommy John surgery of his career. The Red Sox would be thrilled if they get what Eovaldi provided in four of his last five starts with the Rays, when he completed at least six innings and allowed two earned runs or less each time. He fired six scoreless frames against Washington on June 26 and seven scoreless innings against the Mets on July 8, flashing the type of dominant raw stuff that convinced Boston to part with Triple-A All-Star Jalen Beeks.

"We trust his stuff," Boston manager Alex Cora said. "He can even get away with mistakes. When you throw 100 (mph) and you place it in the right spot — even if they take a good swing — you can get mis-hits."

Eovaldi's one poor start in that closing span with Tampa Bay was a doozy — nine hits and eight earned runs allowed in just 2 2/3 innings against Minnesota on July 13, an 11-8 loss. Eovaldi has allowed at least seven hits in four of his 11 starts with Boston, and he's failed to record an out in the sixth inning seven times.

But none of those struggles have come against the Yankees, and that's why Eovaldi earned the nod in the rotation ahead of left-hander Eduardo Rodriguez. Eovaldi, who started a combined 48 games for the Yankees in 2015 and 2016, has dominated his old teammates to the tune of no earned runs allowed in 16 innings with the Red Sox. Eovaldi's six scoreless frames in his last start here came prior to his bullpen blowing the lead in a 3-2 Boston loss on Sept. 18.

"It definitely gives me confidence just knowing that I've had recent success against them," Eovaldi said. "I'm trying to do the same thing that I've been doing — stay aggressive and try to get that first-pitch strike out of the way."

Who follows Eovaldi in the late innings, if necessary, is anybody's best guess. David Price could join the bullpen after his early flameout in Game 2, since the left-hander lasted a mere 10 batters in a 6-2 loss. Rick Porcello is scheduled to start Game 4 on Tuesday and Chris Sale would be in line to pitch a Game 5, if necessary, at Fenway Park on Thursday.

"We expect to go out there and win tomorrow and the next day," Red Sox reliever Matt Barnes said. "I think that's one of the reasons why we were so good during the regular season. We don't get caught up in anything other than the next game, worrying about that game and doing everything we can to win that one."

Barnes, Ryan Brasier and Craig Kimbrel are the likely options should Boston hold the lead beyond Eovaldi's start. Joe Kelly also delivered 2 1/3 dominant innings behind Price on Saturday, throwing 20 of his 25 pitches for strikes. Porcello could be the only Red Sox pitcher unavailable, as Boston will be loathe to enter a Game 4 with its season on the line in a ballpark where it posted just a 3-6 mark in nine games this season.

"Where I was at the start of the season with the Rays, we had good things going over there," Eovaldi said. "But with the Red Sox in the division, they were running away with it. To get traded over here, I'm super excited to be in this situation."

Red Sox Journal: Cora considering lineup changes for Game 3

Bill Koch

NEW YORK — The Red Sox offense has managed just four runs in its last 16 innings, but that doesn't mean manager Alex Cora is about to usher in sweeping lineup changes.

Boston enjoyed an off day in the city on Sunday, with only a select few players reporting to Yankee Stadium to go through optional workouts on their own or receive treatment. Cora was considering his roster prior to Monday night's Game 3 in the American League Division Series, but he made no hard and fast guarantees during his afternoon meeting with the media about shuffling personnel.

"We know we have to swing the bat better," Cora said. "I think (Saturday) we were too aggressive outside the zone, and we don't do that too often. Credit to (Yankees starter Masahiro) Tanaka."

The Red Sox managed just five hits in a 6-2 defeat in Game 2, a stark contrast to the three home runs cracked by New York's sluggers. Gary Sanchez blasted a titanic three-run shot in the top of the seventh to seal the victory and Boston surrendered the home-field advantage. The Red Sox have played their final game of 2018 at Fenway Park if they can't produce at least a split in two games here.

"Tough loss yesterday," said shortstop Xander Bogaerts, who drove a solo home run to center field in the fourth. "It's a good day to relax. We have an important game tomorrow."

Will Bogaerts be surrounded by the same cast in the infield? Mitch Moreland (right hamstring) left Saturday's game late and was still being evaluated by Boston's medical staff the following afternoon. Eduardo Nunez, Ian Kinsler and Sandy Leon are all under pressure to keep their spots due to a mix of underperformance and capable players sitting behind them.

"I'll go to experience from the World Series last year," said Cora, who helped Houston win a championship as its bench coach. "That's something I learned — be patient. It's such a small sample size and people get caught up."

Nunez is 0-for-7 in two games and has been shaky defensively at third base, negating his perceived advantage in the field over Rafael Devers. Kinsler has struck out a team-high five times in eight at-bats, making his only offensive contribution thanks to an RBI double late in Game 2. Leon's 5-for-79 finish to the regular season has carried into the playoffs, as the catcher is hitless in five at-bats.

"We felt good with that lineup (on Saturday)," Cora said. "Tomorrow is (Luis) Severino. We'll take a look at the numbers and we'll go from there."

Severino, New York's Game 3 starter, won't make changes any easier for Cora based on those numbers. Devers (0-for-12, five strikeouts), Brock Holt (1-for-15, six strikeouts) and the combination of Christian Vazquez and Blake Swihart (2-for-10, four strikeouts) don't exactly dominate against the right-hander. Steve Pearce (2-for-7, double, home run) is at least a serviceable alternative to Moreland.

"The postseason is good pitching and timely hits," Bogaerts said. "All of that is important, but if you can try to find a way to score first and keep our same approach that we've had the whole season, we should be fine."

Standing his ground

Boston relief pitcher Ryan Brasier could be one of the prime villains over two nights here thanks to his showdown with Sanchez on Saturday.

The right-hander was ahead in the count while facing Sanchez in the fifth inning of Game 2. Sanchez's request for a timeout was granted by plate umpire Dan Bellino, but Brasier was on the rubber and ready to deliver his next pitch. He was captured by television cameras ordering Sanchez back into the batter's box in no uncertain terms and finished the at-bat by blowing Sanchez away with a fastball upstairs.

"Heat of the moment thing, adrenaline was going, the crowd was up and I was ready to go," Brasier said. "That's it. It was one of those things where it was a big moment and I was ready to throw the pitch."

Brasier struck out the side while appearing for the second straight night. He retired just one of the three batters he faced on Friday, a 5-4 Red Sox win in Game 1.

No excuses

It was Eduardo Rodriguez who served up Sanchez's 479-foot bomb to Lansdowne Street, but something he did earlier in the inning also drew criticism.

Aaron Judge chopped a grounder to the right side and Rodriguez was slow off the mound to cover first base. Boston's infield was shifted to the left side expecting Judge to pull and Moreland was left alone to field the ball going to his right. Moreland's flip toward Rodriguez was far too late, and Judge was safe. He eventually scored on the Sanchez homer.

"I guess (Rodriguez) told you guys he slipped or something like that," Cora said. "I'm like, 'Man, if you don't break right away, just be accountable. That's all we ask.' And he's like, 'Yeah, my fault. I just didn't break.'"

“That’s it. I get it. Next time just bust your [butt] to first base. That’s all you’ve got to do.”

*** *MassLive.com***

David Price, ALDS reliever? Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora open to idea

Chris Cotillo

NEW YORK -- David Price's meltdown in Game 2 of the ALDS won't stop the Red Sox from using him again against the Yankees.

Manager Alex Cora said Sunday that the team is planning on using Price again in the de facto best-of-three series.

"I know physically he's fine and we know where we're going," Cora said. "So most likely we'll use him in some spot, yeah."

Price allowed three earned runs (including two homers) in 1.2 innings to start Boston's 6-2 loss Saturday night. He still has never won a playoff start, with his teams going 0-10 in games he has started in October.

Cora noticed that Price did not look like himself in his final two starts of the regular season against the Yankees and Orioles.

"We'll talk," Cora said. "Obviously, we need outs. Actually, we were just talking about him, me and (pitching coach Dana LeVangie), a few things that we noticed, actually the last few weeks, that he's not doing the way he did in those 11 outings or whatever it was. Unless we recognize something, we'll talk about it."

Cora plans on calling Price tonight to see how he feels heading into Game 3 at Yankee Stadium. Having only thrown 42 pitches in Game 2, Price could be utilized as a reliever if he feels up to it Monday.

Cora admitted Price's performance Saturday was a tough one for the lefty to handle.

"He's the first one to admit he's disappointed," Cora said. "One thing I love is the fact that he came out to the dugout. Regardless of the result, he was there for his teammates. I didn't get caught up in the whole thing. I know we need him to win a World Series. He needs to pitch better, and he knows it."

"I know he'll be better," Cora said. "I know he's going to contribute. Whenever we call his name, he has to be ready for it and perform."

