

The Boston Red Sox Thursday, November 1, 2018

*** *The Boston Globe***

Why the Red Sox feel good about David Price going forward

Alex Speier

David Price came to Fenway Park ready to celebrate the Red Sox' 2018 championship season, and hoping to do it again sometime in the next four years.

Price had the right to opt out of the final four years and \$127 million of the record-setting seven-year, \$217 million deal he signed with the Red Sox after the 2015 season by midnight on Wednesday. However, as he basked in the afterglow of his first World Series title, the lefthander said that he would not leave the Red Sox.

"I'm opting in. I'm not going anywhere. I want to win here. We did that this year and I want to do it again," Price said minutes before boarding a duck boat. "There wasn't any reconsideration on my part ever. I came here to win. We did that this year and that was very special, and now I want to do it again."

Red Sox principal owner (and Globe owner) John Henry was pleased with the decision. While industry opinion was nearly unanimous that Price wouldn't have been able to make as much money on the open market as he will over the duration of his Red Sox deal, Henry said that the team wasn't certain of the pitcher's decision until he informed the club.

"[Boston is] a tough town in many ways. I think [the opt-out] was there because it gave him an opportunity to see if he wanted to spend [all seven years here]," said Henry. "He had a lot of choices when he decided to come to Boston. I think he [wanted] to see what it was going to be like. It would be hard for me to ever leave. I assume David feels the same way at this point. I can't imagine we end up winning this thing without David Price this year. He was willing to pitch every day, sacrifice himself to be in the bullpen every day . . . so this [decision] is great news."

Henry is well aware of the typical diminishing returns of pitchers as they age. Price delivered a strong 2018 season (16-7, 3.58 ERA, 9.1 strikeouts per nine innings in 30 starts) in which he emerged as the Red Sox' second-half ace and then a World Series force (2-0, 1.98 ERA in 13 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings), but at 33, Price is at an age when most pitchers decline.

Yet decline is not guaranteed, and if the lefthander can maintain his production or at least make his decline gradual, he will represent a valuable contributor for the Red Sox moving forward. And the Red Sox believe that, so long as Price remains healthy, he showed in 2018 why he represents a good bet to maintain his productivity moving forward.

A few elements bode well for Price's future in Boston. Among them:

- He vaporized the albatross of past playoff failures, and likewise wiped out any questions about his ability to excel in Boston.

"We came to Boston and Boston had this reputation of never winning in the playoffs," Henry said. "Someone said David had the same thing. I said, 'Well, Boston is a good place to come and get a monkey off your back.'"

- Price showed a remarkable ability to adapt his arsenal in the middle of the season, not just once but twice, to change his plan of attack and to reestablish himself as a force. In July, after a dreadful start against

the Yankees, he changed sides of the rubber, changed his arm slot, and altered his pitch sequencing to expand the plate and carve opposing hitters rather than working to just one side of the plate. The result was one of baseball's best starters in the second half.

At the end of the regular season and into the start of the postseason, however, Price's stuff backed up as his release point lowered. He made a slight adjustment with his hand position to get a more fluid delivery with a higher release point, which allowed him to attack with fastballs at the top of the strike zone and complementing that with changeups that dived late out of the zone.

The ability to adjust is considered a crucial element of pitchers who defy typical aging patterns. Price showed that he possesses it.

"To be able to make those adjustments and changes, that was huge," said Price, one of two players to opt in on Wednesday (infielder Eduardo Nunez also will return in 2019, for \$5 million). "I feel like that's been kind of my career. The 10, 11 years I've been doing this, being able to make adjustments, make changes on the fly, that's what's helped me get to where I am right now."

The ability to make one major in-season adjustment in a plan of attack is unusual. Price made two wholesale changes to how he attacks the plate, suggesting an outlier's adaptability.

"He's still evolving. He's gone through multiple phases in his major league career," said Red Sox vice president of pitching development Brian Bannister.

- With the delivery adjustments that Price made during a bullpen session in Houston during Game 4 of the American League Championship Series, he showed greater velocity than he had all year. In the middle of the year, Price insisted that he still had more velocity in the tank, and that he believed that — somewhat like former Tigers teammate Justin Verlander — he would realize velocity gains at some point, whether in 2018 or beyond. That is precisely what happened in the playoffs, challenging the idea of a pitcher who must adapt to declining arm strength and stuff.

- That said, there will be a time when Price does feature a decline in arm strength — most likely during the life of his Red Sox contract. The team was well aware of that likelihood when they signed Price in the first place, but believed that he has skills that will allow him to age favorably.

"We looked at all pitchers who are given long-term deals in their 30s. The primary [sources] of success were the ability to have a wipeout changeup, a sinker that utilizes gravity so it ages well as the arm slows down, the ability to throw a cutter, and [being] lefthanded," said Bannister. "You look at the [Jamie] Moyers, you look at the [Tom] Glavines, you look at a lot of the guys who did it — they were lefthanded, they had the ability to make the ball go down, they had the ability to have success at lower velocities, and they usually have a really good changeup. He checks all those boxes."

Ultimately, there are still risks for Price, and health is no guarantee. But while the Red Sox almost surely will pay him more than he might have received had he become a free agent this winter, the team's confidence in what he can do in Boston may never have been greater.

"He still throws really hard," said Bannister, "but he has the capability to do a lot of things. That was why he's worth it, and he came through for us."

Sox players praise fans as they bask in the moment

Nicole Yang

Mookie Betts had been on a duck boat before Wednesday morning — just never as a World Series champion.

“This is definitely a better reason,” the Red Sox outfielder said at Fenway Park ahead of the team’s victory parade, three days after they defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers to bring home the franchise’s fourth championship since the turn of the century.

Following a champagne-filled clubhouse celebration Sunday night, a joyous flight to Boston Monday, and a splashy party at Icon nightclub Tuesday, the jaunt down Boylston Street kept the festivities rolling Wednesday. Players and coaches, along with their families and friends, congregated at Fenway prior to the parade’s 11 a.m. start.

“Here in Boston, everybody lets you know that you did a great job, but they also let you know that you didn’t do a great job, too, so it’s good to be on the good end of it,” said Betts, who was also sporting a “trick or treat” hat in honor of Halloween. “We put in so much work to get to where we are.”

Mayor Marty Walsh and Governor Charlie Baker — who gave his best impression of Dodgers infielder Manny Machado striking out to end Game 5 — were on hand to congratulate the Sox and address a cheering crowd in crisp, sub-50 degree temperatures. Manager Alex Cora and team owner John Henry also spoke, and nearly every sentence was met with screams and applause.

“What they bring every day is special,” designated hitter J.D. Martinez said of the fans. “It’s different. You don’t see that every day.

“It feels like we’re actually sharing it with our family right now. I don’t know, it’s different. It’s weird to put it into words.”

“They drive us, day in and day out, packing Fenway and showing up like they do on the road,” added pitcher David Price. “We definitely feel the appreciation and the love.”

The past 72 hours have been a whirlwind for the players — many of whom had yet to contextualize their World Series title and franchise-record 108 regular-season wins.

“Everything’s been kind of moving too fast,” Betts said. “Once I get home and get kind of settled, I’m sure I’ll take a step back and just kind of reflect and enjoy the memories that I have.

“You have to take it in because people don’t make the playoffs. Some people don’t ever make the playoffs. I definitely take in every moment at every opportunity that I can get.”

“You get some emotions when you start thinking about the past and about the season,” added second baseman Ian Kinsler. “You start thinking about the playoffs and what everyone has gone through to get to this moment. It comes and goes; it soaks in slowly. I want it to be that way. Just soak it in as slow as possible.”

For some players, Kinsler included, Wednesday could be one of their last experiences with the Red Sox. The organization has to address several contract issues, including the impending free agency of Kinsler, Nathan Eovaldi, Joe Kelly, Craig Kimbrel, Steve Pearce, and Drew Pomeranz.

Kelly, while gushing about the team’s chemistry, said he “absolutely” hopes to return.

“I want to be back,” the reliever said. “I love everyone on this team, from front office down to our bullpen catchers. We mesh so well. A year from now, we’ll probably be doing this again. Hopefully, we can keep the band together.”

Pearce, the World Series MVP, said negotiations are above his pay grade, but noted that he, too, “would love to come back.”

One matter that appears to have been resolved, however, is Price’s status. The 33-year-old lefthander announced Wednesday that he will not exercise the opt-out clause in his seven-year, \$217 million contract.

“I’m opting in,” Price said. “I’m not going anywhere. I want to win here. We did that this year, and I want to do it again.”

‘This definitely has got to stop’: Mookie Betts and the bombardment of beer during the Red Sox victory parade

Stan Grossfeld

Mookie Betts definitely did not want a beer masquerading as a projectile missile tossed at him.

Especially a full can, like the ones tossed repeatedly at the duck boat he was on during the Red Sox victory parade Wednesday.

It started on Boylston Street when a Bud came flying in and crashed off the scalp of Red Sox photographer Billie Weiss. Then as we approached Copley Square, the bombardment increased. There were nips of vodka, peppermint schnapps, Jack Daniels, and more beer.

Betts’s family was on the boats, including his mother.

This has never happened at any other rolling rally. In 2013, on the Charles River, David Ortiz made eye contact with a fan on a nearby boat. The fan offered a beer and Ortiz smiled. The fan tossed it and Big Papi showed that he was more than a designated hitter.

Betts, a two-time Gold Glover, was amazing Wednesday. He was protecting us all with his lightning-quick hands, almost like a goalie under attack.

He also was not happy.

“This definitely has got to stop,” Betts said.

“Do Some Damage” was a catchy slogan, but why would you want to hurt the probable AL MVP?

By the time “Dirty Water” was played later in the parade, Weiss’s wound was swollen. The wife of hitting coach Tim Hyers, who was also on Betts’s boat, was hit in the stomach. I got hit four times.

