

The Boston Red Sox Monday, November 5, 2018

*** *The Boston Globe***

Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr., and Ian Kinsler win Gold Glove awards

Peter Abraham

Jackie Bradley Jr. didn't need a Gold Glove to be recognized as one of the best center fielders in the major leagues. Red Sox fans have known that for several years.

But Bradley certainly did deserve one and it finally came his way on Sunday night. Bradley, right fielder Mookie Betts, and second baseman Ian Kinsler were Gold Glove winners. The Red Sox and Atlanta Braves each had three.

A finalist in 2014 and '16, Bradley was selected ahead of Mike Trout (Angels) and Adam Engel (White Sox) in voting done by managers and coaches. Bradley was second among MLB center fielders with an 8.7 ultimate zone rating and tied for the American League lead with eight assists. There's no statistic for improbable acrobatic catches but Bradley had a series of those.

Betts won for the third consecutive year, the first Red Sox player to do that since Dwight Evans won five in a row from 1981-85. Betts is now one of seven Red Sox players to win three or more Gold Gloves. Betts led all right fielders with 20 defensive runs saved. He has 83 DRS the last three seasons.

Kinsler, 36, is now a two-time winner. He also won with the Tigers in 2016. In 128 games for the Angels and Red Sox, Kinsler had 10 DRS, the most in the AL at second base. Andrew Benintendi (left field) and Mitch Moreland (first base) were finalists. Kinsler, Betts, and Bradley are now eligible for the AL Platinum Glove award.

The other AL winners were pitcher Dallas Keuchel (Astros), catcher Salvador Perez (Royals), first baseman Matt Olson (Athletics), third baseman Matt Chapman (Athletics), shortstop Andrelton Simmons (Angels), and left fielder Alex Gordon (Royals). Gordon now has six and Perez five.

The National League winners were pitcher Zack Greinke (Diamondbacks), catcher Yadier Molina (Cardinals), first baseman Anthony Rizzo (Cubs) and Freddie Freeman (Braves), second baseman DJ LeMahieu (Rockies), third baseman Nolan Arenado (Rockies), shortstop Nick Ahmed (Diamondbacks), left fielder Corey Dickerson (Pirates), center fielder Ender Inciarte (Braves) and right fielder Nick Markakis (Braves). Molina has nine in his career, Arenado six and Greinke five.

Below is the complete list of 2018 Gold Glove recipients and the number of times they have won the award in parentheses:

American League

C: Salvador Perez, Royals (fifth)

1B: Matt Olson, Athletics (first)

2B: Ian Kinsler, Angels/Red Sox (second)

SS: Andrelton Simmons, Angels (fourth)

3B: Matt Chapman, Athletics (first)

LF: Alex Gordon, Royals (sixth)

CF: Jackie Bradley Jr. (first)

RF: Mookie Betts, Red Sox (third)

Pitcher: Dallas Keuchel, Astros (fourth)

National League

C: Yadier Molina, Cardinals (ninth)

1B: Anthony Rizzo, Cubs (second) and Freddie Freeman, Braves (first)

2B: DJ LeMahieu, Rockies (third)

SS: Nick Ahmed, Diamondbacks (first)

3B: Nolan Arenado, Rockies (sixth)

LF: Corey Dickerson, Pirates (first)

CF: Ender Inciarte, Braves (third)

RF: Nick Markakis, Braves (third)

Pitcher: Zack Greinke, Diamondbacks (fifth)

Expect the Red Sox to make some moves and the market to move faster than last year

Peter Abraham

CARLSBAD, Calif. — The Red Sox already have a roster in place that's at least capable of defending the World Series championship, even with the potential loss of several free agents.

Matt Barnes or Ryan Brasier could replace Craig Kimbrel as closer, although neither righthander has worked in that role. There's pitching depth that could compensate for the loss of Nathan Eovaldi and Joe Kelly. The contributions of World Series MVP Steve Pearce could be replaced, too.

But it's unlikely that will be the route they choose. The Red Sox have the payroll flexibility to retain some of those players or find replacements via trade or free agency. Standing pat, even after winning the World Series, is rarely a sound strategy.

That process will start to play out this week when the General Managers Meetings start here Monday.

The GM Meetings — which are overdue for a name change since increasingly fewer teams are actually run by a general manager these days — are traditionally the start of baseball's hot stove season.

Ideas that are kicked around in suites at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa this week could develop into signings or trades in the weeks to come.

It was at the GM Meetings in Orlando a year ago when the Red Sox and new manager Alex Cora first sat down with free agent J.D. Martinez. It took until February to get Martinez signed, but Cora felt confident it would happen based on that first meeting.

There are indications that the market could move much more quickly than it did last season.

The Nationals signed free agent reliever Trevor Rosenthal on Wednesday and the Cubs traded Drew Smyly to the Rangers two days later.

Free agents, fearful of being unemployed well into January as so many were last winter, may be quicker to accept offers. That could play to the advantage of the Red Sox.

Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said last week he sees the bullpen as an area of need with the potential loss of Kimbrel and Kelly.

Kelly led the Sox with 73 appearances and 65 $\frac{2}{3}$ relief innings last season. Kimbrel was third in appearances and second in innings. They accounted for nearly 22 percent of the innings out of the bullpen.

Kimbrel had 108 saves over the last three seasons. The pitchers still on the roster have four.

Saves are seen as overrated and the increasingly varied way managers use relief pitchers could further devalue that statistic in the next few years as the best relievers grow more accustomed to pitching when most needed, not just to get the final three outs.

But power arms like those of Kimbrel and Kelly have value in any role and the Red Sox will need to add to their bullpen.

One way could be by trading a catcher. The Sox went all last season with Sandy Leon, Blake Swihart, and Christian Vazquez on the roster. This offseason may finally be the time when one is moved.

“We like all three of them,” Dombrowski said. “I say it’s unlikely but not impossible that you have three [catchers]. They all have their strengths. But I’m not really sure where that’s going to take us at this point.”

Dombrowski is excited about what comes next because it’ll be new for him.

In 1997, after his Florida Marlins won the World Series, Dombrowski was told to break the team up by owner H. Wayne Huizenga. Now he gets a chance to further hone a championship team.

Hometown hero: Alex Cora makes joyous return to Puerto Rico, with trophy in hand

Maria Cramer

CAGUAS, Puerto Rico — Ana Colon woke up at 3 in the morning and carefully packed the supplies she would need for the day: a folding chair, the 32-ounce liquid lunch she needed to keep her diabetes in check, and her pink Red Sox hat.

Alex Cora, the first Puerto Rican manager to win the World Series, was coming home and bringing the championship trophy with him. Colon, 58 and a lifelong Red Sox fan whose roof was partially destroyed by Hurricane Maria last year, wasn’t going to miss a second of it.

“After Maria, Puerto Rico went through so much,” Colon said Saturday, as she sat 30 feet from the stage set up in the town square here, where Cora and other members of the Red Sox would soon arrive to celebrate the team’s victory with throngs of giddy fans. “This championship that Alex Cora has brought to this country is enormous. I feel so proud to be Puerto Rican.”

In January, Cora, who grew up in Caguas and from 2014 to 2016 managed the town’s winter league team, the Criollos de Caguas, arrived with a delegation of Red Sox players to bring food, water, and a check from the Red Sox Foundation for \$200,000 to help hurricane relief efforts. Now, he was coming home in triumph, carrying the symbol of baseball’s pinnacle achievement. After a year of loss and devastation, it was a moment to celebrate.

To welcome Cora home, thousands of people lined Paseo de las Artes, the main drag through town and where a statue of Caguas's other favorite son, the famous bolero singer, Felipe "La Voz" Rodriguez, looms over a square bustling with bars, restaurants, and colorful storefronts. Signs welcoming Cora home festooned storefront windows and awnings. Red Sox hats were ubiquitous and so were T-shirts that read "Vivela de Cora" and "In Cora, we believe."

When the team finally pulled into the square on a flatbed truck with Cora at the helm, the crowd erupted in screams and chants of "Cora! Cora!"

A band played "Enamorado de Puerto Rico" (In love with Puerto Rico).

The players, including pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez and infielder Eduardo Nunez, were clearly moved. Catcher Christian Vasquez, who is also Puerto Rican, put his hand over his heart and pounded his chest, trying to compose himself.

Some members of the Red Sox organization gamely tried their clumsy Spanish.

"What a manager que tenemos aqui!" yelled Andy Barkett, one of the team's assistant hitting coaches, pointing to Cora, who laughed.

Cora, the last to speak, looked out at the crowd and yelled out "Criollo!" The crowd roared back "Criollo!"

Cora thanked the people of Caguas for pushing him to do his best when he was the manager for the Criollos.

"You made me a better ballplayer, and you made me a better man," he said in Spanish. "People ask me what's harder: being the manager of the Red Sox or being the manager of the Criollos. You know my answer: being the manager of the Criollos."

He thanked them for staying up until 3 or 4 in the morning some nights to watch the tense playoff games.

"You are incredible," he said to them.

Then he roared: "Yo soy Boriqua!" (I am Boriqua, a term for Puerto Rican).

"Pa'que tu lo sepas!" the crowd roared back. (Just so you know).

The sight of the glittering trophy overwhelmed some fans, who wept at the sight of Cora hoisting it over his head.

Just minutes after winning the World Series, Cora vowed to take the trophy to Caguas, a city of about 150,000 16 miles south of San Juan, the capital.

"He is such a good guy," said Charlie Collazo, who lived in the Bronx for years and technically is a Yankees fan, but cheered for the Red Sox because of his affection for Cora. "He's our hero."

Plus he's easy on the eyes, said Colon, who had traveled north with her husband, Pedro Vazquez, more than an hour from their hometown of Coamo.

"With all due respect to my husband, he is very handsome," Colon said, laughing. "I'm sorry, but he is Boriqua."

On the streets, everyone seemed to claim a connection to Cora.

“He’s my cousin,” said Jose A. Cora, 61, as he stood with his grandson Jason, 9. “I knew he would win the World Series. Intuition.”

He brandished his driver’s license to dispel any doubts.

“You’re his cousin?” a passerby asked and put out his hand to shake Jose Cora’s. “Mi hermano!”

Cora grinned back.

“This is enough to make you forget Maria,” he said.

“That’s right,” a woman sitting nearby called out.

Jose Cora fought back tears as he considered the significance of the victory after a year filled with so much sorrow.

“Maria is always on our minds,” he said. “But this helped us forget, for a little while.”