Boston Red Sox ALDS Game 3 lineup shakeup? Alex Cora learned 'be patient' during Astros' 2017 World Series run

Christopher Smith

NEW YORK -- Red Sox third baseman Eduardo Nunez is 0-for-7 with a walk and two strikeouts in the ALDS.

Second baseman Ian Kinsler is 2-for-8 with five strikeouts in the first two games. He slashed .190/.244/.266/.510 in 21 games during September.

Will the Red Sox shake up the lineup for Game 3? Will Red Sox manager Alex Cora start Rafael Devers at third base and Brock Holt at second base?

It doesn't sound like it.

The Red Sox and Yankees play Game 3 here at Yankee Stadium on Monday. The series is tied 1-1.

"I knew that question was coming," Cora said Sunday. "I'll go to experience from the World Series last year. That's something I learned: be patient. It's such a small series that people get caught up on the whole small sample sizes. I always said that the difference between a .300 hitter in the postseason and a .200 hitter is 2 for 10 and 3 for 10 is one swing.

"So we go with the quality at-bats," Cora added. "We know we have to swing the bat better. I think yesterday we were too aggressive outside the zone, and we don't do that often, credit to (Masahiro) Tanaka. We'll see. We'll think about it tonight. We'll talk as a staff, and we'll go from there."

Devers is 0-for-12 with five strikeouts and one walk vs. Yankees Game 3 starter Luis Severino. Holt is 1-for-15 with six strikeouts.

Kinsler is 3-for-18 with a double, homer, RBI, two walks and two strikes vs. Severino. Nunez is 5-for-18 with two doubles, RBI and two strikeouts.

Cora was asked if he's prioritizing defense over offense when putting together his postseason lineups.

"Yesterday, we talk about defense at first base, but also at the same time with Tanaka the splits weren't that -- actually, righties are better than lefties against him," Cora replied. "It was one of those that we felt that we were good with that lineup yesterday. Tomorrow is Severino. We'll take a look at the numbers, and we'll go from there."

Mitch Moreland injury: Boston Red Sox first baseman getting treatment before ALDS Game 3

Chris Cotillo

NEW YORK -- Red Sox first baseman Mitch Moreland is being treated at Yankee Stadium on Monday after tweaking his right hamstring during Game 2 of the ALDS Saturday night.

"He's okay," manager Alex Cora said. "He's getting treatment, aggressive treatment. We'll know a little bit more after all his rounds of whatever, steam and all that stuff he goes on, and then we'll talk to (athletic trainer Brad Pearson) and go from there."

Moreland felt some tightness in his hamstring rounding third while scoring on an Ian Kinsler double in the seventh inning Saturday and was replaced in the field by Steve Pearce. He said after the game that the hamstring was a new issue, not something that had been lingering before the game.

Cora said that he expects Moreland to remain on the ALDS roster and play throughout the rest of the series. He'd be likely to make a start Monday against righty Luis Severino.

Boston Red Sox ALDS: Nathan Eovaldi will start Game 3 vs. Yankees

Chris Cotillo

NEW YORK -- Nathan Eovaldi will start Game 3 of the ALDS at Yankee Stadium on Monday, the team announced Sunday.

Eovaldi was originally slated to start Game 4 but was moved up a day after Rick Porcello made a relief appearance in Game 1. Porcello will now be the likely Game 4 starter for Boston on Tuesday night.

Eovaldi edged out Eduardo Rodriguez for a postseason rotation spot, largely due to his strong performance against the Yankees since joining the Red Sox in late July. He has made three starts against New York since July 25, allowing zero earned runs on six hits in 16 innings.

Eovaldi believes those starts have him ready to face New York on a larger stage.

"Just the fact that we faced the Yankees so many times, if you're not prepared for them now, you're in trouble," Eovaldi said. "I feel like I'm prepared for them."

Monday's outing will be Eovaldi's first career postseason start. He pitched for the Yankees in 2015 and 2016.

*** *RedSox.com***

Red Sox will look to Price for relief vs. Yankees

Ian Browne

NEW YORK -- The Red Sox have not lost confidence in David Price. A day after the lefty got shelled in his loss in Game 2 of the American League Division Series against the Yankees on Saturday night, Boston manager Alex Cora said he plans on using Price in relief, though he didn't specify which game or in what type of situation.

"Obviously we need outs. Actually, we were just talking about him, me and [pitching coach] Dana [LeVangie], and there were a few things that we noticed, actually the last few weeks, that he's not doing the way he did in those 11 outings or whatever it was," Cora said. "I know physically he's fine, and we know where we're going. So most likely we'll use him in some spot, yeah."

In fact, Cora didn't rule out Price pitching as early as tonight's Game 3 if the Red Sox are in a bind. Price threw just 42 pitches and lasted only 1 2/3 innings in Game 2 on Saturday night, yielding mammoth homers to Aaron Judge and Gary Sanchez, as well as an RBI rocket off the Green Monster by Didi Gregorius.

"We'll talk to him," Cora said. "Actually, I'll call him tonight, see how he feels. If it's [tonight], it's [tonight]. If it's Game 4, it's Game 4."

It would be a highly intriguing storyline to see Price pitch in Yankee Stadium, where he is 0-6 with a 9.79 ERA while allowing 13 home runs in 30 1/3 innings since joining the Red Sox. While Price's failures as a starter in the postseason have been well-chronicled (0-9, 6.03 ERA), he's been much better as a reliever, going 2-0 with a 2.35 ERA in eight appearances.

Moreland a definite maybe for Game 3

First baseman Mitch Moreland, who tweaked his right hamstring running the bases and had to be removed from Game 2, spent Sunday receiving "aggressive treatment," according to Cora.

There's no word yet if Moreland will be able to answer the bell for Game 3.

"We'll know a little bit more after all his rounds of whatever, ice and stim and all that stuff he goes on, and then we'll talk to Brad and go from there," Cora said.

If Moreland can't start, Cora could go with Steve Pearce or Brock Holt at first base.

Not rattled

Though this is the first time the 108-win Red Sox have faced true adversity all season, needing to win one of these two games in New York to avoid elimination, there was a business-as-usual feel to the team on Sunday.

"The only aspect I think that is pretty much the same in the regular season is that we go day by day," shortstop Xander Bogaerts said. "So we just really focus on tomorrow and winning tomorrow. I think we've had a lot of success during the season on winning the game on that specific day and not thinking ahead. So I think we'll just go out and take the same approach. We know how important it is to win [tonight], and we're looking forward to that."

Cora has set the even-keeled tone for his team all season. It has been successful getting the team to this point, so the Red Sox won't waver.

"Coming into the playoffs, we knew we had to win series," Cora said. "I think we did an outstanding job throughout the season just staying in the moment. I think at one point in the season, we were two games back. I think it was in Minnesota. Nothing changes. Like today, regular off-day. Some guys showed up. They took some hacks. They got treatment, they'll have a good dinner in New York City, and come [tonight] and play the way we can play."

Cora to E-Rod: 'Be accountable'

In the top of the seventh inning of the Game 2 loss, Judge hit a grounder to the right side that Moreland fielded at first base. The only problem was that pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez didn't get to first base in time, and Judge was safe. Later in the inning, Sanchez hammered his second homer of the night, a three-run shot that put the game away.

"I just talked to him and told him just be accountable. That's it," Cora said. "I guess he told you guys he slipped or something like that. I'm like, 'Man, if you don't break right away, just be accountable. That's all we ask.' And he's like, 'Yeah, my fault. I just didn't break.' That's it. Hey, I get it. Next time just bust [it] to first base. That's all you've got to do."

"The thing is, I look at the play, and it's not guaranteed he's going to be out, but we probably have a chance. And where we're at right now at this stage, we can't take plays off. We didn't do that the whole season. It just happened yesterday. But I talked to him, and we're on the same page. Hopefully, the next ground ball to first, he goes to first and we get him."

Red Sox tab Eovaldi for Game 3 vs. Yanks

Ian Browne

NEW YORK -- Rookie manager Alex Cora is already sensing how quickly plans can change in the postseason. With that in mind, the Red Sox will start Nathan Eovaldi for the pivotal Game 3 of the American League Division Series at Yankee Stadium tonight, with New York and Boston even at one game apiece in the best-of-five series.

Originally, 17-game winner Rick Porcello was supposed to draw the Game 3 nod. But Porcello was needed for the first two outs of the eighth inning of a chaotic 5-4 win in Game 1, and Cora felt it made more sense to hold his sinkerballer until Game 4.

"Rick pitched that inning on Friday, so we felt like one more day is going to benefit him if we stay away from him," said Cora. "Nate hasn't pitched in a while. He's rested, had a good week, and we're going with him."

That might not be a bad thing. Eovaldi has been lights-out against the Yankees since joining the Red Sox in July, firing 16 scoreless innings against their high-powered offense.