I was really angry and started swatting away beers and using hand signals to try to get fans to stop. Red Sox security man Mike Gunning made several big saves.

This is not cool, people.

As for the Jim Davis photos, my esteemed colleague misses nothing.

The story is more how Mookie saved us, rather than us saving him.

With championship parades, Boston has its ducks in a row

Chad Finn

It’s not just that Boston fans have mastered the protocol of the modern championship parade — how and when to get there, where the best sightlines are along Boylston Street, how to get a witty sign (“Chris Sale, show me your belly-button ring”) noticed by the players, that sort of intel that comes only with experience.

It’s that, as we were reminded again Wednesday afternoon, Boston invented modern championship parade protocol.

Oh, that may seem arrogant to fan bases in Los Angeles, New York, or Chicago, or to other cities that have seen their teams fall to one Boston team or another during this run of 11 championships across four sports since the Patriots got all of this thrilling madness started with their Super Bowl victory over the Rams in February 2002.

To which we say: How can it be arrogant when it's the truth?

OK, so it's a little arrogant. Maybe more than that. It's just that what we saw Wednesday, as the Red Sox celebrated their fourth World Series title since 2004, was quite familiar, in all the good ways.

It began with a little pep rally at Fenway Park, and perhaps a few warmup beverages for the participants. The players and their families, ownership and management, and various front-office folks and assorted personnel boarded the duck boats and began navigating through the sea of red.

First from Lansdowne Street, then right onto Ipswich, left onto the main drag of Boylston, a left onto Tremont, and continuing onto Cambridge until the finish line on Staniford. Veteran duck boat drivers stopped needing GPS for this route a long time ago.

Whoever originally came up with this fitting, perfectly Boston idea to use the duck boats all those years ago for the Patriots' first parade was a genius. Whoever decided that the parade should halt before the amphibious vehicles could venture into the Charles with their precious cargo — as they did as a caper on the chilly day of the 2004 Red Sox parade — might have been even savvier. In retrospect, taking this thing on the water was courting a whole new era of misery in Red Sox lore.

The acknowledgement of familiarity in all of this is not to suggest that any of it should be taken for granted. Anyone who remembers the desperation, during that championship-less period from the Celtics' 1986 win until the Patriots in '01, of celebrating Raymond Bourque's Stanley Cup win at City Hall after he won as a member the Colorado Avalanche knows this.

You young ones who know only success — and my God, you're post-college age now — should know it too. A championship is always worthy of a parade, and a parade is always worth attending, especially if it comes with the subtle satisfaction of sneaking out of work, or better, sneaking your kids out of school. All of the logistical challenges for you — even as a master of parade protocol, of course — are worth the lifelong memory.

And never forget: It's a lifelong memory for those on the duck boats, too. Wednesday's parade would not make the podium among the best of the 11 celebrations this century. The Bruins parade in '11 was the most idyllic, the '04 Sox was the most cathartic, and the '01 Patriots was the purest fun. Wednesday's parade seemed quick, or ruthlessly efficient in getting the job done, like the '18 Red Sox themselves.

The best thing about it was the joy on the faces of those who hadn't experienced it before. There was Chris Sale, standing tall above the crowd, beaming and hollering at fans, a joyous version of what he did to inspire his teammates before their epic rally late in Game 4 of the World Series.

There was Rick Porcello, pointing to the B on his hat and repeating, time and again, "This is for you. For you."

There was Mookie Betts, smiling behind glasses that make him look like a studious undergrad at Boston University or Emerson, then fumbling a beer thrown his way, a rare E-9 for the special right fielder.

There were familiar faces, too. While Pedro Martinez and David Ortiz, both as gregarious and involved as when they were the ones securing championships themselves, took turns raising the championship trophy (one of four that made the trip), Jason Varitek looked on from another boat like an amused dad. And it was so good to see Jerry Remy, whose season in the broadcast booth was abbreviated because of another cancer fight, smiling and saying he is "kicking cancer's ass."

No, there were no zany antics this year, no version of Jonathan Papelbon dancing to the Dropkick Murphys (who did make the trip on the lead boat) or Rob Gronkowski crushing beers, no shirtless Glen “Big Baby” Davis among this crew. There was just the collective appreciation of the moment, a moment that now comes around here often after Boston fans waited for so long, a moment that can never be taken for granted — but yes, can be anticipated again.

“A city like this, they love all the sports,” said pitcher Joe Kelly. “Hopefully, this could be one of many parades. Maybe the Patriots can win this year, Celtics, Bruins, everybody will.”

Just what the rest of the sports world wants to hear — and yet, not entirely unrealistic. To borrow the words of a certain tall guy in green who rode in a 2008 parade, in Boston sports these days, anything is possible.

‘I’m not going anywhere’: David Price says he is opting to stay with Red Sox

Nicole Yang

David Price will be back in a Red Sox uniform next season.

The lefthander announced at Fenway Park Wednesday morning that he will not be exercising the opt-out clause of the final four years of his seven-year, \$217 million contract.

“I’m opting in,” he said prior to the team’s celebratory duck boat parade. “I’m not going anywhere. I want to win here. We did that this year, and I want to do it again.”

Price’s tenure in Boston has had its fair share of ups and downs, but the 33-year-old insisted he had always planned on opting in — even before his stellar pitching performances in the World Series.

“There wasn’t any reconsideration on my part, ever,” he said. “I never had a problem with the fans. It was you guys I had a problem with. That’s it. They’ve supported me extremely well.”

The Red Sox still have a number of roster questions to answer — including the impending free agency Steve Pearce, Nathan Eovaldi, Craig Kimbrel, and Joe Kelly — but Price said he “absolutely” hopes the group returns.

“We had a very good team this year, and we want to continue on with that same team.”

Red Sox owner John Henry called Price’s decision to opt in “great news.”

“In my mind, he’s the co-MVP of the World Series,” said Henry, who also owns the Globe. “I can’t imagine we’d end up winning the World Series without David Price this year. He was willing to pitch every day [and] to sacrifice himself.”

Price was the winning pitcher in Game 5 of the World Series as the Red Sox completed their 4-1 series victory over the Dodgers. In the playoffs, he went 3-1.

“Someone said to me that when we came to Boston, Boston had this reputation of never winning in the playoffs. Someone said David had the same thing. I said, ‘Well, Boston is a good place to come to get the monkey off your back.’” Henry said.

Infielder Eduardo Nunez also official picked up his \$5 million player option for next season.

*** *The Boston Herald***

Red Sox final report card

Jason Mastrodonato

Only a real nitpicker would look back at arguably the best team in Red Sox history and give out individual grades to each player while hand-selecting their contributions and shortcomings during the 2018 season.

Nitpicker here, ready and willing. Let's do this.

POSITION PLAYERS

C Sandy Leon: B-plus

How good does a catcher have to be behind the plate to earn a B+ after hitting .177 with a .511 OPS, the worst OPS by any MLB player with at least 250 plate appearance since 2011? As good as Leon was in 2018. His 3.28 catcher's ERA was best in baseball and second-best to only 2017 Yasmani Grandal among all qualified catchers since 2014. He allowed just 28 stolen bases, third-least by all 30 players with 600 innings caught. Pitchers rave about his game calling and ability to navigate a lineup. He's the definition of an unsung hero.

C Christian Vazquez: C-plus

This is a case of a player who redeemed himself in the postseason. He caught 87 innings to Leon's 46 while posting a 2.90 catcher's ERA and throwing out two of the three would-be base-stealers. He also had eight hits in the playoffs, including the decisive home run that led to the end of the Yankees' season in Game 4 of the ALDS. Regular season Vazquez was a huge disappointment.

1B Mitch Moreland: B-plus

Of the many perfectly-timed home runs the Red Sox relied upon this postseason, Moreland's three-run shot in Game 4 of the World Series might've been the most important. He was 5-for-17 despite playing through an injured hamstring and, similar to Vazquez, helped erase his subpar regular season in which he once again suffered a dramatic decrease in production later in the year.

1B Steve Pearce: A-plus

It's remarkable how one player can shape an entire nine-man lineup, but that's what Pearce did when he arrived midseason from the Blue Jays. He often hit third against lefties, who he crushed to the tune of a .304 average and .959 OPS. But his ability to hang with righties (.265/.828) gave the Red Sox a unique matchup advantage whenever he came off the bench. At 35 years old he won World Series MVP honors after a smashing postseason. Now the Red Sox must draw up a contract to lure him away from free agency.

2B Ian Kinsler: C-minus

There's a happy story in there somewhere: a 36-year-old, on the tail end of a marvelous career, who had fallen short in two previous World Series trips only to capture a title in his 13th big league season. Kinsler had a few key hits and made a couple nice plays throughout to earn his ring. But the Buckner-esque defensive mistake in Game 3 was unforgettable. And his offensive numbers overall look putrid: .242/.604 with the Sox in the regular season and .206/.523 in the playoffs.

2B Brock Holt: A

What a year for a player who once appeared to be without a roster spot back in spring training. Holt survived the cuts and continued to make himself useful. With two concussions and a case of vertigo behind him, he put together his best career year at the plate (.277/.774) and rotated through six positions on defense. His bat from Game 3 of the ALDS is now being preserved in the Hall of Fame.

3B Rafael Devers: B-plus

His three-run homer off Justin Verlander led the Red Sox past the Astros in the ALCS, but it wasn't Devers' only contribution. He had 10 hits in total this postseason to go with nine RBI, fourth-most on the team. At third base, where he led the majors in errors during the regular season, Devers was solid in October. It was the kind of growth that should have the team excited about his potential at age 22 in 2019.

3B Eduardo Nunez: B-minus

It's truly remarkable that Nunez made it through the entire season without a trip to the disabled list. He started the year with a bad knee and never seemed to fully recover, adding hamstring and ankle injuries along the way. He managed a .265/.677 line and was unpredictable on defense. A few memorable playoff moments shine a light on his otherwise dim year.