Red Sox president Sam Kennedy told the crowd that because of Cora and the championship Boston is “forever connected” to Caguas. That struck a chord with Robert Hernandez, 31, who came with his sister Maria, 23, from their hometown of Arecibo, an hour and a half away.

“It made me feel like Puerto Rico is bigger than it is,” Hernandez said. For Maria Hernandez, the comment was a validation for an island that often feels forgotten by the mainland.

“Finally, they recognize us,” she said. “Those people who forget that we’re also part of America.”

Baseball’s hot stove will begin to cook this week

Nick Cafardo

The GM meetings take place in Carlsbad, Calif., this coming week. Usually they serve as a launching point for activity at the Winter Meetings in Las Vegas the second week of December. But the general managers begin their face-to-face preliminaries at these meetings, and also meet with agents in the early stages of the free agent market.

The Nationals already have been aggressive in acquiring reliever Kyle Barraclough from the Marlins and signing free agent reliever Trevor Rosenthal. So that could be a sign that teams are moving more quickly than usual. Players and agents also remember last offseason and how slowly the market moved. Those who signed early seemed to get the better deals.

Here’s a look at what the thinking of each team might be:

AL East

Red Sox — The Red Sox would love to bring their entire team back. They want to re-sign Nathan Eovaldi and Steve Pearce, and then must make a tough decision on Craig Kimbrel. They’ll look for bullpen help if they lose Kimbrel and Joe Kelly. You won’t see too much else unless they deal one of their catchers or if they’re in the market for a second baseman should Dustin Pedroia not make it back.

Yankees — GM Brian Cashman will try to make his starting rotation great again. Look for the Yankees to consider free agent lefthander Patrick Corbin, Eovaldi, Gio Gonzalez, Dallas Keuchel, and Charlie Morton — while trying to re-sign J.A. Happ. Cashman has said he’ll try to move righthander Sonny Gray to a smaller market.

Rays — The Rays will look for a “bargain” power hitter such as Nelson Cruz, Matt Adams, Adam Jones, or Mike Moustakas.

Blue Jays — The Jays are building with top prospects Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Cavan Biggio, and Bo Bichette, but they’ll look to improve their rotation with one of the better starting pitchers on the market.

Orioles — As of this writing, the Orioles do not have a GM or manager. Interim GM Brian Graham will likely represent the Orioles at the meetings. Believe me, the Orioles won’t be active in free agency or on the trade front for some time — unless they’re trying to unload starters Alex Cobb or Andrew Cashner or any other veteran who wouldn’t be of use to them for a while.

AL Central

Indians — The Indians will have defections in their bullpen, namely Andrew Miller and Cody Allen, and possibly in their outfield with Michael Brantley and Lonnie Chisenhall, who are free agents. Another free agent is third baseman Josh Donaldson. So the Indians have some work to do. Brantley, a really good player, would be a huge loss, but the Indians might devote their resources toward a less-expensive outfielder.

Twins — The Twins desperately need a rebound season with their new manager, Rocco Baldelli, who will likely bring the Rays’ ways of doing things to the Central division. The Twins will be hunting for pitching. Could they be a possible trade partner with the Yankees for Gray?

Tigers — The Tigers remain in their rebuild mode, but two interesting players who could be traded are righthander Michael Fulmer and right fielder Nicholas Castellanos. We’ll see if Al Avila has the appetite to trade one or both. Both would be attractive trade chips. The Tigers could be in the hunt for a shortstop with Jose Iglesias testing the market.

White Sox — Their long rebuild will continue. We’re not expecting much to happen here, though there will be dialogue to deal first baseman Jose Abreu for more prospects.

Royals — The Royals continue their rebuild. They could get feelers for Danny Duffy, who didn’t have a good season. But he’s lefthanded, experienced, and with the dearth of starting pitching, could bring back a good return. Duffy (8-12, 4.88 ERA) is 29 years old and will make about \$15.2 million a year for the next three years.

AL West

Astros — Keuchel and Morton are free agents, but they have internal replacements for the back end in Lance McCullers Jr., Colin McHugh, and flame thrower Josh James. Look for the Astros to dip into the catcher market, where they could make the Marlins an offer for J.T. Realmuto or target free agent Wilson Ramos.

Athletics — They made great progress this past season in winning 97 games. Could the A’s actually be a player in trying to reacquire Gray from the Yankees? They lose reliever Jeury Familia, second baseman Jed Lowrie, and catcher Jonathan Lucroy, among others. Lowrie might be re-signed, but the A’s will likely seek lower-cost replacements and also need a starting pitcher or two.

Mariners — They could be losing Cruz to free agency so they’ll likely need offense. Will they be a player for Bryce Harper or Manny Machado? Robinson Cano may move to first base or even DH. They still need a bat or two. If Dee Gordon stays at second base, they’ll need a center fielder. Could Andrew McCutchen be a fit?

Angels — The Angels will be looking for pitching and they’ll pay the price for it. With Cashman and Angels GM Billy Eppler having a close relationship from their Yankee days together, this could be another landing spot for Gray. But the Angels will be in the hunt for Happ or Corbin, and the bigger names in free

agency. They may also consider CC Sabathia. They could also use a fourth outfielder who can play center field.

Rangers — The Rangers hired Dodgers third base coach Chris Woodward as manager on Saturday, and now GM Jon Daniels's attention turns to pursuing pitchers. After dealing with the Cubs for Drew Smyly, who missed all of 2018 with Tommy John surgery, expect them to pursue at least one more starter. Drew Pomeranz or Marco Estrada could make some sense for them on the back end.

NL East

Braves — They seemed too young to go far in the playoffs in 2018, but 2019 could be different. The Braves might be in position financially to go after a notable pitcher (Happ, Eovaldi, Corbin) to augment a young staff. They'll also seek to enhance their bullpen. Take your pick from Craig Kimbrel, Kelvin Herrera, and Zach Britton, among others. They could also go big with Harper and/or Machado.

Phillies — Are the Phillies ready to spend some serious money? It would appear so. Harper, Machado, or both are definitely in play. The Phillies have serious TV money to spend and they have a chance to take the next step in their comeback. Watch for the beginnings of trade or free agent talks on starter and bullpen enhancements. They are certainly one of the teams who could afford the rest of Zack Greinke's \$104.5 million contract over the next three years if the Diamondbacks want to deal him.

Nationals — Don't count the Nationals out on Harper because they have the money to re-sign him and agent Scott Boras has an excellent relationship with the Lerner family, which owns the team. President of baseball operations Mike Rizzo already has acquired Barraclough and signed Rosenthal, who missed this past season following Tommy John surgery. Rizzo is sick of this team not playing to its potential. He also may upgrade the infield with DJLeMahieu or a facsimile.

Mets — The Mets have a new leader in former agent Brodie Van Wagenen — we'll see what he has planned. The Mets have a solid core of starters but need offensive help and bullpen reinforcements. It's all about how much the Wilpons are willing to spend.

Marlins — The Marlins will continue to shed rather than add. They'll give young players a chance to develop with no option but to exercise patience. They'll have to decide whether Realmuto is a player they want to build around or trade for more down-the-road pieces. Dan Straily could be a trade chip as a back-end starter.

NL Central

Brewers — What a nice 2018 season. It ended with a Game 7 loss to the Dodgers in the NLCS, but the Brewers aren't going away. They have virtually all of their team back. A couple of defections in the coaching staff (pitching coach Derek Johnson and hitting coach Darnell Coles) will result in some change. The Brewers must decide whether they want to go with the "opener" concept. Wade Miley and Joakim Soria are two free agents the Brewers must replace or re-sign.

Cubs — The Cubs need an offensive boost, but who they are and where they play are the issues. The Cubs may also have a luxury-tax concern, which could prevent them from a big splash. Minus that issue, you could see them having interest in Machado with Addison Russell suspended to start the season. The Cubs traded Smyly to the Rangers and picked up their \$20 million option on Cole Hamels.

Cardinals — They need to do something at third base. They have long coveted Donaldson, so that's a possibility, but Moustakas might suit them better since they need balance with a lefthanded bat. Harper and Machado also have been linked to the Cardinals, but they generally don't overpay anyone. They could also dabble in the starting rotation market. A guy like Corbin would interest them.

Pirates — The Pirates made a gutsy move not picking up Josh Harrison's option, as he was a fixture at second base for a long time. The Pirates are in and out of rebuilding and going for it, so it's hard to gauge what they'll do this offseason. They may get a veteran shortstop or re-sign Jordy Mercer.

Reds — They are slowly rebuilding their organization, naming David Bell manager. With Johnson leaving the Brewers to become the Reds' pitching coach, one wonders whether Miley could be in their plans to rebuild the rotation. Look for them to also be in on Keuchel, Gonzalez, Hyun-Jin Ryu, and Lance Lynn, among others.

NL West

Dodgers — They may need to replace Ryu in the rotation if he defects. The big story will be whether they'll try to re-sign Machado, who didn't endear himself to a lot of Dodgers players and officials with his no-hustle stance. Anyway, shortstop Corey Seager is scheduled to return after missing 2018 with elbow and hip surgery. The Dodgers have strong catching in their system so they may not want to bring back free agent Yasmani Grandal, who is a defensive liability.

Rockies — With LeMahieu and Carlos Gonzalez hitting free agency, they will be in the market for a proven bat, in the outfield or at second base. There's also speculation — though I can't see this — they could deal third baseman Nolan Arenado, who is heading into his last controllable season.

Diamondbacks — Look for some Greinke trade talk this offseason. A big-market team with money such as the Yankees or Phillies could have some interest in picking up the remaining three years of his contract. He does have a no-trade clause to 15 teams. The D-Backs will likely lose A.J. Pollock to free agency so they'll need to acquire an outfielder. There's also been talk of a Paul Goldschmidt deal as he enters the final season of his contract. Arizona could be in transition to a rebuilding mode.

Giants — A new GM is about to dictate what direction they go in, but whether it's more analytics-based or not, offense will be the accent during this offseason. The Giants need some pop (Steve Pearce?) in their lineup. They also need youth.

Padres — Given that their 5.09 rotation ERA was the worst in the NL, starting pitching will be the priority. The Padres spent big on first baseman Eric Hosmer last offseason, so they probably have one big purchase available on the pitching front. Those on the younger side, such as Eovaldi and Corbin, could be on their radar.