"Yeah, it definitely gives me confidence just knowing that I've had recent success against them," Eovaldi said. "I'm trying to do the same thing that I have been doing; stay aggressive and try to get that first-pitch strike out of the way."

Getting 27 outs against the Yankees, particularly when they are at home, is a daunting task. The Red Sox will lean on Eovaldi to get the first 15 to 18 outs, and they'll hope that the bullpen can take it home from there.

The key to this mission will be to keep the Yankees in the ballpark. But that's easier said than done against a team that set a record for homers in a season and bashed three titanic big flies at Fenway in Game 2.

"Trying to keep the ball in the ballpark. Try and get quick outs," said Eovaldi. "Try not to let the crowd get too crazy and get behind them and get them going. Again, I feel like the key to that is working ahead and staying ahead and not really giving them the free bases and little things like that."

With Eovaldi pitching and the Yankees countering with Luis Severino, the heat will be on for Game 3. Eovaldi and Severino were the two hardest-throwing pitchers in the game this season.

Severino's average four-seam fastball velocity this season was 97.6 mph, the highest among regular starters, and Eovaldi ranked second at 97.1 mph. Eovaldi threw 10 pitches at 100-plus mph, the most among regular starters, while Severino trailed him by one, with nine pitches thrown at 100-plus mph.

"We know he's going to be throwing hard, and he's going to mix it up. He's had success against them," Cora said. "Seems like it's a good matchup. Obviously, in the playoffs, game-planning is part of it, and I know they're going to be ready, but we will, too. We trust his stuff. He can even get away with mistakes, you know what I mean? Like when you throw 100 and you place it in the right spot, even if they take a good swing, you can get missed hits. So that's a key."

Who will get the rest of the outs?

While the Red Sox hope that Eovaldi can be the type of tone-setter that David Price wasn't in Game 2, they are still going to need plenty of help from a bullpen that has lacked consistency. In a perfect world, they will hand the ball straight from Eovaldi to Matt Barnes, and then Barnes can hand it to elite closer Craig Kimbrel.

Barnes got Giancarlo Stanton on a wicked curve to strike him out with the bases loaded and nobody out in the seventh inning of Game 1. The righty was Boston's leader in strikeouts per nine innings this season, at 14.01. That's an impressive distinction on a staff that also includes Chris Sale (13.5) and Kimbrel (13.86).

"By no means is it going to be easy to win ballgames here, but we have the absolute confidence that we can do that," Barnes said. "If we can go out and control everything we can and play the way that we know we're capable of, I think everybody in that locker room is confident that we're going to win."

Neither Barnes nor Kimbrel pitched in Game 2, so both should be plenty rested for tonight. Cora said Saturday that Kimbrel is a "full go" for the eighth inning in this series.

What if Plan A doesn't work?

So what happens if Eovaldi doesn't last long enough for a straight handoff to Barnes and Kimbrel?

That's where it gets interesting. Given the importance of this game -- the Red Sox need a split in New York to stay alive -- Cora will pull out all the stops. This could include deploying Price -- who threw just 42 pitches in Game 2 -- in a relief role.

Do you want the good news first or the bad news? We'll give you the good news. Price has actually been successful in the postseason as a reliever throughout his career, going 2-0 with a 2.35 ERA in eight outings.

Now, the bad news: Price has been a disaster at Yankee Stadium in the three years he's been with Boston. From May 7, 2016 through Sept. 19, 2018, Price pitched six times at Yankee Stadium. In those games, he was 0-6 with a 9.79 ERA while allowing 13 home runs in 30 1/3 innings. In other words, Cora would probably like to stay away from Price until Game 5 if he can, particularly in high-leverage situations.

Though Porcello is penciled in for Tuesday's Game 4, don't rule the righty out from pitching out of the 'pen in Game 3. Porcello, like Eovaldi, has fared well against New York this season, going 2-0 with a 2.25 ERA over 24 innings.

If Porcello is thrust into action in Game 3, the Red Sox would have to start Price (gulp) or Eduardo Rodriguez in Game 4. Or maybe they would just have to go with a bullpen game. If Cora has a chance to win Game 3, he will do everything in his power to do it.

Who else can Cora trust?

Joe Kelly certainly gained some of his confidence back by firing 2 1/3 scoreless innings in Game 2. Kelly tends to go on long streaks -- both good and bad. Perhaps he's ready to get hot again. In 30 games from April 1 through June 14, Kelly had a 1.47 ERA.

Ryan Brasier is another important arm for Cora. Not even on the 40-man roster when the season started, as he pitched in Japan last year, Brasier had a 1.60 ERA in 34 regular-season games. He had a hiccup in Game 1, allowing two of Sale's inherited runs to score. But Brasier not only bounced back in Game 2, striking out the side in one inning, but he also shouted at Gary Sanchez to get back in the batter's box. The Red Sox welcome that kind of fire.

Any edge the Red Sox can muster is necessary against a loaded Yankees lineup.

"They all concern me," Cora said of the Yankees' offense. "They're all good. You make a mistake on them - the thing is, it's not going to be a single. They hit the ball out of the ballpark. So they're all good."

How Sox could adjust lineup for Game 3

Anthony DiComo

NEW YORK -- Alex Cora understands better than most what elite offenses can do. As Houston's bench coach last season, Cora oversaw a club that led the Majors in runs, batting average and OPS, among other offensive categories. He watched that same team score just one run in World Series Game 1, then break out for seven in Game 2 with an identical lineup. Cora watched the Astros again score one run in a Game 6 loss, then rebound for five in Game 7 with the exact same personnel.

Now managing a Red Sox team that led the Majors in runs, batting average and OPS in the regular season, Cora is wary of tinkering too much with his lineup following a 6-2 loss to the Yankees in American League Division Series Game 2 on Saturday night.

"That's something I learned -- be patient," Cora said. "It's such a small series that people get caught up on the whole small-sample sizes. I always said that the difference between a .300 hitter in the postseason and a .200 hitter is 2-for-10 and 3-for-10. It's one swing."

That does not, however, mean Cora will stand by idly as the best-of-five series shifts to Yankee Stadium for Game 3 tonight with the two teams tied, 1-1. Given Boston's unique blend of personnel, it is able to mix things up at various positions around the diamond. Most notably, the Red Sox may consider changes at the following positions:

First base

This depends mostly on Mitch Moreland's health. Moreland, who departed Game 2 after seven innings with a sore right hamstring, received "aggressive treatment" Sunday on his leg. Although Moreland is not at risk of being subbed off the roster, according to Cora, he could sit out Game 3. If that happens, the Red Sox have two options to replace him.

Steve Pearce, Moreland's platoon mate at first base, is 2-for-7 with one home run in his career off Yankees Game 3 starter Luis Severino. While the right-handed Pearce is more effective against left-handed pitching, and offers Boston a valuable power bat off the bench, he is still a candidate to start.

Another possibility is Brock Holt, who has yet to appear in the ALDS despite batting .415 with four home runs, three doubles and a 1.259 OPS over his last 14 regular-season games. Just 1-for-15 lifetime against Severino, Holt posted a .788 OPS this season against right-handed pitching.

Second base

Ian Kinsler provided one of Boston's two Game 2 runs with a seventh-inning RBI double, but he also has five strikeouts and hit into a double play in eight ALDS at-bats. In his past 11 games including the regular season, Kinsler is hitting .136. Since returning from a left hamstring injury Aug. 17, he is slashing .230/.280/.295 with one home run.

"I'm just trying to help the team," Kinsler said. "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."

If Holt is needed elsewhere on the diamond, the Red Sox could give Kinsler another crack in Game 3. Or they could replace him with Holt, looking for a spark from the latter half of their lineup. So far in the ALDS, the bottom-four grouping of Eduardo Nunez, Kinsler, Sandy Leon and Jackie Bradley Jr. is 3-for-26.

Third base

Before Game 2, Cora used defense as justification for playing Nunez over Rafael Devers, whose 21 homers ranked fourth on the Red Sox. But Nunez committed a fielding error later that night, is 0-for-7 with a walk in the series and has not homered in more than a month.

Alternative options are Holt and Devers, and the latter is 5-for-18 lifetime off Severino.

Catcher

Following Boston's Game 1 victory, several Red Sox went out of their way to praise Leon, a strong game-caller who successfully blocked ball after ball in the dirt. Yet, Christian Vazquez is an excellent defender as well. While neither catcher enjoyed a strong offensive regular season, Vazquez has had a bit more success (2-for-8) than Leon (2-for-16) against Severino.

Cora's decision to start Nathan Eovaldi over Rick Porcello in Game 3 makes a change at catcher even more likely. Unlike Porcello, who threw almost exclusively to Leon this season, Eovaldi paired with Vasquez in each of his last three regular-season starts -- two of those against the Yankees.