SS Xander Bogaerts: A-minus

It was a breakout season for the 26-year-old, who became just the 10th shortstop in the last 20 years to hit at least 40 doubles and 20 homers with an average of .280 or higher. He continues to make quiet growth in his defense, making just 10 errors, seventh-fewest among qualified shortstops. His bat was useful in the ALDS and ALCS but went quiet in the World Series. Still, there's little doubt he's a cornerstone player the Red Sox need to lock up before he hits free agency after the 2019 season.

LF Andrew Benintendi: B-plus

He hit just two home runs after the All-Star break and none in the postseason, but his lack of power shouldn't overshadow the growth he made as a complete hitter. Once a pull-happy power hitter, he became an average hitter who used all fields, which made him a difficult out against both lefty and righty pitching late in the year. There's still development to be made if he's to reach his ceiling.

CF Jackie Bradley Jr.: B-plus

There will always be questions about his bat, but he answered some with prolonged success in the second half into October. Nobody had more highlight reel hits in the postseason than Bradley, who finished with three homers and 10 RBI to go with a .360 on-base percentage.

RF Mookie Betts: A

After an A+ regular season, Betts' bat went quiet in the playoffs, when he hit .210 with a .623 OPS. But the Sox may not have advanced through the Astros without Betts' sizable contributions on defense. His presence atop the order was felt regardless, as he was intentionally walked a postseason-high four times. An MVP trophy should soon be his to keep.

DH J.D. Martinez: A-plus

Finishing the playoffs with a .300 average and .923 OPS, Martinez proved that the lights weren't too bright for him in October. It put the finishing touches on a record-setting first year in Boston as he hit .330 with 43 homers and 130 RBI, all while serving as somewhat of a second hitting coach in the Sox' clubhouse. His \$110-million contract could end up a bargain for the Red Sox.

Incomplete: Blake Swihart, Hanley Ramirez, Tzu-Wei Lin, Sam Travis, Brandon Phillips, Dustin Pedroia, Dan Butler, Tony Renda.

PITCHERS

SP Chris Sale: A-minus

Soon, perhaps, we'll learn exactly how severe his shoulder inflammation was. He was scratched twice during the postseason and, though he submitted some gutsy efforts and recorded the final out of the World Series, his 4.11 ERA left something to be desired. The Cy Young Award might've been his had he not missed most of the last two months on the disabled list.

SP David Price: A

It's hard to remember what he did in the regular season, or what he did in his first two postseason starts. All that'll be remembered from 2018 is that Price conquered his postseason demons, pitched three times on short rest and submitted one of the best World Series starts of the last 20 years.

SP Rick Porcello: B+

Just another mediocre regular season from the reliable mid-rotation starter was followed by an impressive playoff run that began with his set-up appearance in the eighth inning of Game 1 against the Yankees. He had a 3.52 postseason ERA after a 4.28 ERA in the regular season. His final year under contract is 2019.

SP Nathan Eovaldi: A-plus

His 97 pitches out of relief in Game 3 were the fifth-most in postseason history, and the very next day he made himself available out of the bullpen yet again. Eovaldi was arguably the most valuable Red Sox player in this postseason, finishing with a 1.61 ERA in 22⅓ innings. He's a free agent going into 2019.

SP Eduardo Rodriguez: B

Had he not given up that three-run blast to Yasiel Puig in Game 4, Rodriguez would've submitted one of the finest starts of the playoffs. The Red Sox think he did some real growing up this October, and they're still looking to unlock the potential of a lefty who throws in the mid-90s with a plus-plus changeup.

RP Craig Kimbrel: B-plus

All around it was a difficult year for Kimbrel, who missed most of spring training to be with his family due to his newborn daughter's health concerns. He finished with a 2.74 ERA, second-highest of his career, rarely looked comfortable in non-save situations or outings of longer than one inning and put up a postseason-high 5.91 ERA. Free agency looms for the talented closer.

RP Joe Kelly: A-minus

Two great months to start the season were followed by a long summer for Kelly, who struggled to undergo the necessary changes that led to his dynamite postseason. When he finally worked it out, Kelly became the Red Sox' most trusted reliever in the 'pen, throwing 11⅓ playoff innings while allowing just one earned run and striking out 13. He's heading into free agency.

RP Matt Barnes: A-minus

He was one of the game's best set-up men for the majority of the season until he tried pitching through a hip injury that caused him to miss a few weeks in September. He recovered in time to play a big role in the playoffs, allowing just one run in 8⅓ innings.

RP Ryan Brasier: A-plus

After signing a minor league contract and spending the first half of the year in the minors, Brasier came out of nowhere to lead the staff with a 1.60 ERA during the year. He added 8⅓ innings of one-run ball in the postseason.

RP Heath Hembree: B

It was just a mediocre season for Hembree, who has been the Red Sox' utility reliever the last four years, pitching in various roles from long man to set-up guy. He threw 4⅓ scoreless innings in the postseason.

Incomplete: Steven Wright, Brandon Workman, Bobby Poyner, Brian Johnson, Hector Velazquez, Drew Pomeranz, Tyler Thornburg, William Cuevas, Marcus Walden, Carson Smith, Justin Haley, Robby Scott, Jalen Beeks.

LEADERSHIP

Manager Alex Cora: A-plus

The locker room felt different with Cora at the helm from the beginning of spring training. He united players from all backgrounds, carefully managed big league egos, maneuvered games with a questionable bullpen, pulled career years out of several players and did it all while providing a clear face for the franchise. He also takes pride in his commitment to the hurricane recovery efforts in Puerto Rico. There was nothing but pure class and giant success from Cora in Year 1.

President of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski: A

Watching Travis Shaw help the Brewers get one win away from the World Series while Tyler Thornburg continues to battle shoulder issues must've been difficult for Dombrowski, who has otherwise compiled a long list of successful roster decisions since taking over mid-year in 2015. Signing Price, Martinez, Brasier and Moreland while acquiring Eovaldi and Pearce via trade all look like clear winners.

David Price: 'I'm opting in' to remainder of contract

Jason Mastrodonato

David Price locked himself into four more years with the Red Sox yesterday, when he said he would not initiate the only opt-out clause in the seven-year contract he signed before the 2016 season.

Speaking at Fenway Park before the World Series parade, Price said "I'm opting in. I'm not going anywhere. I want to win here. We did that this year and I want to do it again."

Red Sox principal owner John Henry will have to saddle up for the \$127 million still owed to the 33-year-old left-hander, who played a significant role in the World Series run but not without showing signs of declining throughout the regular season.

Henry said he thought there was a chance Price would opt out and become a free agent.

"Sure," Henry said. "You come to Boston and it's a tough town in many ways. I think (the opt-out) was probably there because it gave him an opportunity to see if he wanted to spend (all seven years here). He had a lot of choices when he decided to come to Boston. I think he wanted to see what it was going to be like.

"It would be hard for him, I think, to leave. It's been hard for me, and I've been here 17 years and I can't wait for each season. In my mind he was the co-MVP of this World Series."

Price had until midnight to make his decision, but it seemed unlikely considering he's owed \$31 million in 2019 and \$32 million each year from 2020-2022.

"There wasn't any re-consideration on my part ever," Price said. "I came here to win. We did that this year and that was very special and now we want to do it again."

Had he chose to leave, maybe he would've received another four-year contract elsewhere, though it almost certainly wouldn't have paid him \$31 million or \$32 million per season.

Jake Arrieta earned the most lucrative contract (via average annual salary) paid to a pitcher last winter, when he joined the Phillies for \$75 million over three years. And Arrieta was two years younger than Price is now, with a three-year ERA of 2.71 compared to Price's three-year ERA of 3.74.

Price's return means four members of the Red Sox rotation will be back in 2019: Chris Sale, Rick Porcello and Eduardo Rodriguez are the others. But given the high payout of Price's deal, it's not an ideal scenario for the Sox, who will need to start shelling out even more money to keep their stars around after next season.

They may lose Craig Kimbrel, Nathan Eovaldi, Joe Kelly, Steve Pearce, Ian Kinsler and Drew Pomeranz to free agency this offseason. And after 2019, Sale, Porcello, Xander Bogaerts, Mitch Moreland and Brock Holt can hit the market.

With so much money tied up in Price, the Sox will need him to be more than a mid-rotation starter.

His average fastball velocity of 93.1 mph was by far the lowest of his career and dropped drastically from the 94.5 mph average in 2017. The whiff percentage on all of his pitches dropped this year, too. It wasn't until the second round of the playoffs that Price began throwing in the 93-94 mph range while mixing in more of his changeup, which became a dominant out-pitch for him in the World Series.

His 1.37 ERA over his final four postseason appearances will surely keep him in the good graces of the fanbase.

"I'm not surprised," Hall of Famer Pedro Martinez said at Fenway yesterday when told Price was staying with the Red Sox. "I told you that David Price, just like this fanbase, he wanted to love Boston and Boston wanted to love him. It was just a matter of getting the monkey off his back and actually doing something positive."

Price said he's never had a problem with Red Sox fans, even though this spring he told J.D. Martinez he'd get booed in Boston and, in the offseason, said he was taunted with racial slurs while pitching at Fenway Park.

"I never had a problem with the fans, it was (the media) I had a problem with," he said yesterday. "That's it. Yeah, the fans supported me extremely well."

Henry said Boston is a city that welcomes redemption stories.

"Someone just said to me, 'We (the ownership group) came to Boston and Boston had this reputation of never winning in the playoffs,' " Henry said. "Someone said, 'David had the same thing.' I said, 'Well, Boston is a good place to come and get a monkey off your back.' Any kind of monkey, because the fans here support this team and make it so we can afford a player like David Price, whose talent came through."

Dave Dombrowski could be next in line for extension

Jason Mastrodonato

Are the Red Sox considering a contract extension for Dave Dombrowski?