Apropos of nothing

1. Alex Cora said that Rafael Devers will spend the majority of the winter working with J.D. Martinez in Miami. This is a pretty good idea as Martinez can get the 22-year-old Devers in a solid mindset at the plate. This is an even better idea than Devers going off to play winter ball.

2. Roger Clemens and Tom Seaver both loved Bill Fischer, their longtime Red Sox pitching coach (Fischer also coached Seaver with the Reds) who died this past week at age 88. Fischer worked in baseball up until this past season with the Royals, for whom he acted as a pitching adviser. "It's with great sadness and a heavy heart that I say goodbye to one of my first professional coaches, Bill Fischer," Clemens wrote in a text. "Fish helped so many of us young pitchers while we were chasing our dreams to be great at the major league level. We visited last Monday about my record-setting 20-strikeout game and how he loved that I struck out 20, but even more that I didn't walk a batter. For those who don't know, Fish still holds the MLB record for most consecutive innings without allowing a walk! I will miss this man. He knew that my nickname was Rocket, but he always called me 'Smoky' after Smoky Joe Wood. Fish, thanks for being the best at what you did."

3. Like Eddie Mathews walked behind Hank Aaron, Billy Williams behind Ernie Banks, and Roger Maris behind Mickey Mantle, Willie McCovey walked behind Willie Mays. McCovey died this past week at age 80. He was one of the most feared lefthanded hitters of his era. Some of the most touching comments came

from Barry Bonds, who referred to McCovey as his uncle. “Mac, I am crying over losing you even when you told me not to,” Bonds wrote. “I remember asking you what I would do without all of you around. You told me when that day comes — and it will one day — to keep the tradition of Giants baseball living forever. You told me to help the next generation of ballplayers get better. You told me to be thankful that we had so much time to spend together and talk about the love we have for the game, San Francisco, the Giants, and for each other.”

4. Red Sox special assistant Dick Berardino and wife Kathy celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on the day the Red Sox won the World Series.

5. Now that Cora has had so much success with the Red Sox, will brother Joey Cora, a coach with the Pirates, get a legitimate look for a manager’s job? Joey was once a very hot managerial candidate, but he fizzled out.

6. Texas and/or Baltimore should consider Red Sox bench coach Ron Roenicke for their managerial opening. The constant message Cora gave about Roenicke, “He’s a great teacher.” That’s so important, since as Cora accurately points out, players don’t spend that much time in the minor leagues anymore and the learning continues in the majors.

Extra innings

From the Bill Chuck files — “On May 11, 2011, the Nationals beat the Braves, 7-3, in 11 innings. Washington had tied the game with two runs in top of the ninth on a pinch-hit, two-run single. The pitcher with the blown save was Craig Kimbrel. The pinch hitter was Alex Cora.” . . . Also, “In 2014, relievers made 14,461 appearances. In 2016, relievers made 15,306 appearances. In 2018, relievers made 16,339 appearances.” . . . Happy birthday, Carlos Baerga (50).

A look at the contract situation of every Red Sox player this offseason

Peter Abraham

Now that the Red Sox season is over and preparations for 2019 are under way, this is a good time to reset the roster.

Compared to last year at this time, when the Sox were building a coaching staff and still months away from signing J.D. Martinez, the Sox are much more settled.

Here is a breakdown of the contract status of players on the 40-man roster and a look at the prominent free agents who could be leaving the Sox:

UNDER CONTRACT

These players are under guaranteed contract for at least one more season.

LHP David Price (through 2022 at \$127 million): Price kept three promises. He made every start, he pitched well in the postseason, and he didn’t opt out of his contract. Unlike so many other celebrated free agents, Price learned how to handle Boston.

2B Dustin Pedroia (through 2021 at \$40 million): He’s 35 and has had at least six surgeries to his left knee or foot. The odds are against Pedroia being a productive player again. But the odds were against him being the Rookie of the Year, MVP, and four-time All-Star in the first place.

DH-OF J.D. Martinez (through 2019 at \$23.75 million): Martinez can opt out of his deal after the 2019, ’20, and ’21 seasons or collect \$110 million in all. It’s great to have choices. But in terms of a manager, coaching staff, teammates who respect him, and an organization where he can build a Hall of Fame résumé, Martinez can’t do better than the Sox.

RHP Rick Porcello (signed through 2019 at \$21 million): On the whole, Porcello has been a good investment. He has averaged 197 innings per season, been part of three postseason teams, and over the last three seasons pitched well above the league average.

LHP Chris Sale (through 2019 at \$15 million): He had a 2.56 ERA over 372⅓ innings at a cost of \$24.5 million his first two seasons. What a bargain. Only 29, Sale will be looking for a big season prior to free agency.

C Christian Vazquez (through 2021 at \$13.55 million): The three-year extension he agreed to last spring, which starts next season, doesn't look so great after he posted a .540 OPS. But he'll get every chance to be the everyday catcher.

1B Mitch Moreland (through 2019 at \$6.5 million): He gave the Sox excellent defense, clubhouse leadership, 37 home runs, and 147 RBIs as a platoon first baseman for two seasons at \$11.5 million. He should be a bargain again in 2019.

INF Eduardo Nunez (through 2019 at \$5 million): The Sox were too hasty to sign Nunez last spring. He was clearly still hurt for much of the season, then broke down physically near the end. His agents deserve kudos for negotiating a \$5 million player option for 2019.

ARBITRATION ELIGIBLE

These players are under team control but must be offered a contract by Nov. 30 or they become free agents. If necessary, their 2019 salary would be determined by arbitration.

(Arbitration projections via MLBTradeRumors.com.)

OF Mookie Betts: He'll land roughly an \$8 million raise after an MVP-caliber season, the projection being \$18.7 million. Ownership has made it clear they want to sign Betts to a long-term deal.

SS Xander Bogaerts: In his final year of arbitration, he'll land approximately \$11.9 million unless the Sox sign him to a long-term deal.

OF Jackie Bradley Jr.: He'll get a deal worth roughly \$8 million. If you're among the stubborn few questioning his worth, Bradley was 10th in WAR (2.1) on a championship team.

LHP Eduardo Rodriguez: Only 25, Rodriguez is due \$4.8 million. It would be nice to see him avoid the disabled list for once. There's a 15-game winner lurking in there.

UTIL Brock Holt: He'll be a free agent after next season and for now will land a deal worth roughly \$3.5 million. He had a .774 OPS over 109 games and started at eight positions. There lots of value there.

RHP Tyler Thornburg: If the Sox were looking to save a few bucks, nontendering Thornburg and using the \$2.3 million elsewhere isn't a bad idea. Maybe it's worth it to see if he finally bounces back from shoulder surgery, but there are few signs he will.

C Sandy Leon: Leon is a fascinating debate for a front office. On one hand, he's an excellent catcher who has the unshakeable trust of the team's best pitchers. On the other hand, he's hit .201 the last two years. For now it's worth \$2.3 million to keep Sale happy and productive.

RHP Matt Barnes: At 28, he'll finally make some decent money (approximately \$1.5 million) after making 194 appearances the last three seasons.

RHP Brandon Workman: With all the DL time, this is actually his third time in arbitration. He'll get around \$1.4 million.

RHP Steven Wright: At 34 (young for a knuckleballer), Wright is due for roughly \$1.4 million.

RHP Heath Hembree: He's arbitration eligible for the first time after making 189 appearances the last four seasons with an adjusted ERA of 126. Hembree should get \$1.1 million, a bargain given what he's provided.

C-UTIL Blake Swihart: The former first-round pick is in line for \$1.1 million. His draft bonus was \$2.5 million in 2011.

0-3 YEARS OF SERVICE TIME

These players are under team control and not yet arbitration eligible. They are guaranteed at least the major league minimum unless released.

OF Andrew Benintendi: Other players are likely a greater priority at the moment. But Benintendi is a player the Sox should be looking to lock up.

RHP Ryan Brasier: A potential closer, the 31-year-old should have a bigger role however it plays out next season.

RHP William Cuevas: At 28, he has only 13 games in the majors. Cuevas is expendable depth.

3B Rafael Devers: Nine RBIs in the postseason did not cancel out a poor regular season that saw Devers make 24 errors and post a .731 OPS. As was the case a year ago, he needs to get in better condition.

INF Marco Hernandez: He had three surgical procedures on his left shoulder in a span of 13 months. To what degree he can be a serviceable player remains to be seen.

LHP Brian Johnson: A very valuable pitcher who should be again. His 99½ innings were fifth on the team.

UTIL Tzu-Wei Lin: This guy can play in the big leagues. But he's in a roster crunch with the Sox.

RHP Austin Maddox: Rotator cuff surgery in September knocked him out for 2019.

LHP Bobby Poyner: He emerged from organizational depth to appear in 20 games and handled himself well.

LHP Robby Scott: His career took a wrong turn, going from 57 games in the majors in 2017 to only nine this past season.

RHP Chandler Shepherd: He was the only healthy 40-man roster player who did not get into a major league game this past season.

1B-OF Sam Travis: He'd probably be better off with another organization. A .713 OPS in parts of three seasons in Triple A doesn't create much hope.

RHP Hector Velazquez: He has a 3.12 ERA in 55 games over two seasons. He wore down in the second half, though.

RHP Marcus Walden: He made the Opening Day roster, appeared in eight games, and vanished as injuries and poor performance cost him.

FREE AGENTS

These players are free to sign with any team, including the Red Sox.

RHP Nathan Eovaldi: His postseason performance (four earned runs over 22½ innings in six games) should lead to a lucrative deal for the 28-year-old. He has played for five teams in seven seasons and wants to find long-term security.

RHP Joe Kelly: Kelly will likely try to market himself as a starter in free agency. Whether anybody bites on that is another story. He has been essentially league average in four-plus years with the Sox but has the high-end stuff that will get him a good contract. If he can find that deal on the West Coast, he'll take it.

RHP Craig Kimbrel: Based on adjusted ERA, Kimbrel had the second-worst full season of his career with a 150 percent increase in walks and 15 percent decline in strikeouts. His postseason also was a wreck as he put 19 men on base over 10⅔ innings with only 10 strikeouts. But Kimbrel is a reliable closer and bringing him back would make sense at the right cost. But another team — Atlanta? — could well see him as worth splurging on.

2B Ian Kinsler: He almost surely will not be back. But Kinsler shored up the defense at second at a time when that was needed.

1B-DH-OF: Steve Pearce: The World Series MVP will not lack for offers after posting an .890 overall OPS. He'd be a good fit with the Sox to platoon with Moreland but can likely get more guaranteed money elsewhere. As he heads for his age-36 season, Pearce should take whatever he can get.