"We'll talk about it tonight," Cora said Sunday. "We'll see. We've got to score runs, too, and that's something that we've been talking about for a while. It's not on Sandy only. Everybody has to get going. We'll talk about it and make a decision."

*** *WEEI.com***

Like it or not, you might be seeing David Price sooner rather than later

Rob Bradford

NEW YORK -- There could be three more games left in this American League Division Series. And if there is, count on David Price being involved in at least one them. As a starter? Probably not. But somewhere, somehow.

"We'll talk to him," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora during his Sunday media availability at Yankee Stadium when asked about Prie. "Actually, call him tonight, see how he feels. If it's tomorrow, it's tomorrow. If it's Game 4, it's Game 4."

It's easy to suggest the Red Sox would never possibly throw Price back out against the Yankees, especially if the teams were playing in the Bronx. We know the history of the pitcher against the team (not good). And the image of that 1 2/3 innings Saturday (really bad) is still fresh in our minds.

But it isn't difficult to see how the Red Sox might need Price.

If there is a pocket in the lineup that doesn't involve Gary Sanchez, this could absolutely be a scenario. Of course, such a maneuver would be unbelievably uncomfortable. But if there is faith left when it comes to Price it emanates from Cora's clubhouse.

"I've got to talk to him," Cora said. "He's not here today. We'll talk. Obviously, we need outs. Actually, we were just talking about him, me and Dana (LeVangie), a few things that we noticed, actually the last few weeks, that he's not doing the way he did in those 11 outings or whatever it was. Unless we recognize something, we'll talk about it. I know physically he's fine and we know where we're going. So most likely we'll use him in some spot, yeah."

It's not easy finding a good matchup for Price against the Yankees. Up and down, they own the lefty. Still, without the certainty the Red Sox thought they might have him Steven Wright and/or Eduardo Rodriguez we might see some dice-rolling. Perhaps that involves bringing Chris Sale out the bullpen for a spell, or maybe it's another go-round with Price.

"I know he'll be better. I know he's going to contribute," Cora said. "Whenever we call his name, he has to be ready for it and perform."

The uncomfortable role of Pedro Martinez

Rob Bradford

NEW YORK -- Pedro Martinez was, and is, great.

He was a once-in-a-lifetime experience on the mound, is a joy to listen to any time he opens his mouth and is about as good an ambassador to the game of baseball as there is.

But Pedro's current existence is uncomfortable. Maybe not for all, but for some. At least it should be.

Let's start with what we're about to witness Monday night. Luis Severino. While being paid by the Red Sox as a special assistant to the president of baseball operations Martinez basically remade the pitcher who may be standing in the way of his organization advancing past the American League Division Series. It has been well-known that the Yankees' Game 3 starter credits the former Red Sox great for teaching him how to be an ace.

For some context, this would be like Jason Varitek -- who carries the same title as Martinez -- improving Gary Sanchez's ability to block balls. Doesn't feel quite right, does it?

To Pedro's credit, he doesn't shy away from the topic. He is very secure in what he did, how he did it and when he did it when it comes to Severino.

This is how he explained it when appearing on WEEI in February:

"To me, no and I'm going to say this in a personal way: I feel like once I retired, my duty with society, with baseball, the best gift I can actually supply for baseball is my knowledge, my experience, my own way of doing things easier for all the players. I think it's our duty, believe it or not. I don't know if many people would be brave enough to express this, but our duty is not to really to keep it within and within the organization either, it's to pass it along.

"We all talk in life in all sorts of life, we talk about passing along the good things, passing along the good experience, passing along the hugs and the good feel for everything that you do, passing along the support. So for me, I feel like anybody, and it doesn't have to be Severino. Like this year, I'm going to be point blank open. I had Severino, I had [Mets pitcher Hansel] Robles, I had [Jeury's] Familia, I had like six or seven of them that I actually work with, including another kid [Carlos] Carrasco from Cleveland. I stopped Cleveland in 1999 in the postseason but who will ever figure out that I will be helping one of the pitching stuff in Cleveland?"

"You know, I get all kinds of players coming over asking. Ervin Santana, who actually got to revive his career at the end, Fernando Rodney, those are guys that I interact with. Anything that I can do. But I think, our duty as retired players and players that have been through the game and had some success in the game is to pass along what we learned, how we did it, how it worked for us, just in case it works for them. And Severino is one special guy, because Severino ever since he signed, the picture he had was my baseball card hanging on his locker all over. The video he would look at on his phone was my video, every single day. I was his idol because he was young and he got to see me actually in my prime and I was the one he fell in love with. He didn't know he was going to sign with the Yankees when he was watching me. So he fell in love before he signed with the Yankees and as he became a Yankee, he wanted to do things like me. As a matter of fact, it must be great to be good because the little things that I relayed to Severino, who deserved all the credit, it seems like are falling to me but in reality, it's Severino doing it and adjusting to little things I thought I could correct."

When asked about the relationship Sunday, Severino struck the same tone.

"It's not about he's in Boston, and I'm a Yankee. In the offseason, we're humans," he said Sunday. "He's a great pitcher. He was a great pitcher, Hall of Fame. So when somebody like that offers to help you, you don't say no to those kinds of people."

OK. Fair enough. But that doesn't make it any less uneasy. And it's not only the Severino thing that seems a bit off in this relationship with the Red Sox.

Martinez has done a lot in terms of helping pitchers in this organization. He is respected and valued. So much so that all it takes for him to put a uniform back on and get an hour-long, one-on-one audience with Red Sox starter just two days before the pitcher's start is a phone call. Even though such a middle-of-the-season dynamic seems a bit odd -- as was the case when Pedro encouraged Nathan Eovaldi to land on his toe instead of his heels -- it is his team. That's what at least part of the paycheck is for.

But then comes along an appearance on national television where Martinez is insinuating Chris Sale's return was pushed along by "medicine" (which most would surmise meant cortisone). Or the proclamation that he has knowledge that Severino was pitching hurt in the second half because the Yankees' pitcher told him so.

"I didn't know until I finally spoke to Severino that Severino wasn't totally healthy, and they could not afford to stop him from pitching," Pedro said on TBS. The pitcher's response? "I don't know where he got that, but I didn't say nothing about I was hurt," the Yankees' pitcher said. "If you hear that from Yankees staff or something like that, maybe you can believe it, but I don't know where you get that from. Like I always say, I care about my arm and being healthy. So I'm not going to go out there and compete if I'm not healthy."

There are other bits of uneasiness.

Martinez' analysis very public analysis of his own team and its own players is a bit weird. Something we were reminded of after David Price's Saturday start.

This isn't a unique scenario in some sense.

Alex Rodriguez analyzes games on ESPN while serving as Brian Cashman's special adviser. Roger Clemens does it for Houston's Jeff Luhnow. But it's hard to imagine a world where Rodriguez's tutelage altered the career path of Xander Bogaerts or dropped private injury information passed along by a Red Sox player.

It is what it is. I want to continue to enjoy Martinez the baseball television analyst. I applaud the spirit of wanting to help young players.

But when Severino is setting down the Red Sox Monday night with an arsenal fine-tuned by Pedro, well, it's just a little weird.

Nathan Eovaldi will be Red Sox' Game 3 starter

Rob Bradford

NEW YORK -- The Red Sox announced Sunday that Nathan Eovaldi will be bumped up a day and get the start in Game 3 of the American League Division Series against the Yankees Monday night.

The original plan was for Rick Porcello to make the Yankee Stadium start but plans changed when Porcello was called into action out of the bullpen in Game 1. Eovaldi said after Game 2 he was still planning on pitching in a Game 4, but the Red Sox' changed course after meeting following their loss Saturday night.

Eovaldi has pitched very effectively against the Yankees since joining the Red Sox, turning in eight shutout innings at Fenway Park on Aug. 4 and then not allowing a run and just two hits in six innings at Yankee Stadium Sept. 18.

The Red Sox and Yankees head into Game 3 with their best-of-five series tied at 1-1.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

Red Sox annoyed by Aaron Judge's bat, not his music

Evan Drellich

NEW YORK — There is no indication the Red Sox have ordered a pallet of portable speakers to be dropped off at Yankee Stadium for revenge.

That's because they don't think any revenge is necessary.

"I found Aaron Judge annoying last night," Red Sox president and CEO Sam Kennedy said, "but not because of his musical selections walking out of Fenway."

Aaron Judge on Saturday night strolled along the Fenway Park concourse with a speaker blaring "New York, New York," the anthem played after every game at Yankee Stadium. A video of the moment circulated on the web, and Dustin Pedroia mentioned it to Sox manager Alex Cora.

No offense was taken there either, it seems.