The subject was on the mind of principal owner John Henry yesterday, when he was asked before the World Series parade about the team's interest in trying to negotiate with Chris Sale, who will be a free agent after 2019.

“It’s something I haven’t discussed with Dave, the timing and all that stuff,” Henry said. “We have the same issue — we’re running out of time with Dave Dombrowski as well. There are a lot of things to discuss this winter.”

Dombrowski, the president of baseball operations, signed a five-year contract with the Sox in the middle of the 2015 season, when he took over decision-making power from former general manager Ben Cherington.

Though the majority of the players on the World Series roster were already in the organization when Dombrowski arrived, the Red Sox have had success under his lead. Overall, the Sox are 319-210 (.603) in the regular season and 12-9 in the postseason since Dombrowski was hired.

Though it could be argued he waited too long to move on from former manager John Farrell, Dombrowski certainly made the right choice in Alex Cora to replace him. The David Price contract may end up hurting them down the road, but it led directly to a championship. And the majority of Dombrowski’s trades have looked good on paper, with the Travis Shaw deal the only glaring mistake.

Dombrowski, 62, has long been known for emptying the farm system in order to put the best product on the major league field. It’s worked so far in Boston, but the Red Sox will start to see their young stars hitting free agency in the next couple years.

Sale will be 30 years old when he’s a free agent next winter.

“We haven’t had any conversations about any contracts thus far,” Henry said. “I haven’t talked to Dave. We’re focused, like the players, on one thing. I’ve never seen a year where there was no talk about contracts, no talk about media. I was the only one who complained about the media this year. You never see that. All that will be discussed.”

Pearce wants in

Among Dombrowski’s first orders of business this offseason should be to consider a new contract for Steve Pearce, the World Series MVP.

Before the parade, Pearce re-emphasized his desire to stay in Boston.

“That’s something I leave it up to my agent to do, but myself personally, I would love to come back,” he said. “This has been a fun year. I’d love to do it again next year.”

Ian Kinsler, another midseason acquisition by Dombrowski, didn’t perform well in his time in Boston, but the pending free agent said he’s still hoping to play in the majors next year.

“The teams make decisions on players, however they do it. I don’t know how the process works out,” he said. “It’s very tough to break down, and whatever happens in free agency happens. I want to continue playing. I think I have a lot of baseball left in me. I feel great. My body feels great. But outside that, we’re holding onto this moment, I’m holding onto this moment as long as I can.”

Duck, duck, Mookie

Mookie Betts had only been on a duckboat once before yesterday.

“It was a couple of years back doing a tour,” he said. “This is a different reason. It’s definitely a better reason.

Betts wore a Halloween themed “Trick or Treat” hat for the parade. He said he’s yet to reflect on a wild season.

“Not yet, I think everything has been moving too fast,” he said. “Once I get home and get kind of settled, I’m sure I’ll take a step back and kind of reflect and enjoy the memories that I have. Right now, everything’s kind of moving too fast.” . . .

NECN reported a 36-year-old Red Sox fan was stabbed and beaten after the team’s title-clinching Game 5 victory at Dodger Stadium on Sunday night.

*** *The Providence Journal***

Now that they’ve silenced the doubters, Red Sox bask in vindication

Bill Koch

BOSTON — Turns out we might not have known this Red Sox team as well as we thought.

Anyone could see the expected strong collection of talent on the field. Postgame comments from players were professional and somewhat reserved, right in line with what is generally heard in clubhouses and locker rooms these days.

But underneath simmered a certain brand of resentment that boiled over once the calendar flipped to October. Boston took no prisoners while steamrolling its way through the playoffs, and its ninth World Series championship in franchise history was celebrated with a vindicating rolling rally through the city on Wednesday.

The combined 1-6 record in the past two American League Division Series appearances and resulting criticism appears to have had a galvanizing effect. Emotions came out in driblets and drabs once it was clear these Red Sox were a cut above some of their most recent predecessors. Vanquishing the 100-win Yankees, 100-win Astros and two-time National League champion Dodgers was a gauntlet Boston ran through all too easily.

“It’s a tribute to all of these guys,” Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said Sunday night in Los Angeles, a clinching 5-1 victory in Game 5 already secured. “You don’t get to that point unless you’re talented, but you grind. You really work through things. You bounce back, you’re resilient and you’re tough. And that’s this group.”

Was it really? These couldn’t have been the same Red Sox who bowed so meekly to Cleveland and Houston in each of the past two seasons. Aside from firing manager John Farrell, hiring manager Alex Cora and signing free-agent slugger J.D. Martinez, this wasn’t a starkly different group from the one that fell to the eventual champion Astros in four games last season.

Until it was. Until this roster steamrolled to a franchise-record 108 wins in the regular season. Until this group rebuffed a multi-pronged assault from skeptical fans and media alike, with Boston’s overall character questioned as much as its performance on the field.

“It’s hard to put into words, but I finally realize what the grind is,” said pitcher Chris Sale, who recorded the final three outs of the season. “This is a grind.”

What was Aaron Judge thinking? The Yankees stole home field advantage from the Red Sox in the American League Division Series thanks to a 6-2 victory in Game 2, and Judge strolled out of Fenway Park with ‘New York, New York’ playing from a sound system perched on his shoulder. That same song was heard three nights later in the visiting clubhouse at Yankee Stadium when Boston clinched the best-of-5 series win, including a 16-1 thumping in Game 3.

“The sky was falling,” Cora said at Wednesday’s rally. “We lost Game 2, and it was panic here. Everybody was like, ‘Whoa, it’s over!’”

“Then we scored 16 [runs] at Yankee Stadium. Suck on it.”

What was Alex Bregman thinking? Trying to troll Nathan Eovaldi on Instagram over some home runs he allowed with Tampa Bay against Houston in June seemed a bit out of touch. This was a different pitcher who roared into the American League Championship Series, one who notched an 8-2 victory in Game 3 and came out of the bullpen for 1 1/3 scoreless innings to help lock down the clinching Game 5.

“I feel I’m a completely different pitcher,” Eovaldi said prior to Game 3, foreshadowing his pair of strong outings. “I’m attacking it a lot differently.”

What was Manny Machado thinking? He loafed down the line on one particular single off the wall in left field, failed to beat out a grounder to a sprawling Rafael Devers at deep third and buried his cleats into the heel of his good friend Steve Pearce at first base. At best Machado was flaky, at worst petulant and weak-minded — two things the Red Sox were certainly not against the Dodgers.

“We grind together,” said Pearce, who was named the series Most Valuable Player thanks to his three home runs. “And I think that’s one of the best things that probably sum up our season. We’re together.”

That’s how Boston’s fourth championship club of this century will be remembered. There was a certain amount of dirt under their fingernails, a lunch-pail gang at heart masterfully directed by Cora through seven months of brilliant baseball. Perhaps we all should have seen this coming in the first place.

Steve Pearce’s family glad he didn’t hang ’em up

Kevin McNamara

The wide smile and slow, amazed head shake of Jessica Pearce near home plate at Dodger Stadium Sunday night said so much about the unlikely rise of a World Series hero.

Pearce had just left a press conference where her husband, Steve, accepted the Willie Mays Award as the MVP of the World Series. As her husband and 6-year-old daughter, Jensen, sat amid the TV lights and answered questions, Jessica had sobbed with joy in the back of the room and held the couple’s baby boy, 9-month-old Crew.

“It’s been an unbelievable journey. We’ve been everywhere,” she said. “This is surreal.”

In a sports world where the MVP trophies usually go to spoiled superstars, Pearce is the flip side. He’s toiled in relative obscurity for 11 major league seasons. He’s played for seven different teams, signed a series of one-year contracts and been released or granted free agency a half-dozen times in his career.

At one point, he considered hanging up his cleats and going to college. Then, in what can only be described as a moment where baseball’s stars aligned, everything came together for one week.

At 35 years old, Steve Pearce’s moment of perfection arrived. A critical, clutch, solo home run that tied Game 4 of the World Series was followed by a three-run double that clinched a huge comeback win. Then, in Sunday’s Game 5, the magic returned. First, a two-run home run that gave the Red Sox a quick lead in the top of the first. Then, a solo homer in the seventh that cemented his legacy as a New England sports hero.

“You know, baseball is a funny game. You never know where the game will take you,” Pearce said. “And I’ve gone through a lot in my life and in my career to be here. I couldn’t be more thankful.”

Fans can easily forget about the journey of their sports heroes but their families certainly don’t. They live that journey. While always well-compensated, Pearce hit more than 15 home runs only once in his career and never batted above .300.

"It's amazing, it's crazy," Jessica Pearce said. "We never, ever dreamt that we'd be here with all the injuries, getting released, going back to teams multiple times. He was ready to sign up for college."

When the Red Sox traded for Pearce on June 28, the couple hoped for the best. The Blue Jays had signed Pearce to the best contract of his career (two years, \$12.5 million) but Boston owned the best team in baseball.

"We knew they were the best team but also knew that if they wanted him, they had a plan for him. That was a great compliment," Jessica Pearce said. "We were just excited to see where the ride would take us."

After Hanley Ramirez's release, Pearce and Mitch Moreland shared first-base duties. Pearce's power bat became a weapon and his stretches at first base a welcome defensive skill.

But shining in the game's brightest spotlight was clearly a life-changing career highlight that the Pearce family will never forget.

"I've been screaming for two days," Jessica Pearce said. "It was unbelievable. I was in utter shock. My phone was vibrating the whole game. Everyone is so excited."

As Steve Pearce wrapped up his news conference, he remarked that his father, also named Steven, grew up in Rehoboth and made sure his three sons were Red Sox fans. That Sox love never waned and now he'll never be forgotten in New England.

"This is the greatest feeling of my life," he said. "When you're a kid, this is where you want to be. And it's happening right now. And I get to celebrate it with my family and friends sitting back there. I know they're happy. They're on cloud nine, as I am. This is a great moment. I'm so glad I get to share it with everybody."