LHP Drew Pomeranz: If Pomeranz has the most WAR in 2019 among the Sox free agents it won't be a surprise. He had a terrible 2018 but still throws a good curveball that makes his fastball look better than it is. He's a good risk for a one-year deal.

Red Sox face tough decisions as they build toward next season

Alex Speier

The members of the 2018 Red Sox forever will be linked by their shared accomplishment. But while much of the group will remain together in 2019, an offseason of inevitable change has already begun.

This winter won't feature the identity-changing turnover of 2004 to 2005, when the Red Sox followed the in-season trade of Nomar Garciaparra by parting with another face of the franchise, Pedro Martinez, along with Derek Lowe and Orlando Cabrera. Nor will it be the 2013-14 winter, in which the team turned over at three up-the-middle positions (Jarrod Saltalamacchia for A.J. Pierzynski behind the plate, Stephen Drew for Xander Bogaerts at short, Jacoby Ellsbury for Jackie Bradley Jr. and Grady Sizemore in center).

Still, after a 2017-18 offseason in which the primary change in players was one addition (J.D. Martinez), the Red Sox now have central members of the roster eligible for free agency. With next week's GM Meetings in Carlsbad, Calif., marking the point where the offseason begins in earnest, here are some of the tasks that confront them:

■ **ACQUIRE (OR RETAIN) TWO LATE-INNING ARMS:** Closer Craig Kimbrel and Joe Kelly are free agents, and the Red Sox will have to re-sign or replace them.

Kimbrel, who can use the five-year deals for Aroldis Chapman (\$86 million) and Kenley Jansen (\$80 million) as benchmarks, seems the less likely to return. Some members of the Red Sox organization had misgivings about the initial deal to land Kimbrel from the Padres, feeling some discomfort about giving up prospects (center fielder Manuel Margot and shortstop Javier Guerra the headliners) for a closer who was going to make close to market value (\$37 million for three years).

The Red Sox put a lot of resources into a 60-inning pitcher, but the commitment could be justified based on the need for stability at the back end of the bullpen, particularly in a playoff run. Yet Kimbrel was not the central figure in the emergence of the Red Sox bullpen as a postseason force. At times, he represented the greatest pitching uncertainty.

That may make it easier for the Red Sox to spread the wealth when it comes to bullpen investments. Kimbrel was officially extended a qualifying offer (one year, \$17.9 million), which will allow the Red Sox to receive draft-pick compensation if he departs.

Given that the Red Sox may want greater long-term financial flexibility to retain position players, they may target an alternative to Kimbrel who would command less in years and dollars — or even turn to Matt Barnes or Ryan Brasier for the ninth (which is less likely). The creativity of manager Alex Cora throughout the postseason may give the Red Sox more comfort in taking a non-traditional approach to the late innings.

Kelly, who had a huge impact in October, has quality stuff that will make him coveted. The Red Sox have resisted getting drawn into the escalating free agent bidding wars for setup men, but Kelly will be an interesting test case for that approach.

■ **FORTIFY THE ROTATION:** In theory, the Red Sox could enter 2019 with a group of starters who remain under team control — Chris Sale, David Price, Rick Porcello, Eduardo Rodriguez, and Steven Wright — and feel they had as good a rotation as anyone else in the AL East.

However, Dave Dombrowski acknowledged that uncertainty remains with Wright, given his difficulty staying on the mound this past season. Sale (shoulder), Price (elbow), and Rodriguez (ankle, knee) all have missed significant time the last two years, and the toll of a seven-month championship run often shows up in the subsequent season.

While Brian Johnson and Hector Velazquez represent credible depth, the Red Sox likely need to do more to fortify that.

Undoubtedly, they will explore a return for Nathan Eovaldi. But after his remarkable October, and with roughly \$65 million already committed to Sale, Price, and Porcello, there's a good chance the righthander will be priced out of Boston.

■ **TRADE A CATCHER:** The Red Sox went a full year with Christian Vazquez, Sandy Leon, and Blake Swihart on the big league roster. When Vazquez was sidelined for nearly two months with a broken finger, Swihart got an opportunity behind the plate, but as soon as Vazquez returned, that opportunity all but vanished.

Dombrowski said it would be hard for the Sox to carry three catchers again, and with Swihart having restored some of his value, it's probably time for him to get an opportunity elsewhere. The Red Sox could use him to address some of their pitching concerns or to acquire a prospect (or prospects) who could help refill the upper levels of their farm system.

■ **TRY TO EXTEND YOUNG PLAYERS:** With a title in hand thanks in no small part to a spectacular young core of position players, the Red Sox are nearing a series of forks in the road with that group.

“We’ll have hard decisions, given the makeup of this team as we move forward,” president/CEO Sam Kennedy said days before the World Series.

“There are so many talented players. There are going to be hard decisions. But right now, we’re glad that we have all of them.”

Bogaerts, Sale, and Porcello are entering their final year of team control before they are eligible for free agency. (The same is technically true of Martinez, who can opt out of his five-year, \$110 million deal after 2019.) Mookie Betts and Bradley have two remaining seasons of team control.

The Sox are getting to a point where they need to start clarifying which of those players will be with them in 2020 and 2021 — to stay in front of potential core roster turnover rather than scrambling in reaction to it.

This winter probably won't bring the start of that turnover, but it could at least offer clarity about when it will happen and what form it will take.

Alex Cora bringing group — and the trophy — to celebrate title in Puerto Rico

Peter Abraham

Red Sox manager Alex Cora is going home on Saturday and bringing the World Series trophy with him.

Cora and five of his players — Brock Holt, Sandy Leon, David Price, Eduardo Rodriguez, and Christian Vazquez — will be the guests of honor as the championship is celebrated in Caguas, Puerto Rico.

Sox chairman Tom Werner, president Sam Kennedy, and coaches Andy Barkett, Tom Goodwin, and Ramon Vazquez will join Cora, the first manager from Puerto Rico to win a World Series.

The mayor of Caguas, William Miranda Torres, will meet the Sox at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan and escort the group to the town.

"I know the people back home," Cora said Thursday. "When they do it, they do it right and long. It should be fun. They're expecting a lot of people. Treat these guys with a lot of food and beverages. Just show the people from back home they're part of it, too.

"It should be a cool day."

Kimbrel gets the offer

The Red Sox officially extended a qualifying offer to free agent righthander Craig Kimbrel.

Kimbrel has until Nov. 12 to accept or decline the one-year, \$17.9 million offer. If he declines, which is expected, the Red Sox would receive a compensatory draft pick after the fourth round if he signs with another team.

Diamondbacks lefthander Patrick Corbin and outfielder A.J. Pollock, Dodgers catcher Yasmani Grandal, Nationals outfielder Bryce Harper, Astros lefthander Dallas Keuchel, and Dodgers lefthander Hyun-Jin Ryu also received offers.

Best Red Sox team ever? The 1912 guys have something to say about that

Bob Ryan

It's lunchtime at the Great Red Sox Home In The Sky, and the 1912 boys are a bit agitated.

"I mean, those 2018 kids are pretty good," sighs Tris Speaker. "But what's this nonsense about them being the best Red Sox team of all time?"

"You tell 'em, Spoke," chirps Smoky Joe Wood, using Speaker's nickname. "Sometimes people get a little carried away."

"I understand how people might get a little confused," declares Jake Stahl, who was not only the manager of the team but also the regular first baseman. "They did win 108 games. But we still have the best percentage. They'd better do the math. Our 105-47 is a better percentage than their 108-54. It should be obvious: .691 is better than .667. Nuff said."

"It's not just that, Jake," chimes in Heinie Wagner, the shortstop. "You see any Smoky Joes on that pitching staff?"

Related: Here are the memories that stood out most covering these Red Sox

“Well, that Sale guy is pretty good and Price ain’t bad, either,” admits Rough Carrigan, the catcher (and future skipper). “But come see me when one of them goes 34-5.”

It’s true. Smoky Joe Wood was 34-5 with a 1.91 ERA. Pitching as both a starter and reliever, he went 3-1 in the World Series against the Giants, and was the relief winner in the clinching Game 8.

Yup, Game 8. No lights in those days. Game 2 had to be called because of darkness with the teams tied at 6 apiece. And it was a best-of-nine that year.

“Can’t stand the way they play the game nowadays,” says Hugh Bedient, a 20-game winner that year. “They throw a parade for a guy if he gets into the seventh. Darn hard to figure out.”

“And get this,” pipes up Harry Hooper, the right fielder. “They’re all puffed up down there about their outfield. Those kids are OK, but guess what? Spoke’s in the Hall, I’m in the Hall, and Duffy was a helluva player. And that Bennywhatsis kid in left never had to deal with The Cliff.”

Now in case you don’t know, when they first built Fenway Park in 1912, a 10-foot slope was built running the length of the left-field wall. It was done so that in the case of standing room crowds being placed on the field (a not uncommon occurrence in those days), the fans could see the game over each other’s heads. Nope. Not making this up.

Anyway, Duffy Lewis was the first of many Red Sox left fielders who needed to learn how to negotiate the incline. And because he was the first, and best, of the many who roamed left for the Sox until the incline was eliminated in a 1934 renovation, that bit of real estate was nicknamed “Duffy’s Cliff.” Oh, and can you imagine the many disastrous adventures that would bedevil enemy left fielders?

Lewis was a master of his cliff, and, according to Richard Johnson and Glenn Stout in their superb tome “Red Sox Century,” sports cartoons of the period “often depicted him making catches amid sheep and snowcaps.”

So appreciate your good fortune, Andrew Benintendi.

“We had the best outfield then, and I still think we’re the best Red Sox outfield,” maintains Speaker, who hit .383 that year. “And I don’t want to brag, but I was keeping a close eye on them this year and I don’t recall that Bradley kid in center pulling off any unassisted double plays.”

You read that correctly. Tris Speaker was famous for playing shallow and he was famous for his unassisted double plays. In fact, he pulled one off in Game 7 of the 1912 Series. Art Wilson of the Giants was on second when Art Fletcher hit a sinking liner. Wilson figured there was the proverbial snowball’s chance in Hades that Speaker would catch the ball. But that’s what he did, and he kept right on running to second for the unassisted double play.

Watch: Reflecting on the 2018 Red Sox season

“And by the way, look who we beat,” points out third baseman Larry Gardner. “We beat John McGraw and his mighty Giants. We beat the Great Matty [Christy Mathewson]. We beat Rube Marquard, and that guy won 19 straight in the middle of the season. Still the record, if I’m not mistaken. Larry Doyle. Buck Herzog. Darn good players.”