"You've got to ask [Judge] if it was something for us," Cora said, "but I doubt it. He's a guy that, when he hits the ball out of the ballpark, he [puts his head down] and runs. That's probably just something they do when they win. Probably they did it somewhere else too."

Judge, on fire at the plate, is 7-for-12 in the postseason thus far, spanning three games. That includes the Wild Card game against the A's and two ALDS contests with the Red Sox. He's homered in all three.

Some Red Sox players were technically close as Judge shared his tune, because of the clubhouse's location along the concourse. But Fenway's walls also insulate the players in the clubhouse from noise on the concourse.

Now, some Sox officials did hear and see Judge. Ultimately, whether someone actually heard or witnessed it in person or later on video seems irrelevant: this seems to be just some friendly ribbing, rather than any sort of escalating episode of bulletin-board material.

"It's a good song," Yanks manager Aaron Boone said. "And Aaron, he's one of our resident DJs, so he's got a pretty extensive playlist. I guess that's the one that was going. We like to hear that song sometimes when we win a big game."

Matt Barnes and Xander Bogaerts said they had not seen the video.

"I think it's fun," Boone said. "It's something to talk about. But I think it's just a good-natured whatever."

Boone was asked how he'd feel if a Sox player did the same as a Yankees player, but with "Sweet Caroline" blasting.

"I like that song too actually," Boone said. "So, whatever. I think both teams are really good, have a lot of respect for each other, and I'll just kind of leave it at that."

Cora asks E-Rod to be accountable: 'Bust your ass'

Evan Drellich

NEW YORK — The seventh inning that effectively put away Game 2 of the American League Division Series for the Yankees began with a mental mistake from lefty Eduardo Rodriguez.

Aaron Judge hit a grounder to the right side that Rodriguez did not break on fast enough, and Rodriguez, pitching in relief, decided not to try to outrace Judge. A 3-1 Yankees lead grew to 6-1 later in the inning, when Gary Sanchez homered, and the Sox lost 6-2.

The way Rodriguez described the catalyzing moment to the media on Saturday, however, he made his mistake sound physical.

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

Rodriguez's focus has been a topic from time to time, including on the second-to-last day of the regular season, when Cora was displeased with his performance. Cora, in a matter-of-fact tone on Sunday's off-day before Game 3 at Yankee Stadium, said Rodriguez needs to make sure he at least fully attempts to get to first

"I just talked to him," Cora said. "And told him just be accountable, that's it. I guess he told you guys he slipped or something like that. I'm like, 'Man, if you don't break right away, just be accountable, that's all we ask.' And he's like, 'Yeah, my fault. I just didn't break.' That's it. Hey, I get it. Next time, just bust your ass to first base. That's all you've got to do."

"The thing is, I look at the play, and it's not guaranteed he's going to be out. But we probably have a chance. And where we're at right now at this stage, we can't take plays off. We didn't do that the whole season. It just happened yesterday. But I talked to him, and we're on the same page. Hopefully, the next ground ball to first, he goes to first, and we get him."

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Red Sox go with Nathan Eovaldi as Game 3 starter

Sean McAdam

NEW YORK — The struggles of the Red Sox starting rotation in the postseason — combined, they've earned one October win and even that didn't come until Chris Sale won Game 1 last Friday night — have been well-chronicled, so maybe it's not a bad thing that the Red Sox have decided to go with someone who has never before pitched in the postseason as their Game 3 starter Monday night.

Manager Alex Cora had the option of going with Rick Porcello, but went with Nathan Eovaldi instead.

“Rick pitched that inning on (Friday),” said Cora, referring to two-thirds of an inning in relief, “so we felt like one more day is going to benefit him if we stay away from him. Nate hasn't pitched in a while. He's rested, had a good week and we're going with him.”

Aside from providing time for more bounce-back opportunity for Porcello, the Red Sox are also buoyed by what they've seen from Eovaldi — especially against the Yankees.

“We know he's going to be throwing hard and he's going to mix it up,” said Cora. “He's had success against (New York); seems like a good matchup. We trust his stuff. He can even get away with mistakes — when you throw 100 mph and you place it in the right spot, even if they take a good swing, you can get miss-hits. So that's a key.”

Eovaldi made three appearances against the Yankees and didn't allow an earned run. He shut them out for eight innings on Aug. 4, and then beat them at Yankee Stadium on September 18, not allowing a run over six. He even added two innings of relief against them in the final series of the year, during which the Yankees scratched out an earned run.

“It definitely gives me confidence, just knowing that I've had recent success against them,” said Eovaldi. “I'm trying to do the same thing that I have been doing — stay aggressive and try to get that first-pitch strike out of the way.”

Unlike David Price, who saw his streak of postseason futility extended Saturday in Game 2 — he's now winless in 10 starts — Eovaldi will be making his playoff debut.

“It's definitely the most important game I've ever pitched in,” said Eovaldi. “This is what we play for, coming out of spring training and preparing for this moment.”

If the postseason is entirely foreign to him, surely Eovaldi won't be awed by the surroundings. He made 48 starts in pinstripes between 2015-2016 and the environment will not be new. Eovaldi knows better than most how critical it is to keep the ball in the ballpark — among other keys.

“You try and get quick outs,” he said, “and try not to let the crowd get too crazy and get behind (the Yankees) and get them going. I feel like the key to that is working ahead and staying ahead and not really giving them free bases and things like that.”

On that score, Eovaldi can usually be counted on to throw strikes. During the 2018 season — first with Tampa Bay and then, over the final two months with the Red Sox — Eovaldi averaged just 1.6 walks per nine innings, among the lowest walk rates among starters in the American League.

Apart from the huge importance to the Red Sox playoff chances, Game 3 will also serve as a special reminder for Eovaldi about how far he's traveled to reach this point. It was, ironically, against the Red Sox in 2016 that Eovaldi suffered an elbow injury, resulting in the need to undergo Tommy John surgery for the second time.

That his first postseason appearance will come in the ballpark in which he was first sidelined, is only fitting.

“I hurt my arm against the Red Sox,” noted Eovaldi, “and now I’m on this side of it and back in Yankee Stadium in this situation. I think it’s kind of cool.”

ALDS Red Sox Notebook: Wholesale lineup changes unlikely

Sean McAdam

NEW YORK — After the Red Sox exploded for five runs in the first three innings in Game 1 Friday night, the offense has been stagnant — shutout over the final five innings in Game 1 and limited to just two runs in Game 2 Saturday.

But don’t expect Alex Cora to use that as an excuse to make wholesale changes to the Red Sox lineup for Game 3.

“I knew that question was coming,” said a smiling Cora during an off-day press conference at Yankee Stadium. “I’ll go to experience from the World Series last year. That’s something I learned — be patient. It’s such a small sample size that people get caught up on the whole small sample sizes. I always said that the difference between a .300 hitter in the postseason and a .200 hitter is 2-for-10 and 3-for-10 and one swing.

“So we go with the quality at-bats. We know we have to swing the bat better. I think (Saturday) we were too aggressive outside the zone and we don’t do that often, so credit to (Yankee starter Masahiro) Tanaka. We’ll see. We’ll think about it tonight. We’ll talk as a staff and we’ll go from there.”

Cora has some options off the bench. He could go with the lefthanded Rafael Devers over Eduardo Nunez at third against righty starter Luis Severino. And he could opt for lefty Brock Holt over Ian Kinsler at second base.

But the numbers don’t support that: Devers and Holt have exactly one hit between them in 27 at-bats against Severino, with 11 strikeouts.

One switch that could be made: catcher Christian Vazquez over Sandy Leon, who has been struggling mightily with the bat, behind the plate. Leon is 0-for-5 with a sacrifice in the series to date.

“We’ll see,” said Cora. “We’ve got to score runs, too, and that’s something we’ve been talking about for a while. It’s not on Sandy only. Everybody has to get going. We’ll talk about it today and make a decision.”

The Red Sox are still monitoring Mitch Moreland’s hamstring strain to determine his availability for Game 3 Monday.

“He’s OK,” said Cora. “He’s getting treatment, aggressive treatment. We’ll know a little bit more after all his rounds of whatever — steam and all that stuff he goes on. Then we’ll talk to (the training staff) and go from there.”

Cora reiterated that the Red Sox do not anticipate taking him off the roster for the remainder of the series, as they were forced to do Saturday with pitcher Steven Wright.

Moreland strained his right hamstring scoring from first on a double in the seventh inning of Saturday’s loss. He was replaced by Steve Pearce for the final two innings.

With Severino set to start Game 3 for the Yankees, Moreland would ordinarily be the likely choice to play first base. But much will depend on how he progresses physically before gametime.

David Price won't get another start in this series, but that doesn't mean he won't pitch again. The Sox could use him in relief, a role in which he succeeded last October against Houston.