*** *MassLive.com***

Chris Sale potential extension: Boston Red Sox's John Henry says, 'We haven't had any conversations about any contracts'

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- The Red Sox exercised their club option for ace Chris Sale on Tuesday.

Sale -- who will earn \$15 million in 2019 -- is eligible for free agency after the 2019 season.

Red Sox principal owner John Henry said the Red Sox haven't discussed any extension with Sale.

"We haven't had any conversations about any contracts thus far," Henry said. "I haven't talked to Dave (Dombrowski). We've been focused like the players on one thing. I've never seen a year in which there was no talk about contracts, there was no talk about media. I was the only one who complained about the media this year. But you never see that. But all that will be discussed."

Sale will turn 30 on March 30. Are the Red Sox willing to extend a pitcher in his 30s?

"We signed David (Price) I think when he was 30," Henry said. "Everyone sooner or later has an age issue. But look at what this team accomplished with older players, younger players. Steve Pearce is 35 I think. Where would we be without Steve?"

Price was 30 when the Red Sox signed him.

Henry also was asked if extending Sale was a priority for the Red Sox this winter.

"This winter?" Henry replied. "Again it's something I have to discuss with Dave. Timing and all that stuff. We have the same issue: we're running out of time with Dave Dombrowski as well. So there are a lot of things to discuss this winter."

Dombrowski signed a five-year contract when the Red Sox hired him in August 2015.

John Henry: David Price staying with Boston Red Sox is 'great news,' he 'was the co-MVP of the World Series'

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- Principal owner John Henry is glad that David Price will remain with the Red Sox through 2022.

Price announced before the World Series parade Wednesday his plan to opt in to the remaining four years, \$127 million of his seven-year contract.

"In my mind he was the co-MVP of the World Series," Henry said here at Fenway Park. "I can't imagine we end up winning this thing without David Price this year. He was willing to pitch every day, sacrifice himself. Being in the bullpen every day. He like so many others on this team had no selfishness. I've never seen a club that had the kind of selflessness. So that's great news."

Price struggled in his first postseason start this year. He lasted only 1.2 innings and gave up three runs in Game 2 of the ALDS against the Yankees.

He went 3-0 with a 2.59 ERA (24.1 innings, seven earned runs) in five outings, four starts, between the ALCS and World Series. The opposition slashed .176/.260/.306/.566 against him.

Price won both his World Series starts. He allowed just one run in 7-plus innings in Game 5, the clincher.

"Someone just said to me that when we came to Boston, Boston had this reputation of never winning in the playoffs," Henry said. "Somebody said that David had the same thing. And I said, 'Well, Boston's a good place to come to get the monkey off your back. Any kind of monkey.' Because the fans here support this team and make it so we can afford a player like David Price whose talent came through."

Henry said he wasn't always sure Price would stay.

"You come to Boston and it's a tough town in many ways," he said. "I think it was there because it gave him an opportunity to see did he want to spend--? He had a lot of choices when he decided to come to Boston. But I think he wanted to see what it was going to be like. And it would hard for me to ever leave. I assume David feels the same way at this point."

Steve Pearce, Boston Red Sox haven't discussed his return yet but World Series MVP says, 'I would love to come back'

Christopher Smith

BOSTON -- Steve Pearce, a pending free agent, hasn't told the Red Sox he's interested in returning next year. But he is.

"That's something I leave up to my agent to do, but myself personally, I would love to come back," Pearce said before the World Series Parade on Wednesday. "This has been a fun year. And I'd love to do it again next year."

Pearce won the World Series MVP, going 4-or-12 with three homers, one double, eight RBIs and four walks.

"The matchups kind of played into my favor with all lefties and getting a bunch of starts," Pearce said. "So that was cool. That was really cool on the big stage that my number was called."

He said winning the World Series and the aftermath has been a surreal experience.

"I'm soaking it all in and loving every minute of it," Pearce said.

"It's overwhelming and fun," Pearce added. "And just being here with my teammates celebrating right now, this is what you dream about."

Pearce slashed .279/.394/.507/.901 with seven homers, eight doubles, one triple and 26 RBIs in 50 games after Boston acquired him from the Blue Jays on June 28.

Alex Cora's parade message to those who doubted Red Sox in ALDS: 'We scored 16 at Yankee Stadium'

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox manager Alex Cora addressed fans at Fenway Park before the the start of the World Series championship parade Thursday. The manager reflected on how many fans thought the Sox might be doomed after their Game 2 loss to the Yankees that evened the ALDS at 1-1 on Oct. 6.

"Think about it," Cora said. "The New York Yankees? Yeah, the sky was falling. We lost Game 2 and it was panicking here, everybody was like, 'oh, it's over.' We scored 16 at Yankee Stadium. Suck on it."

Here's the full clip, via NBC Sports Boston.

David Price opts in: Boston Red Sox LHP will remain with Sox through 2022

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Red Sox left-hander David Price will not exercise his opt-out clause and will remain with the Red Sox, he told reporters before the team's World Series championship parade Wednesday.

"I'm opting in," Price said. "I'm not going anywhere. I want to win here."

Price will remain under contract with the Red Sox through 2022, earning \$127 million over four years. His original contract included an opt-out clause that would have allowed him to test free agency after the 2018 season.

Price was always expected to stay with Boston, though his strong performance late in the postseason made it at least somewhat possible that he would test free agency. Price had his best overall season with the Sox in 2018, posting a 16-7 record and 3.58 ERA before winning two World Series games against the Dodgers.

*** *RedSox.com***

A familiar sight: World Series parade in Boston

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Horns were blaring. Confetti was flying. The music was cranking. And the World Series champion Red Sox thrilled their fans when they emerged from Fenway Park on duck boats and roamed through their sports-crazed city.

It was an all too familiar scene, one that never gets old to those who observe it.

This was the 11th championship parade that Boston has hosted since February 2002. And for the Red Sox, a team that didn't win a championship from 1919-2003, this was the fourth parade in the past 15 seasons.

"So many people, so much energy, it was unbelievable," said Red Sox slugger J.D. Martinez.

Nathan Eovaldi, the flame-throwing righty who emerged as a force in the postseason, had just one word to survey the scene.

"Indescribable," Eovaldi said.

World Series hero David Price was flanked by his 17-month-old son Xavier, who was a fixture at postgame news conferences this October.

"I'm still kind of at a loss for words for what we were able to accomplish as a team," Price said. "For us to be a world champion, that's what it's all about."

It was the happiest kind of Halloween imaginable for the Red Sox. Players on the duck boats needed to have their hands ready, as fans continually tossed canned beverages at them.

"This is really good, everyone is saying 'Hi,' thousands of people," said lefty Eduardo Rodriguez. "I love Boston and all these people. Since I was a little kid, I was waiting for a chance to play in the World Series. This means a lot. I've wanted this all my life, and I hope it happens again."

Steve Pearce, role player extraordinaire, rode in his duck boat as the MVP of the World Series.

"It's been surreal, but I'm soaking it all in and loving every minute of it," Pearce said. "It's everything. It's been so overwhelming and fun. Being here with my teammates, celebrating right now, this is what you dream about."

Ace Chris Sale fired up the crowd by waving his hands emphatically, much like he got his teammates going with his words in the dugout when they trailed 4-0 in Game 4. Martinez, the key addition to this year's squad, waved a 2018 World Series championship flag. Players took turns passing the trophy from boat to boat.

"To be here holding up the trophy at the end of the year, this is what it's all about," Pearce said. "This is why you put in all the work during the year. The injuries, the slumps, the offseason -- everything has all accumulated to get where we're at right now. Now we're hoisting the trophy at the end of the year with all our teammates. This is awesome."

The weather even cooperated on a sun-splashed day, with temperatures pushing close to 50 by the time the parade started.

"Everyone has been very welcoming, obviously," said right fielder Mookie Betts. "Everyone is excited. It's just something I'll never forget."

And as Betts will find over time, the heroics of this team -- which went 119-57 including the playoffs -- won't be forgotten.

To underscore that point, the Red Sox brought back some of their past October heroes for the parade ride, including David Ortiz, Pedro Martinez and Jason Varitek.

What is it like to for a champion to ride through a parade?

"It's a special feeling," Pedro Martinez said. "You have to live it to describe it. It's the best feeling ever."

Price won't opt out of contract with Red Sox

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The duck boats hadn't even left Fenway Park yet, but Red Sox lefty David Price already made a decision regarding his future: He will remain in Boston for the final four years of his contract.

Price had until midnight ET on Wednesday to opt out of the remaining four years of the seven-year, \$217-million contract he signed in December 2015, but the World Series hero didn't even give it a thought.

"Yeah, I'm opting in. I'm not going anywhere," he said. "I want to win here. We did that this year, and I want to do it again. There wasn't any reconsideration on my part ever. I came here to win. We did that this year and that was very special, and now we want to do it again."

At times during Price's first three seasons with the Red Sox, there was speculation that he would consider opting out because of heat from the fans for his past postseason failures and a relationship with the media that was sometimes contentious.

But Price never hinted he would opt out, and now it's official he won't.

"I never had a problem with the fans. It was you guys [in the media] I had a problem with," he said. "That's it. Yeah, they supported me extremely well."

Hall of Famer Pedro Martinez was pleased to hear that Price will stay with the Sox.

"David Price wanted to love Boston, and Boston wanted to love him," Martinez said. "It was just a matter of getting the monkey off his back and actually doing something positive. David Price said very early in the season, it didn't matter what he did in the regular season, he wanted to prove something in the postseason for the city of Boston and for the team, and he did it. This is a warrior. I'm extremely proud of him."