“Yeah, and they keep flappin’ their jaws down there about all their home runs,” says Steve Yerkes, the second baseman. “Well, what about the ball? That thing we were playing with was like hitting a rolled-up bunch of socks. Those guys can check-swing home runs with that darn lively ball. Spoke, you could have hit 40.”

“I wouldn’t doubt it,” agrees Speaker. “But I still hold the record for career doubles (792), you know. I’ll hang my hat on that.”

“And the strikeouts!” shrieks Stahl. “Ridiculous. That Martinez whiffed 146 times! Criminy! What’s the most you ever fanned, Spoke?”

“Fifty-some,” Speaker replies. “But that was my rookie year. Don’t believe I ever got to 40 after that.”

“I’ll give ’em this,” Wood says. “They were relentless. Don’t believe they ever lost more than three in a row. They answered every challenge. I thought they were in trouble going back to New York after losing that Game 2. I thought they were in trouble against Houston. I worried about the state of the pitching after losing that 18-inning game.

“They always had an answer. We gotta give them their due.”

“And that Cora,” says Stahl, shaking his head. “Did everything right. It’s like he was ordering off a menu: ‘I’ll have the three-run homer blue plate special,’ and bang, a three-run homer? Never saw anything like it.”

“Heard they celebrated pretty good on the way home,” says Lewis.

“Maybe so,” replies Wood. “But we had one thing they don’t have.”

“What’s that?” inquires Stahl.

“Scollay Square.”

*** *The Boston Herald***

Jackie Bradley Jr. seizes Golden opportunity

Jason Mastrodonato

The wait is done for Jackie Bradley Jr.

The managers, coaches and defensive metrics combined to elect Bradley the 2018 American League Gold Glove Award winner in center field. Bradley edged Mike Trout and Adam Engel in results announced Sunday night.

It’s Bradley’s first Gold Glove in his sixth big league season, though in two of those years, he appeared in fewer than 75 games.

The entire Red Sox starting outfield was nominated for Gold Gloves this year. Only Bradley and Mookie Betts were victorious.

While Red Sox pitchers and coaches have long been saying Bradley is the best center fielder in baseball, the defensive statistics haven’t always agreed.

According to the SABR Defensive Index, which counts for 25 percent of the weight in Gold Glove calculations (with the other 75 percent coming from the voting by managers and coaches), Bradley ranked fourth at 4.3 as of the latest release on Aug. 19.

Last year, Bradley ranked eighth with zero SDI. In 2016, he ranked seventh with minus-1.2 SDI, worse than Jacoby Ellsbury.

But the Red Sox felt the numbers weren't an accurate representation of Bradley's ability. And while he appeared to have a down year on defense in 2017, when he was often getting to the hard-hit balls but failing to complete the catch, there was no questioning his performance in 2018.

Aside from some accuracy issues on throws to home and a memorable mistake early in the year, when he missed a diving catch that rolled behind him for an inside-the-park-homer, Bradley had a near-perfect season on defense. Some of the memorable catches: a fully-stretched out catch to snag a ball from right field against the Orioles in April, and his tumbling grab before crashing into the Green Monster against the Twins in July.

The 28-year-old is under team control through the arbitration process for two more seasons before he's eligible for free agency.

Ian Kinsler, who was acquired mid-year for his defensive ability but made a costly error that led to the Red Sox' only loss in the World Series, was chosen as the Gold Glove winner at second base ahead of Rongni Odor and Jed Lowrie.

Kinsler ranked second among major league second basemen with 10 defensive runs saved. He previously won the award in 2016. The 36-year-old is now a free agent.

Mitch Moreland, also a 2016 winner, was a finalist at first base but lost to Matt Olson. Moreland returns to the Red Sox for \$6.5 million in 2019, the final year of his contract.

Betts, one of the best defenders in baseball at any position, won his third straight Gold Glove in right field. He ranked first among right fielders in SDI with 9.6 and fifth among all major leaguers in defensive runs saved with 20. Kole Calhoun and Aaron Judge were finalists at the position.

Andrew Benintendi earned his first career nomination in left field, though he was a long shot against Alex Gordon, who won his sixth Gold Glove.

It's a qualified 'no' for Craig Kimbrel

Jason Mastrodonato

A one-year, \$17.9 million contract wouldn't be a bad deal for most relievers to take, but it would be senseless for Red Sox closer Craig Kimbrel.

Yesterday marked the deadline to submit one-year qualifying offers of \$17.9 million, the average of the highest 125 players' salaries in 2018. The Red Sox were certainly going to give one to Kimbrel, securing themselves draft pick compensation should he sign with another club this winter.

Because they were over the luxury tax threshold in 2018, the Sox will be eligible to receive just a compensatory pick after the fourth round in next year's draft. It's a consolation prize at best, and another penalty they will pay for their aggressive spending. Had they not been over the tax, they would be eligible for a draft pick before the third round.

For Kimbrel, who turned 30 in May and is hitting free agency for the first time, this is his big chance to land a lucrative long-term deal. Because the Sox have shown to be willing spenders, they'll have to pay more than \$17.9 million over one year to keep a likely Hall of Famer on their roster.

The only question is whether or not Kimbrel will set a record for the largest contract ever by a reliever, which currently belongs to Aroldis Chapman, who signed a five-year, \$86 million deal with the Yankees before the 2017 season.

Kimbrel's track record is arguably more impressive than Chapman's.

Kimbrel already ranks among the best in MLB history in a handful of categories. If you sort by pitchers with at least 500 career innings, Kimbrel's 1.91 ERA is the best in the last 100 years. His 0.92 WHIP ranks second only to Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen. And he's the best ever in strikeouts per nine innings (14.7), batting average against (.154) and OPS against (.485), among other categories.

There is no active player with more than his 333 career saves, which ranks 14th all-time.

For teams looking for a ninth inning man, there is no better.

But that doesn't mean Kimbrel comes without questions.

He submitted a dubious postseason, when he had the worst ERA (5.91) of anybody with 10 innings in October. He walked eight batters and gave up nine hits in 10L innings (though he did manage to convert all six save opportunities).

The Red Sox concluded he was tipping his pitches for the first two rounds. The Dodgers scored two off him in 4M innings in the World Series.

And while Kimbrel's early years with the Braves were unthinkable good, his numbers during his three years in Boston took a slight turn, though remaining elite.

Kimbrel's three-year average heading into free agency: 2.44 ERA, 0.90 WHIP, 14.9 K/9, 3.7 BB/9, 0.8 HR/9.

Chapman's three-year average before he signed: 1.72 ERA, 0.96 WHIP, 15.7 K/9, 3.8 BB/9, 0.3 HR/9.

And for reference, here's Wade Davis' three-year average before signing for three years, \$52 million with the Rockies last winter: 1.65 ERA, 1.00 WHIP, 10.8 K/9, 3.4 BB/9, 0.5 HR/9.

In the new age of baseball, will Kimbrel's clear comfort level with handling the ninth inning in save situations hurt his case as a free agent? Or would he be willing to adapt to new-age managers who might want to use him as a hybrid reliever capable of getting the biggest outs in the seventh or eighth inning?

John Farrell and Alex Cora tried, though it never picked up traction under either manager.

In an age where most players are trying to lift the ball in the air, Kimbrel has been an expert at getting hitters to chase bad pitches. Among 336 pitchers with at least 50 innings in 2018, he ranked in the bottom 10 among pitches thrown in the strike zone with just 36.6 percent.

His 62.7 percent contact rate was the lowest in the majors.

Among 285 pitchers with at least 100 strikeouts in 2018, Kimbrel's 14.9 whiff percentage left him tied with Chris Sale and Tanner Scott for 12th place.

It's all a matter of what teams are looking for. If the Red Sox want to continue to play eight-inning games, knowing that Kimbrel will lock down the ninth as well as almost anybody in history, they'll have to consider writing a big check.

But spending money in the bullpen hasn't been Dave Dombrowski's method in the past.

Giving Kimbrel a qualifying offer was the wise choice. Accepting it wouldn't be.

*** *MassLive.com***

Boston Red Sox extend qualifying offer to closer Craig Kimbrel, who has 10 days to accept or decline

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox have extended closer Craig Kimbrel a qualifying offer, NBC Sports Boston's Evan Drellich reported via Twitter.

This year's one-year qualifying offer is worth \$17.9 million. Kimbrel and other free agents who receive a qualifying offer have 10 days to accept or decline it.

If Kimbrel declines it and signs elsewhere, the Red Sox receive a compensation draft pick after the fourth round of the 2019 June draft.

The righty posted a 2.74 ERA, 3.13 FIP, 0.99 WHIP and 42 saves in 63 outings (62 1/3 innings) during the regular season. He averaged 4.5 walks per nine innings compared to 13.9 strikeouts.

He posted a 5.91 ERA (10.2 innings, seven earned runs) during the postseason.

Price, Holt among Red Sox joining Alex Cora to bring World Series trophy to Puerto Rico

Nick O'Malley

The Boston Red Sox 2018 World Series trophy is heading Puerto Rico and they're bringing a contingent of coaches and players.

During the Red Sox's postgame celebration after ousting the Dodgers in Game 5, manager Alex Cora -- a native of Caguas, Puerto Rico -- asked the team if they would take the trophy to his homeland as part of the trophy's tour.

Less than a week after the Red Sox won their fourth title since the year 2000, the Red Sox announced that they've assembled a delegation to head down to the U.S. territory and celebrate the championship.

Here's the full list, according to Jason Mastrodonato of the Boston Herald:

Manager Alex Cora
Chairman Tom Werner
President Sam Kennedy
Assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett
First base coach Tom Goodwin
Coach Ramon Vazquez
Utility player Brock Holt
Catcher Sandy Leon
Pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez
Catcher Christian Vazquez

Like Cora, Coach Ramon Vazquez is also a native of Puerto Rico, hailing from Aibonito.

Since coming on as Red Sox manager at the start of 2018, Cora has regularly voiced the pride he has in representing homeland, especially in the wake of the destruction caused by Hurricane Maria.

*** *RedSox.com***

Mookie, JBJ, Kinsler win Gold Glove Awards

Manny Randhawa

The Red Sox outfield was among the best in the game in 2018, and following the franchise's fourth World Series title in 15 years, two of Boston's outfielders were awarded Rawlings Gold Glove Awards on Sunday. American League MVP Award candidate Mookie Betts won his third consecutive Gold Glove Award in right field, while Jackie Bradley Jr. won the first of his career in center field.