"I've got to talk to him," said Cora. "He's not here today. We'll talk. Obviously, we need outs. Me and Dana (LeVangie, pitching coach) were just talking about him and a few things that we noticed over the last few weeks that he's not doing the way he did in those 11 outings (after the All-Star break). I know physically he's fine and we know where we're going. So most likely, we'll use him in some spot, yeah."

Cora said he planned to speak with Price Sunday night and determine how quickly he might be available.

"If it's (Monday), it's (Monday)," said Cora. "If it's Game 4, it's Game 4."

Despite the pounding Price took, Cora remains a believer in his pitcher.

"I know he'll be better," said Cora. "I know he's going to contribute. Whenever we call his name, he has to be ready for it and perform."

Cora acknowledged that Eduardo Rodriguez should have shown better instincts and hustle in the seventh inning. Aaron Judge hit a chopper to the right side which Moreland fielded to the right of first base. But Rodriguez didn't react quickly to get to first to take a throw from the first baseman and when he did make his move, it was at less than full speed.

"I just talked to him and told him, 'Just be accountable,'" Cora said. "That's it' I guess he told you guys he slipped or something like that. I'm like, 'Man, if you don't break right away, just be accountable. That's all we ask.' And he's like, 'Yeah, my fault. I just didn't break.' That's it. I get it. Next time, just bust your ass to first base. That's all you've got to do."

The thing is, I look at the play and it's not guaranteed that (Judge) is going to be out (if Rodriguez broke quicker), but we probably have a chance. And where we're at right now at this stage, we can't take plays off. We didn't so that the whole season. It just happened (Saturday). But I talked to him and we're on the same page. Hopefully, the next ground ball to first, he goes to first and we get him."

*** *The Athletic***

Some questions for Red Sox to answer as they get ready for Game 3 at Yankee Stadium

Chad Jennings

NEW YORK – In terms of conversational setting, a press conference has to rank among the most awkward. It's basically an elementary school classroom in which the questions can be intimately detailed, but the answers must be announced to a large and often vague audience. It's a weird way to talk to a person.

And so, when Xander Bogaerts and Matt Barnes were chosen to speak for the Red Sox at an off-day press conference at Yankee Stadium on Sunday, the most refreshing moment was surely Bogaerts' initial response to receiving the first question. He started with a pause, looking out at the room and the cameras.

"Umm," he said. "Hi, everyone."

It was brilliant. He'd just walked in the room, been ushered behind a microphone and been tossed an easy question about how the Red Sox were feeling after losing Game 2, tied in the American League Division Series before Monday's Game 3. I'm sure the real answer is quite complicated, but a press conference isn't

likely to dig deep into the psyche of the modern professional athlete as he faces a crucial moment with the season very nearly on the line.

So, Bogaerts kept it casual. He said hello to everyone. Then he talked about how off-days are good, and losses are tough, and the Red Sox are taking it one game at a time. He's an engaging personality, and so is Barnes. So, they did fine in that awkward setting. But after they spoke for almost five minutes, and then Game 3 starter Nathan Eovaldi, and then manager Alex Cora, I'm not sure anyone in the room was any closer to the real answers that this team needs heading into Monday's game.

It's been seven months, two weeks and one day since the Red Sox played their first exhibition game of the year. They've won 131 games since then, and there are questions from way back in February that still haven't been fully answered. That's just kind of the nature of the beast.

And so, as the Red Sox and Yankees get ready to play their biggest game of the year – until the next day, when that will be the biggest game of the year – we still have questions. Of course, we have questions. Here are a few of them:

Could there be time for a David Price redemption?

Right now, he's the bad guy again. His postseason record as a starter is not good. We knew that already, and Game 2 only reinforced it. He's also had trouble against the Yankees since coming to Boston. That, too, was confirmed Saturday.

But Price will pitch again this series. It's almost a lock. Eovaldi is going to start Game 3, Rick Porcello will start Game 4, and Chris Sale – probably – will pitch Game 5 if it goes that long (and if he's not called out of the bullpen in Game 4). But everything lines up for another Price appearance at some point, and Cora said it could be as early as Monday. He threw just 42 pitches on Saturday, and he's been tremendous as a postseason reliever.

"I know physically he's fine, and we know where we're going," Cora said. "So, most likely we'll use him in some spot, yeah."

Wouldn't that be some kind of turnaround? If Price can redeem himself in a relief role during this series, it would be a stunning boost for the Red Sox. And it would undoubtedly lead to another press conference.

Is there any need to push Mitch Moreland to start Game 3?

Moreland's a lefty bat, and the Red Sox are facing a right-handed starting pitcher on Monday (Luis Severino). He's an excellent defender, and the Red Sox have been prioritizing defensive dependability. He has pull power, and Yankee Stadium should reward that approach.

But Moreland hit .214 away from Fenway Park this season. He had just a .600 OPS in the second half. His .196 average in September was actually inflated by a nice little burst at the very end when Moreland hit .294 and drew six walks in his last five games. Point is, Moreland hasn't been anything like the guy who went to his first All-Star Game three months ago, so it might be worth considering the other guy while Moreland works his way back from a minor hamstring injury.

"We'll know a little bit more after all his rounds of (treatment)," Cora said.

They'll know more about his health, sure. But will they know any more of what to make of his Jekyll-and-Hyde season?

Moreland does have good numbers against Severino – 7 for 20 lifetime – but Steve Pearce is 2 for 7 with a double and a home run against him. Pearce also has a career .968 OPS in the current Yankee Stadium. Could be worth giving Pearce a turn at first, even though the platoon says it's Moreland's job.

Where have all the pinch hitters gone?

Late in the year, it seemed Cora was test driving an aggressive postseason strategy that would involve increased use of a bench that had proven more capable as the season progressed. Brock Holt pinch hit eight times from Aug. 29 on, accounting for more than half of his pinch-hit appearances for the entire season. Rafael Devers pinch hit twice in September, tripling his total for the year. In the last three weeks, Blake Swihart pinch hit twice, pinch ran twice and got time at four defensive positions.

In the first two games of the division series, though, the bench was a non-factor while .177 hitter Sandy Leon got five at-bats and Holt had none. The one time the Red Sox did pinch hit, they were already down five runs, and Devers' strikeout – in his only at-bat so far – only fanned the flames of the Game 2 burnout. Holt had a 1.123 OPS in September, and that was with eight of his 20 games off the bench. Don't the Red Sox have to find ways to get him involved again?

"You still have to wait for the right spot for him," Cora said. "Just leading off an inning down four, it doesn't make sense for us, and we've got our spots we feel we can use him."

What is happening at the bottom of the order?

One reason the lack of pinch hitters stands out is that the bottom of the Red Sox order has been, well, the bottom of the Red Sox order. A clear weakness during the regular season, the bottom four in the Red Sox lineup have gone 3 for 25 in these first two games. Two of those hits came from Ian Kinsler, who struck out in five of his other six at-bats. Eduardo Núñez is 0 for 7, Leon is 0 for 5 and Jackie Bradley Jr. is 1 for 5 (though he gets a pass, because he was a viable offensive force in the second half, so there would be little reason to bail on him now).

Leon is clearly in the lineup for his defense, and his blocking skills made a clear difference in Game 1. But when the Red Sox fell behind early in Game 2, it might have been time to see if Swihart's bat could help dig out of trouble. Núñez was also in Game 2 for his defense – seen as a less flashy, more reliable glove than Devers. But while he made a handful of nice plays, he also made one error and nearly made another.

We know, we know: It's reactionary and dumb to make too much of two games within a baseball season. But these bottom-of-the-order struggles aren't new, and the Red Sox bench has some viable alternatives. Cora, though, suggested he's most likely to stay the course, citing last year's playoffs, when Astros manager A.J. Hinch was pressured to drop George Springer from the top of the lineup after a cold stretch, refused to do so, and then watched Springer hit his way to World Series MVP.

"That's something I learned," Cora said. "Be patient. It's such a small series that people get caught up on the whole small sample sizes. I always said that the difference between a .300 hitter in the postseason and a .200 hitter is 2 for 10 and 3 for 10 is one swing. So, we go with the quality at-bats. We know we have to swing the bat better."

What's Eduardo Rodríguez's deal?

At the end of the regular season, Cora went out of his way to call out Rodríguez's seemingly uninterested performance in Game 161, then Rodríguez pitched in Saturday's Game 2 and didn't come close to covering first base on a ground ball to the right side.

"I just talked to him and told him just be accountable; that's it," Cora said. "I guess he told you guys he slipped or something like that. I'm like, 'Man, if you don't break right away, just be accountable. That's all we ask.' And he's like, 'Yeah, my fault. I just didn't break. That's it.' Hey, I get it. Next time, just bust your ass to first base. That's all you've got to do. ... Where we're at right now at this stage, we can't take plays off. We didn't do that the whole season. It just happened yesterday."