After going winless in his first 11 career postseason starts, Price couldn't have ended that drought in any more dramatic fashion. He pitched a gem against the Astros on three days' rest to win Game 5 of the American League Championship Series and clinch a World Series berth. Price then beat the Dodgers with six solid innings in Game 2 of the World Series and was again masterful in clinching Game 5.

"He should have been the co-MVP of the World Series," said Red Sox owner John Henry. "I can't imagine we would have wound up winning without David Price this year."

Henry was also enthused to hear Price is staying put.

"That's great news," Henry said.

Did Henry ever think there was a chance Price wouldn't fulfill the entire seven years of the contract?

"Sure, you come to Boston and it's a tough town in many ways. So I think [the opt-out] was probably there because it gave him an opportunity to see how it is," Henry said. "I think he wanted to see what it would be like. It would be hard for me to ever leave. I would assume David feels the same way at this point."

*** WEEL.com**

David Price announces he will not opt out of Red Sox contract: 'I'm not going anywhere'

John Tomase

David Price has a message for Red Sox fans: "I'm not going anywhere."

Speaking to reporters at Fenway Park before the championship parade, Price said he would not exercise the opt-out in his contract. He had to make a decision by Wednesday.

"I'm opting in. I'm not going anywhere," he told reporters, including WEEI.com's Rob Bradford. "I want to win here. We did that this year and I want to do it again."

Price had his best season as a member of the Red Sox, punctuated by a pair of wins in the World Series, including the clinching Game 5. When he beat the Astros in the American League Championship Series, it marked the first victory in a playoff start of his career.

He has four years and \$127 million remaining on the seven-year, \$217 million contract he signed before the 2015 season.

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

David Price decides to remain with Red Sox for 4 more years

Sean McAdam

The 2018 Red Sox were remarkably free of drama, and a few days into the offseason, that trend is continuing.

Fully 14 hours before he had to decide, David Price declared that it was his intention to remain under contract with the Red Sox for the remaining four years on his original landmark seven-year, \$217 million deal, signed in December of 2015.

A clause in his contract could have allowed Price to opt-out and seek a better deal elsewhere, or provide leverage for the Red Sox to rip up the current deal and add another year or two for more money.

But Price, who turned his reputation on its head with two strong starts in the World Series, made it known that he wouldn't be playing any contractual games.

"I'm opting in. I'm not going anywhere," said Price at Fenway Park, as he and his teammates gathered to take part in the victory parade throughout downtown Boston. "I want to win here and we did that this year and I want to do it again."

Price now will earn \$127 million over the next four seasons, with \$31 million due in 2019 and \$32 annually in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Price earned the first postseason win of his career when he won Game 5 of the American League Championship Series in Houston, as the Sox clinched the American League pennant. Then, after winning Game 2 of the Series the following week, allowing two runs in six innings, Price tossed seven dominant innings Sunday night, yielding only one run — on his first pitch of the game — as the Sox won their fourth title in 14 seasons.

"That was special," Price said of his role. "If I could have drawn it up, that's the way I would have drawn it up. I'm definitely happy that it happened that way and even more happy that we're world champions."

When Price pitched as well as he did in October, eliminating that one hole in his resume, there was some speculation that he might look to go elsewhere. But the lefty said he never gave much thought to that.

“There wasn’t any reconsideration on my part, ever,” he said. “I came here to win. That was very special and now I want to do it again.”

Price was one of many potential free agents on the roster. Now that he’s returning, he would like some others eligible for free agency — closer Craig Kimbrel, reliever Joe Kelly, starter Nathan Eovaldi and World Series MVP Steve Pearce — to return with him.

“Absolutely,” said Price. “We want to be able to keep as many guys here as we can. We had a very good team this year and we want to continue with that trend.”

Red Sox principal owner John Henry was happy with Price’s decision.

“Someone just said to me, ‘We came to Boston and Boston has this reputation of never winning in the playoffs and David had the same thing (said about him),’ ” said Henry. “And I said, ‘Well, Boston is a good place to come to get the monkey off your back.’ Because the fans here support this team and make it so that we can afford a player like David Price, whose talent shone through.

“You come to Boston and it’s a tough town in many ways. I think (the opt-out) was there to give him the opportunity to see if he wanted to spend (the entire contract here). He had a lot of choices when he came to Boston, but I think he wanted to see what it’s like. Just as it would be hard for me to ever leave, I would assume David feels the same way.”

Said Pedro Martinez: “I’m not surprised (he’s staying). I think David Price wanted to stay attached to this fan base. He wanted to love Boston; Boston wanted to love him. It was just a matter of getting the monkey off his back and actually doing something positive. David Price said very early in the regular season that it didn’t matter what he did in the regular season. He wanted to do something for the city of Boston and the team and he did it. And I’m extremely proud of him.”

Red Sox Notebook: With David Price now set, is extending Chris Sale next for the Red Sox?

Sean McAdam

Now that the Red Sox now David Price is returning for four more years, it may be time for the team to turn its attention to Chris Sale.

Sale had his 2019 option (worth \$15 million) picked up Tuesday, but is eligible for free agency after next year. It would behoove the Sox to get to work on an extension for Sale this winter so that they don’t risk losing him a year from now.

“We haven’t had any conversations about any contracts thus far,” said principal owner John Henry. “I haven’t talked to Dave (Dombrowski, president of baseball operations). We’ve been focused, like the players, on one thing. I’ve never seen a year (like this) where there was no talk about contracts, no talk about media. All that will be discussed.”

In the past, the Sox have reservations about giving long-term deals to pitchers in their 30s, citing the poor track record on such deals. Occasionally, they’ve broken with their philosophical opposition, as they did when they signed Price to a record-setting seven-year, \$217 million deal, but that came a year after they were reluctant to get into the bidding for Jon Lester, who instead signed a long-term deal with the Chicago Cubs.

Sale will turn 30 in March, before the 2019 season begins.

“We signed David when he was 30,” Henry pointed out. “Everyone has, sooner or later, an age issue. But look at what this team accomplished with older players, younger players. Steve Pearce is 35, I think. Where would be without Steve?”

Asked if extending Sale would be a priority this winter, Henry responded: “This winter? Again, it’s something I have to discuss with Dave about timing and all that stuff. We have the same issue, we’re running out of time with Dave Dombrowski as well. So there are a lot of things to discuss this winter.”

Dombrowski, who joined the Sox in August of 2015, signed for five full seasons after that, meaning his current contract runs through the end of 2020.

Among the other players eligible for free agency include Pearce, a mid-season acquisition from the Toronto Blue Jays, who went on to be named MVP of the World Series with three homers and a bases-clearing double in the final two games in Los Angeles.

Told that Price had announced his intention to remain with the Sox, Pearce said: “I’m stoked. David Price is one of the best pitchers in baseball. I hope I get the chance to come back here and be his teammate this year. Of course (I want to come back). We just won a world championship. We have a great team. Heck yeah, I want to come back next year.”

Prior to boarding the duck boats, Pearce said: “I want to be able to sit back and try to soak it all in. This is for the fans. It’s going to be a cool experience. I’m just going to take it all in right now.”

Ian Kinsler, who just finished his 13th season and has played more than 1,800 regular season games in the big leagues, is still trying to process the fact that he was part of a World Series winning team.

“It’s a bunch of feeling rolled into one,” said Kinsler. “For me, I just reflect on what it took to get here and just how lucky I was to be traded (to the Red Sox at the non-waiver trade deadline). Dave wanted me at the deadline and Alex (Cora) wanted me at the deadline. Just to be a part of this special team. It’s been a pleasure. It’s been a great trip. It was a lot of fun to be part of it.”

Three days after winning the clincher Sunday, Kinsler said it still hasn’t quite sunk in.

“It comes and it goes throughout the day,” Kinsler said. “You get a flood of emotions. You get a moment of silence, maybe when you’re driving in the car and you start thinking about it all. Then it kind of goes away and you remember it a couple of hours later. You try to reflect on everything. It’s a great moment. It’s so fun to be part of it. It’s awesome that it’s here in Boston, a place that I love to play. It was a great, great year.”

Ultimately, Kinsler has to decide what he’s going to do next, but for now, he’s in no hurry.

“I’m going to hold onto this (feeling) for a while,” he said. “Free agency, it is what it is. It’s really out of my control. The teams make a decision on players, however they do it. It’s very tough to peg. Whatever happens in free agency, happens. I want to continue playing. I think I have a lot of baseball left in me. I feel great. My body feels great. But outside of that, I’m holding onto this moment for as long as I can.”

Mookie Betts was still glowing in the immediate aftermath of the championship.

“(These last few days) have been amazing,” Betts said. “Everybody’s been very welcoming, obviously, excited. It’s something I’ll never forget, for sure.”

Betts was drafted by the Red Sox out of high school and has been part of the organization since 2011. As such, he may have more of an appreciation for what took place in L.A., since he's worked his way through the minor league system and been a part of the Sox for the past eight years.

"I'm sure I probably imagined (what it would be like to win a World Series)," he said, "and wanted to be a part of it, obviously. I knew it would take some work. A lot of things have to line up for it to work out. I got on a ballclub with a great manager for it all to work out and then we had to go execute it. It's one of those things where the stars aligned, you know?"

Betts admitted that he hasn't been able to put the whole season in perspective.

"Not yet," he said. "Everything's been moving too fast. Once you get home and get kind of settled, I'm sure I take a step back and kind of reflect and enjoy the memories that I have. Right now, it's kind of moving too fast. I'm looking forward to this parade. I know it's going to be a great thing for the city."

*** *The Athletic***

'Like being in the epicenter of an earthquake of cheering': What it's like to drive a duck boat in a Boston championship parade

Jen McCaffrey

Drew Richards woke up at 3:30 a.m. Wednesday at his home in Fairhaven, roughly 60 miles south of Boston.

It figured to be a busy day for the 16-year veteran of Boston Duck Tours. Richards was one of 25 drivers tasked with navigating the streets of Boston for the Red Sox World Series parade.