And that wasn't all the Red Sox had to celebrate when the awards were announced, as veteran infielder Ian Kinsler won his second career Gold Glove honor.

Betts, 26, has received what could be the first of many awards to come for his sensational 2018 campaign. While he slashed .346/.438/.640 with 32 home runs and 30 steals over 136 games, he dazzled with his customarily spectacular defense in right. Betts was tied for second among all Major League outfielders with 20 Defensive Runs Saved (DRS), per FanGraphs. He also produced an impressive 11 outs above average, per Statcast™.

Bradley, 28, claimed his first Gold Glove Award after playing a stellar center field over the past several seasons. Though it's hard to believe this is his first such honor, he has always had stiff competition from defensive stars such as the Rays' Kevin Kiermaier and the Orioles' Adam Jones. This season, though, he wouldn't be denied, tying Atlanta's Ender Inciarte for the most four-star catches in baseball, per Statcast™, with 12. He also posted 11 outs above average.

It's been quite a few weeks for Bradley, who was also named the AL Championship Series MVP during Boston's run to the World Series title.

"It means a whole lot," Bradley told ESPN's Karl Ravech following the Gold Glove Award announcement. "I'm a player that takes a lot of pride in my defense, and helping my team on both sides of the ball. There are a lot of great center fielders that I'm in competition with, and it's an honor to be mentioned along with those guys."

While Bradley and Betts won Gold Glove Awards, yet another Red Sox outfielder received a nomination, in Andrew Benintendi.

"Good luck hitting fly balls to the outfield if you're the other team," Bradley said. "It's very exciting playing next to them. It makes for a lot of fun. Not only are we pretty decent outfielders, but we're really close. I think that's what makes us even better, being able to communicate and keep each other accountable."

A unique aspect of two Red Sox outfielders winning Gold Glove Awards in the same season, particularly in Bradley's case as a center fielder, is that they play their home games at Fenway Park, which has challenging outfield dimensions. It makes the accomplishment all the more impressive.

"Get used to uncertainty," Bradley said of playing in the outfield at Fenway. "Sometimes it's gonna hit a little nook or cranny. It's got a lot of different angles and a lot of different types of padding it could hit off of, whether it's in right-center field or left-center with the [Green Monster]."

"In center field, you've got three different types of backgrounds -- you've got the padded wall, and then you've got the metal fence out there that goes up. So a lot of different things to interact with."

Bradley and Betts have a combined four Gold Glove Awards, and at 28 and 26 years old, respectively, we can expect more where those came from.

Kinsler, who joined Boston in a trade with the Angels at the non-waiver Trade Deadline, earned his first Gold Glove Award with the Tigers in 2016. He and the Rangers' Rougned Odor finished this season with 10 DRS apiece, tied for the most among AL second basemen.

As the old baseball adage goes, "Pitching and defense win championships." In the case of the 2018 Red Sox, that certainly proved true, with the defense taking center stage Sunday night.

Cora, Red Sox take WS trophy to Puerto Rico

Ian Browne

For the second time in four days, Red Sox manager Alex Cora found himself in the center of a parade.

This time, Cora was back in his hometown of Caguas, Puerto Rico. Cora was joined by several Red Sox coaches, players, owners and front-office members who helped make this joyous day in his homeland possible.

In the cover of darkness and with steady rain falling, the Red Sox's contingent left Fenway Park early Saturday morning on a bus to Logan Airport. A couple of hours later, they touched down in San Juan.

Cora, decked out in a Red Sox jersey and rolled-up khakis, was first off the plane, and he had his precious carry-on -- the World Series trophy -- in his hands. Catcher Christian Vazquez and coach Ramon Vazquez, both from Puerto Rico, immediately trailed behind the first rookie manager to win the World Series since Arizona's Bob Brenly in 2001.

From there, the group got on a flatbed for the 16-mile ride to Caguas. Upon arrival, it was a true party. Music played loudly. Horns were honking everywhere. As he stood next to his daughter Camila, Cora moved the trophy over his head back and forth to the joy of a packed crowd of baseball enthusiasts.

"It was very emotional," Cora said. "I'm not a guy that shows too much emotion, but I had to take a step back, to tell everybody how much I love them, from my family, and all those fans, and to thank our mayor and the Red Sox, and what it means to me, and to thank the players. That was a cool moment and hopefully we can do it again."

One fan had a straw hat with "Puerto Rico" taped on to it, and his face was painted like a baseball. Cora walked with his baseball cap on backwards and recorded videos of the celebration on his phone. And later, Cora was dancing enthusiastically as a band played next to him.

While the trophy will go on many trips between now and Spring Training, Cora wanted to make sure to bring it back to his homeland first. This marks the Red Sox's second trip to Puerto Rico this year. Cora led a relief effort in January to deliver nearly 10 tons of supplies to the island, which is still recovering in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in September 2017.

Caguas mayor William Miranda Torres was on hand for Saturday's festivities.

Others who joined for the day trip included Red Sox chairman Tom Werner, president and CEO Sam Kennedy, assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett, first-base coach Tom Goodwin, infielder/outfielder Brock Holt, catcher Sandy Leon and pitchers David Price and Eduardo Rodriguez.

"It's very special," Christian Vazquez said. "It's an honor to be here with Alex and the team, and it means a lot for us."

The trip to Puerto Rico was on the one-week anniversary of the club's biggest win in the 2018 World Series, when the Red Sox came back from a 4-0 deficit to beat the Dodgers, 9-6, in Game 4. The Sox won the World Series the next day, and celebrated with a duck-boat parade in Boston on Wednesday.

"Happy to be home, happy to be in Puerto Rico, my home, my island, and I just want to thank everyone who got here today," Ramon Vazquez said. "Let's go, Red Sox."

Red Sox extend qualifying offer to Kimbrel

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The Red Sox presented a qualifying offer to All-Star closer Craig Kimbrel on Friday, giving the flame-throwing righty one possible avenue -- albeit an unlikely one -- toward returning to the World Series champions.

Kimbrel has until Nov. 12 at 5 p.m. ET to accept the offer, and if he does, he would earn \$17.9 million from the Red Sox in 2019.

Given Kimbrel's track record, which includes 333 career saves and seven All-Star appearances, the veteran is far more likely to reject the offer and explore his options as a free agent for the first time in his career.

In fact, only five of the 73 players who have been extended qualifying offers since this system began in 2012 have accepted the offers. By making the qualifying offer to Kimbrel, the Red Sox have covered themselves in terms of compensation should he sign with another team.

Due to the fact the Red Sox went over the luxury-tax threshold, the compensatory pick they would receive for Kimbrel leaving would be after the fourth round is completed.

The Red Sox didn't make qualifying offers to the two other players who were eligible: righty Joe Kelly and lefty Drew Pomeranz. Due to the fact they acquired Nathan Eovaldi, Ian Kinsler and World Series MVP Steve Pearce during the season, the Red Sox weren't eligible to make qualifying offers to those players.

Kimbrel and the team's other free agents are now eligible to sign with all 30 Major League teams.

In a news conference on Thursday, Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski expressed the desire to keep as much of the team's championship-winning core together as possible.

If the Sox can't keep Kimbrel, Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier are two in-house candidates to replace him as closer.

*** *WEEL.com***

Jackie Bradley Jr, Mookie Betts, Ian Kinsler all win Gold Gloves

Rob Bradford

The Red Sox were well represented when it came to the announcement of this season's American League Rawlings Gold Glove Award winners.

Both Mookie Betts and Jackie Bradley Jr. earned the award for their work in the outfield, with Ian Kinsler getting the nod at second base.

For Bradley Jr. it was his first Gold Glove, while Betts has now won it three years in a row. Kansas City's Alex Gordon earned the honor in left field, the sixth of his career.

Kinsler, who came over to the Red Sox from the Angels, claimed the award for the second time in the last three seasons despite playing in just 128 games. Last year's American League winner at second base Brian Dozier was dealt to the Dodgers just before the non-waiver trade deadline.

Bradley Jr. cracked through this season thanks in part to his continued excellence while previous winners Byron Buxton and Kevin Kiermaier (both centerfielders) saw their seasons cut short by injuries.

Mitch Moreland was also a finalist for Gold Glove at first base but was beaten out by Oakland's Matt Olson.

It marked the first time since 2013 the Red Sox have claimed multiple Gold Glove winners, with Dustin Pedroia and Shane Victorino having won it during that championship season. The last time the Sox had three Gold Glove honorees was in 2011 when Adrian Gonzalez, Jacoby Ellsbury and Pedroia all won the award.

How the Red Sox could be even better next season

Rob Bradford

The conversation back in September was about why David Price signed with the Red Sox in the first place. Part of the pitcher's explanation included his feeling that Dave Dombrowski was going to do whatever was needed to give winning a whirl, each and every year.

"I wanted to put myself in the best chance to win," Price told WEEI.com. "I still feel like I did that even though my first two years didn't end the way we wanted to. This year if we win however many games, set records and go on to win a World Series I promise you we're going to be better in '19 than we were in '18."

Here we are.

Records set. World Series won. Now comes the question regarding that thing Price promised.

Can this 119-win Red Sox team be better next season?

At first glance, this would seem to be an unlikely proposition. The lower tier of the American League -- especially the East -- can't be as bad as they were this time around. The Red Sox are potentially losing one of the game's best closers (Craig Kimbrel), two of their most valuable postseason pitchers (Nathan Eovaldi, Joe Kelly) and the World Series MVP (Steve Pearce).

Who knows how Chris Sale's shoulder is going to hold up? Maybe pitchers started figuring out how to limit the power of Andrew Benintendi, Mookie Betts or even J.D. Martinez? Are you going to primarily get the good or bad of David Price, Jackie Bradley Jr., and Eduardo Rodriguez?

Price's premise is that Dombrowski was going to do what he has done during the majority of his tenure with the Red Sox, not be shy about adding to the roster via free agency and/or trades. Last year it was Martinez. The year before Sale. Prior to that it was Price and Kimbrel. And even the likes of Carson Smith and Tyler Thornburg have to be included because they represented a willingness to not sit idly by heading into a new season.

And while things promise to get really uncomfortable after 2019 thanks to expiring contracts, that's not what we're talking about for the time being. Yes, the Red Sox have the potential to be even better while trying to defend their championship.