It's hard to know what to make of Rodríguez at this point. He's had trouble staying healthy, trouble staying consistent, and he's sometimes had trouble doing even the little things that should be automatic. But he's clearly talented, seems like a good guy and, given the contract status of the other Red Sox starters, the team could really use a more steady version of E-Rod to stabilize their rotation going forward. Given their current pitching situation, they might need him to be either a next-round starter or an inevitable innings eater.

Point is, the kid's got a chance to be good. But he's been in the big leagues for four years now, and I'm still not sure what to make of him.

Would Steven Wright have set the stage for a different Game 2?

In Game 1, after Sale's pitch count got up and that sixth inning began to look spotty, Cora could have used to Wright — if not for the knee injury that forced him off the roster — either to get out of the jam or start fresh in the seventh and go perhaps the rest of the way.

One way or another, Wright surely would have pitched in the series opener, which would have opened multiple possibilities for Game 2, most notably making it easier to let someone other than Rodríguez face Gary Sánchez with two on in the seventh.

This was never going to be a paint-by-numbers bullpen, so there was always going to be some level of guesswork involved in getting through the late innings (especially if a starter couldn't pitch out of the second). But Wright might have been a stabilizing force, had his own stability not been compromised by a bad knee that just kept giving him problems.

We're never going to have any answers to lingering questions about what might have been if Wright were healthy. Maybe it won't matter in the end. Or maybe we'll always wonder if he could have made a difference.

Should we even consider the possibility of the Red Sox in four?

It could happen, you know. Sure, the Red Sox never won two out of three at Yankee Stadium during the regular season, and they certainly didn't win two in a row, but it could happen this week. Their lineup could take advantage of the short porch, Eovaldi could tame the Yankees hitters yet again — he went six scoreless last time he pitched in New York — and the Red Sox could win the next two to finish this thing without need for a Game 5 at Fenway. It could happen.

But it seems safe to assume they're playing to win one and take their chances in Game 5. Burn the whole pitching staff to the ground if that's what it takes to win on Monday. Just be sure to win one. Do that, and this trip to the Big Apple will have been a big success. Win two, and it'll be a huge success.

"We expect to win every day we come to the ballpark," Barnes said. "(Game 2) was a tough loss, but we expect to go out there and win (Monday) and win the next day. I think that's one of the reasons why we were so good during the regular season is that we don't get kind of caught up in anything other than the next game and worrying about that game and doing everything we can to win that one."

Can the Red Sox take full advantage of how good Chris Sale looked in Game 1?

Obviously, Sale's performance mattered a great deal on Friday, when the Red Sox took initial control of this series and breathed a sigh of relief as his fastball velocity jumped back into the mid-90s. It's the main reason why their backs aren't against the wall already.

But what good does that do them Monday night?

Sale's resurgent velocity and performance will do the Red Sox the most good if they can go to him again with a chance to clinch the series. If they can give him the ball in Game 5, great. But if they burn through the bullpen to win Game 3 and have to trust Sale to finish off a win in Game 4, that's just as good.

Sale has done his part to keep the Red Sox from being backed into a corner this week. If they can give him a chance to clinch the thing as well, that would be getting the most out of their most potent weapon.

After the way he looked on Friday, just get into a situation where the series is in his hands, and take your chances.

*** *The New York Daily News***

Red Sox shake up ALDS rotation as Nathan Eovaldi will start Game 3 against the Yankees

Kristie Ackert

The Red Sox shook up their rotation for Game 3 of the American League Division Series. Instead of bringing back Rick Porcello, who threw .2 innings of relief in Game 1 to save a shaky bullpen, the Red Sox announced they will give the ball to Nathan Eovaldi Monday night.

“(Porcello is) slated to start Game 4,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said Sunday at Yankee Stadium. “Obviously, we’re all in with this, so never know what can happen in Game 3. Should be Nate 3, Rick 4.”

“Rick pitched that inning on Friday, so we felt like one more day is going to benefit him if we stay away from him,” Cora continued. “Nate hasn’t pitched in a while. He’s rested, had a good week, and we’re going with him.”

Eovaldi has had more recent success against the Yankees, the team he pitched for in 2015-16. In four starts against the Bombers this season, Eovaldi has a 1.93 ERA with 18 strikeouts in 23.1 innings. He held them to a .173 batting average against and a .272 slugging percentage. He held the Yankees, who smashed the single-season record for home runs in a season, to just one long ball.

“Seven innings, two hits, one run. Just his stuff. We know he’s going to be throwing hard and he’s going to mix it up. He’s had success against them,” Cora said. “Seems like it’s a good matchup. Obviously, in the playoffs, game planning is part of it, and I know they’re going to be ready, but we will too. We trust his stuff. He can even get away with mistakes, you know what I mean? Like when you throw 100 and you place it in the right spot, even if they take a good swing, you can get missed hits. So that’s a key.”

“As you know, we’ve got to try to keep them in the ballpark. When we do that, we have success, and that’s what we’re going to try to do tomorrow.”

That one home run that Eovaldi gave up to the Bombers came at Yankee Stadium, but the Red Sox like his experience in this small ballpark.

“Trying to keep the ball in the ballpark. Try and get quick outs. Try not to let the crowd get too crazy and get behind them and get them going,” Eovaldi said was the key. Again, I feel like the key to that is working ahead and staying ahead and not really giving them the free bases and little things like that.”

Ron Darling apologizes for insensitive remark used during Game 2 of Yankees-Red Sox ALDS »
Hicks and Gregorius said that Eovaldi’s development of an effective cutter has been the major difference they see in him.

“When he was here, he didn’t have a cutter, he was more of a fastball/splitter guy,” the Yankee center fielder said. “The cutter, he throws it from 88 to 94 miles in hour, it’s a big jump, and that’s kind of new for us.”

The Stadium is where Porcello has had some issues this season. In his only start in the Bronx, Porcello allowed five earned runs in 5.1 innings pitched for an 8.44 ERA.

*** *The New York Post***

Yankees, Red Sox know exactly what’s at stake in pivotal Game 3

George A. King III

Red Sox-Yankees in October is like being from New Jersey: You either get it or you don't.

If you are a baseball fan and don't get what is at stake Monday night in Game 3 of the ALDS at Yankee Stadium with the best-of-five affair tied 1-1, double up on the bourbon.

Had the Yankees or Red Sox won the first two games, Monday's tilt would have lost some juice. Because the Red Sox won Game 1 when Giancarlo Stanton and Gleyber Torres failed to hit in the clutch, and the Yankees copped Game 2 by punishing David Price again, Game 3 falls into the category of "The Biggest Game Of The Year" for each club because the winner moves nine innings away from advancing to the ALCS.

That it is being played in The Bronx, where the Yankees' 53-28 regular-season record was the second-best home mark in baseball (Boston's 57-41 was tops), should provide a boost for the home team. Also helping is that the Yankees have won their last seven postseason games played at home.

So, expect the atmosphere to be charged to the max.

"I think the connection that our fan base and our fans now have with our players is a special one and now you put it in the postseason and you bring the Red Sox, I think the atmosphere is going to be special, electric, whatever you want to put on it," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "Hopefully we can give them a reason to keep building as the game unfolds."

Center fielder Aaron Hicks, who expects to play in Game 3 after sitting out Game 2 with a hamstring issue, hears from competitors what problems a loud Yankee Stadium causes visitors.

"I hear guys all the time say how hard it is to play here," Hicks said. "For us to be on the other side, kind of getting excited about our games and getting some energy toward playing, it just helps us play better."

Nathan Eovaldi, who starts for the Red Sox on Monday night, was a Yankee from 2015-16 and left for the Rays as a free agent following a second Tommy John surgery that cost him the 2017 season. He was dealt to the Red Sox on July 25. The hard-throwing, and at times erratic, right-hander has faced the Yankees three times this season, twice with the Red Sox, and is 1-1 with a 2.11 ERA.

He ignores the Public Relations Line No. 1 when asked about the importance of such a pivotal game.

"This is what we play for, coming out of spring training and preparing for this moment," said Eovaldi, who was 20-17 with a 4.30 ERA in 60 starts for the Yankees. "It's definitely, probably, the most important game I have ever pitched in. We need to win and that way we can be ready for Game 4.

Aaron Boone tabbed Luis Severino to start Game 3 and has veteran lefty CC Sabathia scheduled to start Game 4 Tuesday night at Yankee Stadium. Alex Cora plans to send Jersey native Rick Porcello out for Game 4.

Should a Game 5 be required, it will be J.A. Happ against Chris Sale at Fenway Park in a winner-take-all situation.

However, before that delicious event can take place, there is Monday night and the first time the Red Sox and Yankees have tangled in October in The Bronx in 14 years — since Boston capped its ALCS comeback from a 3-0 deficit.