It marked the 11th time the duck boats have helped the city celebrate a championship victory for Boston's professional teams – five for the Patriots, four for the Red Sox and one each for the Celtics and Bruins.

Richards has now been a duck boat driver in five of those parades, including for the 2004 Red Sox championship and the 2014 Patriots' Super Bowl XLIX victory.

The novelty hasn't worn off for him.

"It's weird to see these people all year long on TV and all of the sudden just be standing there in front of them," Richards said. "It's crazy."

For example, chief among Richards' highlights on Wednesday was a chance encounter with David Ortiz, who rode in a duck boat with the Red Sox' owners.

Richards stumbled to get his phone camera working for a quick picture, but said Ortiz was happy to oblige.

"As soon as he saw I got (the camera) up and ready to go, he stopped. And took that good photo," Richards said.

"That was pretty exciting just to see these guys in person."

On Wednesday, Richards arrived at the Boston Duck Tour garage in the Fields Corner section of Dorchester around 5 a.m. and picked up his assigned boat for the day, Catie Copley. Each boat has a whimsical name with a Boston twist (like Charlie River, Faneuil Holly, North End Norma and Red Sox Nathan to name a few others).

“You do a circle check to make sure everything is working and then head over to South Bay (Center),” Richards said.

The massive shopping plaza parking lot in Dorchester is where the duck boats head after leaving the garage in order to get in the correct order for the parade. Every boat has signs denoting which players and personnel are to be on board.

“It’s a big enough parking lot where you can move around and circle and line up,” Richards said. “Then from there you go up to Fenway Park.”

The boats are ready and waiting outside Fenway on Lansdowne Street around 6:30 a.m. but the parade doesn’t begin until 11 a.m. It’s always better to be running early on these days, with so many logistical gymnastics at play.

Richards packs a backpack full of food and water for the idle time and brings a large coffee for the long morning.

“Hopefully if you’re smart you use the bathroom right before,” he said.

His passengers on Wednesday included members of the Red Sox front office staff. He was directly behind the massive L.L. Bean boot. Despite not having any of the big name players on his duck boat, he was impressed with the crowd’s energy.

“It felt more intense than I thought it would be,” Richards said. “I didn’t have any players around me. Mookie Betts was two ducks behind me, and nothing in front of me other than the boot. Then in front of the boot was a flatbed. Then in front of that was a staff one.”

One fan was arrested for allegedly throwing a beer can that hit Red Sox manager Alex Cora during the parade. Richards said he saw beer cans being thrown.

“People thought the (LL Bean) boot was hollow at the top so everybody is throwing beer cans and bottles out of the crowd to try to get it into the boot,” he said. “And what scared me is that sometimes these cans were half full or full and they skim the top, go right over into the crowd on the other side. And of course they (the crowd on the other side) have no idea what’s going on.”

Richards also drove boats in 2005 following the Patriots’ Super Bowl XXXIX victory and 2007 for the Red Sox World Series win. But the 2004 Red Sox and Super Bowl XLIX Patriots parades were most special for him.

Richards started driving for the Boston Duck Tours in 2002, after the company had already hosted one parade for the Patriots. At the time, parade drivers were selected based on seniority, but after the first few parades, they made a switch.

“They changed the policy not based on seniority solely — it was actually more like, how many parades have you done? And if you’d done multiple parades, you got dropped to the bottom of the list to give people a chance,” Richards explained.

But, new to the company back then, Richards didn’t know they had made that change. Born in Cambridge and raised in Lexington, driving a duck boat in the 2004 parade would have been a dream. So he pleaded his case to Boston Duck Boat owner and operator Phil Young.

“When the Red Sox swept and won Game 4, I called up Phil at 1 o’clock in the morning and basically begged him, ‘Is there any way?’” Richards said. “And he told me they changed the policy and I was like, ‘Wait doesn’t that put me at the top of the list?’ And he was like ‘Yeah you’re in the parade,’ and I remember I just started crying.”

That year, Richards drove the duck boat carrying Theo Epstein and Terry Francona.

“Having David Ortiz, Manny Ramirez and Doug Mientkiewicz, and (Orlando) Cabrera (in the duck) right in front of me that was like being in the epicenter of an earthquake of cheering,” Richards said. “I’ll never forget that. At any given point you have at least 20,000 people in your immediate vicinity but they’re so packed in and they’re all screaming at the top of their lungs in your direction, all at the same time. It must be like what it feels like to be in a ballpark when you’re a player and you hit a home run and everyone is focusing and screaming at you. Pretty adrenaline rushing experience.”

In 2015, Richards pleaded one more time with Young to drive in the parade. He’s a massive Patriots fan.

“It’s not a sport for me, it’s a religion,” he said.

The Patriots’ Super Bowl XLIX win over the Seahawks was their first win since 2004.

“I never call Phil but I called him again pretty late at night and I was like, ‘Phil, I know I’ve been in a bunch of these but I hadn’t been in a parade in 10 years please could you get me on this,’” Richards recalled. “I don’t know if that’s how it worked out but he got me on.”

There was a problem, though.

Richards was in New York City for the Super Bowl with his wife and brother. Once he got word he’d be driving in the parade, he made way for Boston — in the middle of a nor’easter.

“I’m in New York and (the storm is) going up 95 and it’s literally following me,” he said. “I’m in a small Volkswagen Golf and I should have changed out the tires three months earlier and it’s me in this Golf and it’s snowing like three inches an hour and it’s trucks everywhere and I remember thinking I’m going to die.”

Ten-and-a-half hours later, Richards arrived in Boston.

“I feel like god or the universe or what-have-you made me earn that parade because when I showed up, I ended up having (Julian) Edelman, (Danny) Amendola and (Brandon) LaFell, (Aaron) Dobson and (Brian) Tyms,” he said.

Edelman decided to climb on the roof of the boat with a Patriots flag, a photo that would become an enduring image from that parade. Richards knew he couldn’t stop the duck boat, so he slowed it down, even though they only average 6-7 miles per hour along the route.

“That was probably the most intense parade,” he said.

But how does one even get into the duck boat driving business? Richards, an anthropology and Spanish literature major at UMass Amherst, worked for the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority in college. Over the summers, he would head to Martha’s Vineyard to serve as a tour guide, something a lot of UMass students who worked at the PVT did.

Someone floated the idea to him that he should use his tour guide experience to apply for a duck boat job in Boston. Richards landed the dream job in 2002.

Sixteen years later, he’s still driving. He estimates he does 350 to 400 tours a year and has logged roughly 15,000 hours behind the wheel of the duck boats.

Because he’d already done four parades, Richards was initially at the bottom of the list to drive on Wednesday for the Red Sox parade. But he was already on the schedule to do normal duck tours that day before they had to scrap the schedule (tourists were refunded) for the parade festivities.

“It was total luck that I was on this parade,” he said. “I’ve been in so many parades and there’s so many people here really that deserve to be in the parade, but I was scheduled to work today and the way it worked for this one was that everybody who was scheduled to work, had the right to work. I was like, ‘Hey I’ll take a sick day,’ but they were like, ‘No if you’re working we want you to work,’ and I don’t want to lose 10 hours of pay. So I showed up.”

Twelve hours after his day began, Richards was back in the duck boat garage in Dorchester, having dropped off Catie Copley for the night.

“It was good. It’s always mayhem,” Richards said.

Not that he expected anything less.

Humility. Confidence. Perspective. How Alex Cora harnessed all the right qualities and became the face of the Red Sox

Chad Jennings

World Series Game 4 was over, opportunity lie ahead, and Red Sox chairman Tom Werner was navigating the labyrinth of Dodger Stadium’s lower-level hallways with owner John Henry last Saturday night. Just as they’d done throughout the postseason, those two made their way into the office of manager Alex Cora to tell him congratulations, to wish him luck. But this time, Cora was the one with the message.

“I’m going to go with David Price tomorrow,” he told them. “Not Chris Sale. And David Price is locked in.”

Those are the words Werner remembers. Quick and to the point. Punctuated with a certainty and conviction that belied Cora’s relative youth and inexperience.

“It’s really quite remarkable for a rookie manager,” Werner said. “Because you think we’re, in some ways, in the presence of Earl Weaver.”

No baseball man drops that comparison without recognizing the heft behind it. Weaver managed at least part of 17 seasons in Baltimore before he had his first losing record, and Cora has a long way to go before measuring up to that Hall of Fame standard. But even so, Werner had a point.

Weaver’s first full season as manager came in 1969, when he won 109 games and an American League pennant. His second year: 108 wins and a World Series title. Weaver was considered a groundbreaking tactician, a 1970s version of today’s analytic-minded managers, and he became a face of his franchise, even with All-Stars and Hall of Famers on his rosters.

To that end, watching Cora at the front of Wednesday’s championship parade from Fenway Park, down past the Prudential Center, alongside Boston Common, and on up to City Hall, it was easy to see, hear, feel and imagine another Boston icon taking root. The Red Sox hired Cora to modernize their approach, to make the most of a talented roster, and to deliver a championship. In a remarkable first impression, he exceeded even those lofty expectations.

“On every level, in every way,” Henry said. “What did he do wrong this year?”

The Red Sox owner laughed as he asked the question. There clearly was no answer he would have accepted. Having just won his fourth World Series, Henry saw only perfection in his first-year manager. But, of course, Cora was flawed. Barely 24 hours earlier, in the middle of Game 4, Cora had nearly ruined the whole thing by leaving Eduardo Rodriguez on the mound four batters too long, lifting him only after Yasiel Puig had hit a crushing, three-run homer.

“I pushed him too hard,” Cora admitted post game, adding later, “I was actually kicking myself for a few innings before the comeback.”

Cora had said something similar way back in April when he failed to insert Jackie Bradley Jr. as an obvious defensive replacement following a late-inning rally against the Rays. Got too excited, he said. Got so caught up in the moment that he forgot the most basic of managerial maneuvers. Asked why he would admit such a thing, Cora shrugged.