Looking back at prior Red Sox' championships, the only one that was followed by a team that could be considered as good if not better came in 2008. That was, in large part, because there simply wasn't a whole lot of turnover, with the re-signing of Mike Lowell serving as the biggest offseason salvo. After 2004? They lost Pedro Martinez, Derek Lowe, and even Orlando Cabrera, with such replacements as Edgar Renteria, David Wells and Matt Clement not going quite as planned. In 2014 some of the lightning-in-the-bottle performances couldn't be duplicated in large part due to injuries and age.

Contracts aside, this group would seem to have the ability to keep evolving.

A strong case can be made that with the continued production and presence of Martinez, the likes of Benintendi, Bradley and Xander Bogaerts could all take steps forward. Another full season of Rafael Devers could truly be a game-changer assuming the uneasy lessons of 2018 are built upon. The catching position isn't going to get worse. Finding a complement at first base for Mitch Moreland (Pearce actually still makes sense) shouldn't be all that difficult.

As we've noted, the best chance to cement an uptick for 2019 is re-signing Eovaldi. This would be viewed as a luxury for some, but when staring at the prospect of two of your top three starters leaving after next season -- along with the need for top-of-the-rotation dominance -- such a proactive maneuver makes a lot of sense. Steven Wright. Brian Johnson. Hector Velazquez. They have proven their worth on the 25-man roster as protection for the top four or five.

Replacing Kimbrel actually might not be all that painful. As Dombrowski suggested, you can bump up Matt Barnes and/or Ryan Brasier in the pecking order with legitimate bullpen help (Travis Lakins, Durbin Feltman, Darwison Hernandez) on the horizon. And while you're executing your internal promotions it wouldn't be that difficult to dip into a free agent market that has quite a few high-end relievers (Zach Britton and Andrew Miller, for example) looking to re-establish their value.

There will also be the possibility that the likes of Michael Chavis and/or Bobby Dalbec pops up to offer the kind of internal position-player insurance the Red Sox didn't really have whole lot of this past season.

On paper, Price might be correct. The 2019 Red Sox could actually be better. But injuries, contract uncertainty (remember Jon Lester and John Lackey in 2014) and down years are always waiting around the corner ready to derail things.

For now, however, the pitcher's proclamation doesn't seem all that crazy.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

How Red Sox handle Craig Kimbrel should be telling

Evan Drellich

BOSTON — Craig Kimbrel is the nexus of everything. Or at least, several relevant baseball topics, from the Red Sox' outlook on a whole to whether saves will continue to be sought and rewarded with the same verve.

Overpaying for a pitcher who had one of the worst years of his career to chase another title might actually make sense, so long as the Red Sox are willing to keep spending on their younger players and realize the risk they're taking on — and the value of the compensatory pick they'd be foregoing.

A highly regarded closer is the ultimate luxury good. It's one thing to be an excellent reliever. It's another to be proven in the fire and brimstone of the ninth inning. Kimbrel's free agency may be a good indicator of how far the Red Sox will go to pursue a title repeat in the immediate future, whether they intend to pull out all stops.

And if the present is everything, then Kimbrel is not easy to simply let resettle elsewhere. Put roles aside momentarily: the Sox generally would do well to add to their bullpen this winter or at least maintain it, not subtract from it.

The Red Sox are not only in a position to actually afford a brand-name closer — hello, season-ticket purchases following a championship, and all the other gobs of money this ownership group has — but in a position where, after 119 wins, Kimbrel may actually be a luxury that makes sense. For 2019, anyway. The 2021 season may be a different story in Boston. But as has been the case with many matters for management in recent years, perhaps the Sox feel they can just cross that bridge later.

Across the game, the closer position itself is evolving, but slowly. The rest of baseball seems to be undergoing small revolutions, but we're still seeing one holdover: the pitcher who must pitch in a certain situation.

Many relievers still swear by a traditional bullpen structure. Yet, this October once again provided an example of how pitchers can break that mold. The postseason and the regular season are two different animals, but that discrepancy is a matter of frequency of usage than anything else. There's no great reason that Kimbrel cannot pitch in big moments outside of save situations — aside from an adherence to tradition and his Hall of Fame aspirations.

Here, then, is a fixed-role pitcher who has shown no indication he is interested in something other than finishing out games, in an age where roles are being slowly destroyed, particularly during the time of year that fans care about most: October.

But let's say there's validity to the role still. That from April through September, at least, a traditional closer still has some added value. Maybe the value is not nearly as great as once thought, but maybe it is enough that, when you're already a championship-caliber club, it's worth having. It's an advantage, even.

The Red Sox must consider that there are only so many ways for them to upgrade. And "upgrade" may actually be the wrong word. No matter what the Sox do this winter, the chances that they are actually a better team than they were in 2018, that they finish with more victories, are incredibly small. Their goal, in essence, is to maintain, and to again win the division and avoid a Wild Card game.

A good pitcher with an intangible would seem to stand out. Keeping Kimbrel is safer for the immediate future than replacing him with a pitcher who has not displayed the intangible so steadily.

Yet, this is a pitcher who will be paid on past performance at a time when there are signs his ability is declining. High-velocity arms, too, are becoming more common still around him.

Kimbrel was not good in the postseason, allowing seven runs in 10 ²/₃ innings, including two home runs. He walked eight.

The Red Sox won the World Series in large part because their pitching staff was both willing to change roles, and subsequently good at said roles: starters as eighth-inning relievers, for example. With a four-run lead in Game 5 of the World Series, Sox manager Alex Cora had Chris Sale pitch, rather than Kimbrel, who had been taxed the previous two days. But Kimbrel also just wasn't as trustworthy, even though he always seemed to get out of his messiest messes.

Compared to his insanely good 2017 season, Kimbrel had a huge drop-off in 2018. And he was still one of the top-25 most valuable relievers in the majors, per FanGraphs' wins above replacement. At 1.5 WAR, he was No. 22, tied with his good friend David Robertson, and behind three of Robertson's Yankees penmates: Aroldis Chapman (10th), Dellin Betances (15th) and Chad Green (18th).

Over his career prior to 2018, Kimbrel averaged 3.3 walks per nine and 14.8 strikeouts per nine innings. He was at 4.5 walks and 13.9 strikeouts per nine this year, respectively.

But he can close. What's that worth to a team with major stars nearing free agency? A lot may be learned from the Sox' handling of Kimbrel this winter.

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

MLB Notebook: For the Red Sox to defend their title, it's going to cost them – again

Sean McAdam

It used to be true that you can't tell the players without a scorecard. Now, that bit of wisdom has been amended: You can't put a roster together without first figuring out the cost.

The 2018 Red Sox had both the highest payroll in the game (somewhere around \$240 million) and the highest payroll in franchise history. The money was well spent — most if it, anyway — since the Sox won the World Series last weekend.

And while principal owner John Henry noted in the immediate aftermath of the title win that “you can’t (spend to the maximum) every year,” it would seem a given that the Red Sox will, again, go over the first threshold of \$206 million for their 2019 roster.

Here’s a look at what they in terms of commitments and how much money they have to spend in pursuit of a second-straight championship.

RETURNING PLAYERS WITH SET SALARIES

David Price	\$31 million
J.D. Martinez	\$23.75 million
Rick Porcello	\$21.125 million
Dustin Pedroia	\$15.125 million
Chris Sale	\$15 million
Mitch Moreland	\$6 million
Eduardo Nunez	\$5 million
Christian Vazquez	\$2.85 million
TOTAL	\$119.850 million

ARBITRATION-ELIGIBLE PLAYERS WITH PROJECTED SALARIES (courtesy: MLB TradeRumors.com)

Mookie Betts	\$18.7 million
Xander Bogaerts	\$11.9 million
Jackie Bradley Jr.	\$7.9 million
Eduardo Rodriguez	\$4.8 million
Brock Holt	\$3.4 million
Tyler Thornburg	\$2.3 million
Sandy Leon	\$2.3 million
Matt Barnes	\$1.5 million
Brandon Workman	\$1.4 million
Steven Wright	\$1.4 million
Heath Hembree	\$1.2 million
Blake Swihart	\$1.1 million
TOTAL	\$57.9 million

TOTAL TO THIS POINT: \$177.75 million

PLAYERS w/ 0-3 years of service time:

Andrew Benintendi
Rafael Devers
Marco Hernandez
Austin Maddox
Brian Johnson
Hector Velazquez
Ryan Brasier

TOTAL (approximate) \$4.5 million

PLAYERS OFF ROSTER WITH REMAINING OBLIGATIONS:

Pablo Sandoval \$18.4 million

TOTAL PAYROLL \$200.650 million.

That figure doesn't factor in another 10 percent or so for insurance, health care and other factors, all of which go into the computation of a payroll. So even before the Red Sox think about adding any free agents or obtain any veterans in a trade, they're effectively over the first luxury tax threshold of \$206 million.

(The next threshold comes at \$226 million, which carries with it a higher tax. It may be tough for the Sox to avoid this, too. Surely, however, they will want to avoid going over the next level, set at \$246 million).

Might that limit what the Red Sox can spend on free agents? Somewhat.

Their most costly outlay will almost certainly come at the closer's position. If the Red Sox re-sign Craig Kimbrel, it seems certain that such a contract would cost them, at minimum, \$18 million annually, probably for four or five years.

Both Aroldis Chapman (five years, \$86 million) and Wade Davis (three years, \$52 million) established the going rate for elite closers at north of \$17 million in terms of annual average value. And because the numbers never go backward in free agency, let's assume that the bar now sits at \$18 million annually.

Given that level of necessary investment, the Sox might find themselves in a position of choosing between, say, retaining both Nathan Eovaldi and Steve Pearce or Kimbrel — but not all three.

Eovaldi will presumably command somewhere in the \$15-\$16 million neighborhood annually, while Pearce could get around \$4-5 million.

Should the Sox choose the latter, it would leave them with the option of finding a closer on the current roster. In his end-of-season press conference Thursday, Dave Dombrowski identified Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier as potential candidates to close.

But for a team intent on properly defending its world championship, that would be a considerable risk. While closers sometimes come from unlikely places — recall that 2013 postseason hero Koji Uehara was the fourth closer the Sox auditioned for the role that season — it would be quite the gambit for the Sox to turn to either Barnes or Brasier, who have combined for exactly two (2) saves in their major league careers.

Presumably, a more experienced closer — such as Zach Britton — could be had at a lesser cost than Kimbrel, but even Britton would command an eight-figure annual salary (he made \$12 million last season).