As for the bedlam that awaits, you either get it or you don't.

Yankees will see new Game 3 starter as Red Sox tweak

Mike Puma

Nathan Eovaldi received word as the Red Sox landed in New York early Sunday: Forget about pitching Game 4 of the ALDS and get ready for Game 3.

With Rick Porcello removed from the equation after pitching in relief in Game 1, manager Alex Cora on Monday will turn to the veteran right-hander Eovaldi, who has allowed only one run in 16 innings against the Yankees since arriving from the Rays in July.

“It definitely gives me confidence, just knowing I’ve had recent success against them,” Eovaldi said Sunday at Yankee Stadium. “I’m trying to do the same thing that I have been doing — stay aggressive and try to get that first-pitch strike out of the way.”

Porcello, who pitched two-thirds of an inning Friday, is Boston’s scheduled starter for Game 4. The Red Sox are also expected to have David Price available from the bullpen as soon as Monday night, following the lefty’s abbreviated Game 2 start, in which he surrendered three runs over 1 ²/₃ innings.

Eovaldi, who pitched for the Yankees in 2015-16, split this season between the Rays and Red Sox, finishing 6-7 with a 3.81 ERA in 22 appearances.

What can the Red Sox expect from him Monday?

“Seven innings, two hits, one run,” Cora said. “He’s had good success against them. Seems like it’s a good matchup. Obviously, in the playoffs, game-planning is part of it and I know they’re going to be ready, but we will, too. We trust his stuff.”

In addition to 98 mph heat, Eovaldi features a sharp cutter, a pitch he used 32 percent of the time this season, according to Fangraphs.

“I think his cutter this year has probably been the main reason,” Aaron Hicks said, when asked about Eovaldi’s improvement since his days in The Bronx. “When he was here he didn’t have that cutter. He was more of a fastball/splitter guy.”

Eovaldi, who has never appeared in the postseason, wasn’t so sure he would be receiving this opportunity as his year with Tampa Bay progressed. But his July 25 trade to Boston for lefty reliever Jalen Beeks changed that outlook.

“I felt we had good things going over there [in Tampa Bay], but with the Red Sox in the division, they were running away with it,” Eovaldi said. “Then to get traded over here, I’m super excited to be in this situation.”

In his last start at Yankee Stadium on Sept. 18, Eovaldi allowed only two hits over six shutout innings. He also pitched eight shutout innings against the Yankees on Aug. 4 at Fenway Park.

“We trust his stuff,” Cora said. “He can even get away with mistakes, you know what I mean? Like when you throw 100 and you place it in the right spot, even if they take a good swing you get missed hits. That’s a key.”

The second life of Gary Sanchez isn’t shocking the Red Sox

Dan Martin

Gary Sanchez hadn’t homered twice in a game since May 19 before he did it in Game 2 of the ALDS to spark the Yankees’ win over the Red Sox.

While Sanchez had a dreadful regular season — plagued by an injured groin, ineffectiveness at the plate and continued questions about whether he was a good enough defender to be an everyday catcher — Boston didn’t take him lightly heading into this series.

“Yeah, he struggled in the regular season and down the stretch, but the guy’s a phenomenal hitter,” right-hander Matt Barnes said Sunday at Yankee Stadium in advance of Monday’s Game 3 in The Bronx. “He really is. When you make mistakes, he can do damage. We don’t take anybody in that lineup, let alone him, for granted. You’re trying to execute pitches at the highest level to every guy in that lineup because one mistake and they can leave the yard, one through nine.”

Sanchez proved that again Saturday night at Fenway Park, as he went deep off David Price to lead off the second inning to extend the Yankees’ lead to 2-0 then helped seal the victory with a three-run blast off Eduardo Rodriguez in the seventh. He became the first Yankees backstop to have a multi-homer game in the playoffs since Yogi Berra in 1956.

“Regardless of what somebody’s done in the regular season, the postseason is different,” Barnes said. “It’s different in all aspects, and you can’t take anybody lightly.”

A year ago, Sanchez struggled in both the ALDS against Cleveland and again in the ALCS against Houston, going 9-for-49 with 19 strikeouts in a dozen games, although he also homered three times during that stretch.

He already has made his mark on this series, continuing his dominance against David Price.

“I believe that Gary, he’s a good hitter,” Boston manager Alex Cora said. “I saw him last year in the playoffs. He’s a tough out. [Saturday], he put some good swings on it and hit the ball out of the ballpark.”

Just as important is the fact that in the Yankees’ three playoff games this season — the wild-card win over the A’s and the first two games of the ALDS — Sanchez has been more than solid defensively.

“I’ve been obviously answering a lot of questions about Gary over the last month and throughout this year,” Aaron Boone said. “I’ve believed what I’ve told you in that I feel like we’ve seen a lot of strides and a lot of really positive things since he came back from the disabled list defensively. ... Now, he was still having the occasional lapse or mistake that would happen that would show up that draws the attention, but I really feel strongly that 90, 95 percent of the stuff we’re seeing was really impactful behind the plate. He’s been able to do that so far in the postseason, limiting the mistakes.”

Red Sox don’t seem to be freaking out about Aaron Judge’s trolling

Dan Martin

Aaron Judge has tormented the Red Sox through the first two games of the ALDS — and did his best to torment them again on his way out of Fenway Park on Saturday night.

After Judge homered in the first inning of the Yankees’ Game 2 victory over the Red Sox, which evened the series, video emerged late Saturday night of Judge walking by the Boston clubhouse following the win on his way to the team bus, with a boom box blaring Frank Sinatra’s “New York, New York.”

Whether the right fielder was trolling his rivals is known — so far — only to him, but no one seemed to have a problem with it at Yankee Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

Asked for his reaction, Boston manager Alex Cora didn’t seem bothered.

“I don’t know, you’ve got to ask [Judge] if it was something for us, but I doubt it,” Cora said. “He’s a guy that when he hits the ball out of the ballpark, he sits down and runs. That’s probably just something they do when they win. ... Probably they did it somewhere else, too.”

If he did, no one ever caught it on their phone and put it on Twitter.

The only two Red Sox players to speak to the media Sunday, shortstop Xander Bogaerts and right-hander Matt Barnes, said they were unaware of what Judge did. Cora said injured second baseman Dustin Pedroia told him about it.

Yankees manager Aaron Boone grinned when the video was brought up to him Sunday.

“It’s a good song,” Boone said of the Sinatra song that is played in some form after every Yankees game in The Bronx. “And Aaron [Judge], he’s one of our resident DJs, so he’s got a pretty extensive playlist. I guess that’s the one that was going. We like to hear that song sometimes when we win a big game.”

Luis Severino insisted he didn’t know what Judge had done, claiming he was waiting for Gary Sanchez in the visitors’ clubhouse when Judge left.

Didi Gregorius said: “I don’t know what message [it sends], but ... we just go out there and play the game. The rivalry is always there, so it’s always good to have a little bit of fun with it, I guess.”

Boone agreed it wasn’t an issue.

“I saw it,” Boone said. “I think it’s fun. It’s something to talk about. But I think it’s just good-natured. ... I think both teams are really good, have a lot of respect for each other, and I’ll just kind of leave it at that.”

Whether the Red Sox use it as motivation remains to be seen, but they have bigger concerns when it comes to Judge.

The right fielder, showing no ill effects from the chip fracture in his right wrist that cost him nearly two months and seemingly had sapped his power when he returned to the Yankees last month, is 5-for-9 with three runs scored and homers in both games of the series. He’s gone deep in three straight games overall.

Despite Judge’s recent dominance, Cora was wary of pitching around him, which might give someone else a chance to hurt his team.

“You’ve got to be careful, too,” Cora said. “You create traffic [for] those guys behind him and you’re going to pay the price. We just have to make better pitches.”

If they don’t, the Yankees will be celebrating to “New York, New York” again Monday in The Bronx.

*** *The USA Today***

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***

Eovaldi to start for Sox tonight

NEW YORK (AP) -- Boston will start former Yankee Nathan Eovaldi rather than Rick Porcello against New York in Game 3 of the AL Division Series on Monday.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora says he made the decision because Porcello pitched two-thirds of an inning of relief in Friday's opener and he wanted to give him an extra day of rest. Porcello is scheduled to pitch Game 4 on Tuesday.

Eovaldi was 3-3 with a 3.33 in 11 starts and one relief appearance for the Red Sox.

, who acquired him from Tampa Bay in July. The 28-year-old right-hander, who throws at 97-98 mph, allowed no earned runs in three of four starts this year against the Yankees. He pitched for the Yankees in 2015 and '16 before injuring his elbow, which required Tommy John surgery for the second time.

New York starts Luis Severino in Game 3, followed by CC Sabathia. The best-of-five series is tied 1-1.