“Because I did,” he said. “Why lie? It happens. Everybody saw that. I ask our guys to be genuine, transparent and responsible. So, if I am asking them to be that way, I better be that way because, if I say something else, they know I am not telling the truth.”

Cora set a standard of accountability for the Red Sox, but he also set a tone of perspective. He spoke often about his young twins, and the fact so many trips home from the ballpark literally included stops for diapers. When Craig Kimbrel’s newborn daughter required intense medical care during spring training, the team told Kimbrel to go home, no questions asked. Even in Boston, even with championship aspirations, there were things more important than baseball.

“I’ve said it a million times,” Chris Sale said. “It could be 10-0 or 1-1, (Cora)’s the same guy. If you can look at your manager, and he’s over there just eating sunflower seeds and having a good time, just ready for the next big thing to happen, that sends a shockwave through the dugout and helps you relax a little bit.”

If there’s a glaring hole in the Weaver-to-Cora comparison – aside from the longevity question – it’s in their method. The first line on Weaver’s Hall of Fame plaque notes that he managed the Orioles “with intensity, flair and acerbic wit.” Cora style is more calm, casual and self-deprecating. Weaver once asked that his tombstone read: “The sorest loser that ever lived.” Cora’s might as well say: “Always found the bright side, even on his way to buy diapers.”

But Cora maintained an edge. Even after their 108-win regular season, the Red Sox manager seemed to embrace the fact that many saw his team as an underdog in the postseason. His team played with a healthy chip on its shoulder, especially in the first two rounds against the Yankees and Astros. Cora liked that. Perhaps even fueled it.

“You know, we lost Game 2 (of the division series), and there was panicking here,” Cora said at Wednesday’s pre-parade ceremony at Fenway Park. “Everybody was (saying), ‘Whoa! It’s over!’ We scored 16 (in game 3) at Yankee Stadium.

“Suck on it!”

It wasn’t quite David Ortiz declaring “our fucking city,” but it wasn’t prim and proper, either. It was irreverent in a way that fit the moment, that played to the crowd. And Cora seemed always to know his audience this season.

When the Red Sox lost World Series Game 3 in crushing fashion, having thrown away what should have been the winning out before suffering a walk-off home run in the 18th inning, Cora held a rare team meeting in the clubhouse. His message was no so much about turning the page. That went without saying. It was about appreciating the beauty of what had just transpired. Even in a loss, the Red Sox had just witnessed a gutsy pitching performance by Nathan Eovaldi. They’d played in what Cora believed to be one of the best World Series games of all time, and it had taken 18 innings to finally beat them. The speech ended in a standing ovation, and two days later, there was a champagne-soaked celebration in that very room.

“It wasn’t about what we need to do,” pitching coach Dana LeVangie said. “It was just about — what are the right words I want to say here? — maybe the passion of the game, the energy we brought the entire game, from beginning to end, from whoever was involved in that game. It was a big-time effort from all those guys, and he just let everyone know he appreciated it.”

It was that ability to communicate that set Cora apart. Brock Holt said, specifically, that was the difference between Cora and his predecessor, John Farrell, who was fired after back-to-back first-round playoff exits.

This postseason, Cora mixed-and-matched at four different positions, and not strictly based on left-right matchups, so lineups were a bit unpredictable, and he asked every starting pitcher to make himself available out of the bullpen between starts. Yet, through the constant changes, Cora kept everyone in the loop about his intentions and his reasons. The Red Sox bullpen became a stunning strength, and their pinch hitters went 4-for-15 with two home runs, nine RBIs and a .421 on-base percentage in the postseason.

“WE SCORED 16 (IN GAME 3) AT YANKEE STADIUM. SUCK ON IT!” — CORA ON RED SOX PARADE DAY

“You know where that comes from?” hitting coach Tim Hyers said. “I think Alex is always communicating with them. He just has a way of giving them confidence.... It’s hard to explain, but the way he talks to the players through the day, he communicates who’s in the lineup and who’s not, and the different situations that he might use them – might not – but he might use them, and I think when he does that, they’re prepared and they’re ready to go out there and they have confidence when they go out to the batter’s box because they know the manager has prepared them, the manager’s got their back.”

Comments like that kept coming up this season. A question about the lineup or the pitching staff or a particular in-game strategy would result in an unprompted mention of Cora’s name. He did his best to pass the credit, but Cora himself was inescapable. Despite all the talent on this team, the manager remained a focal point, and for all the right reasons.

“He has substance because he knows what relationships are all about and how important it is to cultivate them,” Hall of Fame manager and Red Sox special assistant Tony La Russa said. “In this game though you have to have knowledge and make judgements. You can’t just be a relationship guy because you’re making decisions. He had the great sense to put together this coaching staff, empower them all to work together, in and out of uniform. Those guys in the background are providing reports. (He has a) feel for the team concept, and in the end, he’s got to pull the trigger. Just masterful, man. Sometimes you see guys that are smart, but they don’t expose themselves. If he believes in it, he did it. And that’s leadership. And I have to stress, part of it was that he included everybody on that staff. “

When they hired a first-year manager, the Red Sox sought an experienced bench coach to help guide Cora through his inaugural season. They found one in former Brewers manager and long-time coach Ron Roenicke, who had actually managed Cora in the minors. In choosing a job this offseason, Roenicke said, he sought not only an opportunity to win, but also an opportunity to have an impact. He wanted to work for a manager who would listen to him, who would value his experience and opinion. He found that in a manager two decades his junior, one who routinely went out of his way to single out his coaches for their own impact on this team.

Respect and admiration went both ways on this staff.

“No question,” Roenicke said. “And he makes us feel that way. He asks questions, and he listens really well, and he’s very decisive in his decisions, which is really a great quality for a manager. And for a first-year guy, it’s pretty impressive because I know how hard it is to make decisions. I give him three (choices) and boom, he’s got to make a decision right then. It’s not easy. And he’s very decisive in what he does, very confident in what he does. In all of that confidence, he’s very humble in what he does. The combination is really good.”

That combination was at the root of Cora’s success with advanced analytics. While he clearly modernized the organization’s use of data and proprietary statistics, it’s worth noting that the Red Sox’ analytics staff was in place long before he arrived. Vice president of baseball research and development Zack Scott began as an intern in 2004. Cora did not invent these metrics, nor did he introduce them to the organization. He simply embraced them, talked openly about them, and communicated them to his staff and his players.

“This is a year that we (as an analytics staff) felt really connected to the mission,” Scott said, “...in order to use this stuff, actually, to help you get better and make better decisions, you have to be able to communicate. And the fact (is) that he understands it so well, has a good feel and a comfort with it, always trying to get better, always trying to learn more. He knows it can be used as a tool, and that’s how he presents it. Ultimately, you need to be speaking the language of baseball, and he obviously can do that really well. He’s such a genuine person, so when he’s advocating for using some of the information that we provide, the players will know, and the other coaches will know, that this something he genuinely thinks will help the team play better.”

Blending emotionless analytics with personal relationships might have been Cora’s greatest strength. It was at the root of his willingness to make decisions and stick with them, and it was at the heart of the way he communicated with his players to keep them in the loop and keep them prepared. But that’s just one person’s opinion. Here are others.

“If I had to say one word, it would be his confidence,” Werner said. “And he’s been able to get the best out of everybody.”

“I would say his sense of humor,” team president Sam Kennedy said. “And to be able to take everything in stride.”

“For me, the way he brought people together in such a quick fashion,” president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said. “I don’t think you could ever anticipate that.”

“We had unity this year that was unlike any I’ve ever seen in the clubhouse before,” Henry said. “Alex brought these guys together.”

“Alex just kind of allowed them to just be them,” Roenicke said. “He allowed the personalities to come out. He allowed the leadership to come out.”

“You know, he’s an amazing man,” World Series MVP Steve Pearce said. “He always seems to make the right moves. Whatever he says, we listen and we do it. We gelled together behind him, and everybody knew their roles because he was such a great leader. We followed him. I couldn’t have asked for a better manager to play with, play for. In this great moment that we’ve had, it’s been a great season, and he’s definitely been the head of all of it.”

Great managers, it seems, always come to the forefront. This Red Sox team was loaded with talent. Mookie Betts and J.D. Martinez were MVP candidates, Kimbrel continued on a Hall of Fame track, most of the lineup was home grown, and the rotation was led by two Cy Young winners and one of the best lefties in the game.

But as that parade rolled through Boston on Wednesday, it was the Red Sox’ manager who stood as the symbol of their collective success.

This was his team, and if this continues, the start of his own legacy.

*** *The USA Today***

Red Sox victory parade marred by flying beer cans

Steve Gardner

After the Boston Red Sox finished off their World Series championship, they showered each other in beer and champagne in the visitors clubhouse at Dodger Stadium.

Three days later as the team triumphantly paraded through the streets of Boston in traditional duck boats, Red Sox fans apparently couldn't resist the opportunity to toss beer at their heroes.

Unfortunately, the beer was still in the cans. And the honorees weren't pleased.

"This definitely has got to stop," outfielder Mookie Betts told a Boston Globe reporter on one of the parade boats. Betts' mother and other members of his family were also on board.

And Betts wasn't the only one who had to dodge the projectiles. Manager Alex Cora also was hit. So was the World Series trophy. And one fan was injured.

At least one person was arrested: A man police identified as Patrick Connolly, 19, of East Sandwich, Mass.

Which raises a question: What is it with New England sports fans that makes them want to throw beer at athletes?

During the Sunday night NFL game a little more than two weeks ago in nearby Foxborough, Mass., Kansas City Chiefs wide receiver Tyreek Hill was doused with beer by a New England Patriots fan after scoring a touchdown.

That fan was charged with disorderly conduct and banned from future games at Gillette Stadium.