Of course, it's conceivable that the Sox could free up some additional payroll flexibility by dealing off a contract from their roster.

There's a backlog of catching, but none of the three catchers is scheduled to make a lot of money. If the Sox were to move either Leon or Vazquez, it would still save them less than \$3 million.

The biggest potential savings could come in the rotation, where Porcello, a year away from free agency, could have some appeal. Moving Porcello would save the Sox some \$21 million and presumably allow for the Sox to retain both Pearce and Eovaldi with his money.

That would still leave the Sox with a projected rotation of Sale, Price, Eovaldi, Rodriguez and Wright, with Johnson and Velazquez representing depth options. But given the heavy workload experienced by Red Sox starters thanks to their deep postseason run, do they really want to go into 2019 with one less dependable (and entirely healthy) starter like Porcello — especially when you consider that Porcello is two outs shy of averaging 199 innings over the last five seasons.

The Red Sox are fortunate that they have no significant holes when it comes to position players, with every position covered by a returning starter and able bench players (Holt, Nunez, perhaps even Hernandez) set to return, too.

But to maintain their rotation depth and provide themselves with an experienced closer at the back end of their bullpen, it's going to cost the Sox — again — to be good.

One of the viewpoints heard frequently in the aftermath of the World Series was that the Sox won because Alex Cora managed with “feel” while the Dodgers’ Dave Roberts is too tied to analytics.

From a strategic standpoint, Cora did have the better Series. His bullpen performed far better, and unlike the Dodgers, Red Sox pinch-hitters had a huge impact. It's inarguable that the biggest momentum-changer in the five-game Series was Mitch Moreland's three-run, pinch-hit homer in the seventh inning of Game 4. Two innings later, Cora made the right call again when he sent up Rafael Devers to hit for Eduardo Nunez and was rewarded when Devers drove an RBI-single up the middle, giving the Red Sox their first lead of the game.

While it's true that Cora made far more decisions that worked out for his team than did Roberts, this theory is simplistic and wrongheaded. In truth, this is a lazy take — to say nothing of a wholly inaccurate one — and isn't fair to either manager.

Let's deconstruct this false narrative, shall we?

1. It's 2018. Every team relies heavily on analytics.

That's especially true of the Red Sox, who were at the forefront of the analytics wave some 15 years ago, and but for a few exceptions, have remained there ever since.

Cora repeatedly gave credit to Zack Scott, the team's vice president of baseball research and development, for his input over the course of the season and enveloped Scott in a congratulatory bear hug minutes after accepting the World Series trophy on the makeshift stage on the Dodger Stadium infield Sunday night.

Dombrowski acknowledged that Cora relied significantly more on analytics than his predecessor, John Farrell, and brought with him a deep appreciation and understanding of data from his one year of his tenure as bench coach with the Houston Astros, known widely as perhaps the most analytics-driven organization in the game.

2. This is less about managerial ability than it is about managerial autonomy.

Cora welcomes (and receives) input from the Red Sox' Baseball Operations staff. Scott provides daily matchup numbers, trends and other relevant information to assist Cora in preparation.

But Cora also has the freedom to make his own lineups. In the ALDS, he famously chose both Devers and Brock Holt against New York starter Luis Severino, despite their combined 1-for-27 history against the Yankee right-hander. Of course, Holt became the first player to ever collect a cycle in the postseason and had five RBI while Devers also contributed two hits and an RBI.

This was a perfect example of Cora's ... call it what you will: instincts, feel, gut — overriding the empirical evidence. Nobody has a better sense of a player's confidence, approach and readiness than the manager who interacts daily with his roster.

Contrast that with Roberts, who, according to industry sources, often has his lineup dictated by the front office.

Thus, when Roberts sat his three best power hitters — Cody Bellinger, Joc Pederson and Max Muncy — when the Sox started lefties Sale and Price in the first two games of the Series, it pretty clearly was not his doing. But the “suggestions” came from the Dodgers’ Baseball Ops staff, and came with the expectation that they would be implemented.

As Roberts works out a contract extension with the Dodgers, perhaps he can use some currency to demand more say-so in the team’s day-to-day operations. Having lost twice in a row in the World Series, the Dodgers could stand to utilize a new approach. Entrusting the manager to make decisions would seem like a good place to start.

Red Sox claim three Gold Gloves

Sean McAdam

For years, Jackie Bradley Jr. had the reputation as one of baseball’s best defensive outfielders. On Sunday, he finally got the hardware to go with it.

Bradley won his first career Gold Glove, beating out both Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels and Adam Engel of the Chicago White Sox.

Bradley was one of three Red Sox winners. Second baseman Ian Kinsler, acquired at the non-waiver trade deadline at the end of July, won his second Gold Glove while right fielder Mookie Betts won his third straight at the position. Kinsler beat out Oakland’s Jed Lowrie and Rougned Odor of the Texas Rangers while Betts edged out Aaron Judge of the Yankees and Kole Calhoun of the Angels.

Two others Red Sox finalists — Mitch Moreland at first base and Andrew Benintendi in left field — lost out. Oakland’s Matt Olson got the nod at first while Kansas City’s Alex Gordon claimed his sixth straight in left field.

The awards are voted on by major league managers and coaches, accounting for 75 percent of the vote. The remaining 25 percent is determined by defensive metrics.

Bradley punctuated his season with a series of highlight plays, some against the wall and others in which he made while diving in center. Betts, meanwhile, finished fifth in Major League Baseball with 20 runs defensive runs saved. Kinsler was a steadying force in the middle of the infield after being obtained from the Angels, though he committed a highly costly error in the 13th inning of Game 4 of the World Series, the only game the Sox lost to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

(Voting is done at the end of the regular season and doesn’t take into account postseason play).

The three Gold Glove winners by the Red Sox are the most they’ve had since 2011 when Dustin Pedroia, Jacoby Ellsbury and Adrian Gonzalez all won at their respective positions.

Red Sox extend qualifying offer to closer Craig Kimbrel

Sean McAdam

The Red Sox gave free agent Craig Kimbrel a qualifying offer for 2019, ensuring that, at the very least, they’ll get a compensatory draft pick for the reliever should Kimbrel sign elsewhere.

The qualifying offer is worth \$17.9 million. Kimbrel, one of seven major league free agents who received an offer, has 10 days to accept or reject the offer.

Should he accept it — and there’s virtually no chance of this happening — he would immediately become property of the Red Sox and forfeit his free agent status. The two sides could also continue negotiating toward a long-term deal.

If he rejects the offer — as all but five free agents out of 73 have since the system was put in place six seasons ago — the Sox can continue negotiating with Kimbrel, as can other teams.

Under the old system, the Red Sox would have received a first-round pick should Kimbrel sign elsewhere. But under the current collective bargaining agreement, the compensation system is far more complicated, taking into account — among other factors — market size and the size of the contract signed.

Trumping all of that, in this case, is the fact that the Red Sox were one of two teams — the Washington Nationals were the other — to go over the luxury tax threshold this season. That means the Red Sox will only collect a fourth-round pick should Kimbrel sign with another team.

*** *Associated Press***

Alex Cora arrives in Puerto Rico as fans celebrate win

CAGUAS, Puerto Rico — Hundreds of arms stretched into the sky in the hometown of Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora on Saturday as fans took pictures and video of the first man from Puerto Rico to lead a team to a World Series championship.

Cora held up the trophy that he had been cradling in his arms as he arrived in the city of Caguas with pitchers David Price and Eduardo Rodriguez and catcher Christian Vazquez, among others including Red Sox chairman Tom Werner.

The Red Sox beat the Los Angeles Dodgers on Oct. 28 to win their fourth championship in 15 years.

"They didn't put any boundaries on their manager," Cora told reporters. "They trusted a kid from Caguas, Puerto Rico."

The Boston Red Sox say they haven't decided whether they will visit the White House if invited by President Donald Trump. Cora said if that happens, it offers what he called a "huge platform."

"I know what it represents, and I think I've done a good job so far representing my country and Latinos, and if as an organization we decided to go, I'll use this platform the right way," he said. "I'm not going to embarrass the organization, or my country or myself."

When asked by The Associated Press to specify what he meant by "the right way," Cora grinned and only said, "You'll have to wait and see."

Before meeting with reporters, Cora got on stage and addressed the crowd, saying the win wouldn't have been possible without team members.

"Everyone's talking about Alex, about the coaches, about the owners...but what these guys do every day is worthy of admiration," he said, adding that he heard stories about Puerto Ricans staying up until 4 a.m. to watch games.

"And that excited me because I would think, I'm not doing anything. Thank you for being here. Thank you for supporting us," he said.

Fans dressed in red and blue gushed about Cora's visit.

"He put us on the map," said 26-year-old Miguel Martinez, who was slow dancing to salsa with his girlfriend as they waited for Cora. "My eyes filled with tears when he won the championship because this is something historic."

Some fans had driven more than an hour to receive the manager and praised how he helped Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria hit more than a year ago amid a 12-year recession.

When 43-year-old Cora negotiated his contract last October, he asked his team to help with relief efforts, and they eagerly pitched in.

"Despite everything that has happened, we have a bit of happiness on the side," said Red Sox fan Arleen Cruz, who drove to Caguas with her husband from the southern town of Humacao to receive the players.

The two have been Red Sox fans since 1972.

"Puerto Rico's name couldn't be held up higher," said Cruz's husband, Ramon Reyes, who was clad in a Red Sox hat, T-shirt and towel slung over his shoulder.

They mingled with other fans stopping to buy food, beer and merchandise from roadside vendors as the smell of fried empanadillas and other local specialties wafted through the air.

Kershaw gets \$93M deal, leaving Harper, Machado atop market
Ronald Lopez-Cepero and his wife, both from Caguas, had already bought T-shirts last week that read "PROUD for Puerto Rico." He recalled how he had about a dozen baseball cards featuring Cora and his older brother, Joey, a former big-league infielder, which both of them signed.

"He's a tremendous person," said the lifelong fan. "He's very humble and helpful."

Cora, who spent 14 years in the majors and batted .243 as an infielder with six teams, steered the Red Sox to a team-record 108 wins in the regular season before Boston topped the 100-win Yankees and Astros in the playoffs.

Prize pitchers: David Price, Jacob deGrom honored by NY baseball writers

NEW YORK — David Price has won the Babe Ruth award as postseason MVP in voting by the New York chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America.

After pitching the Boston Red Sox to their World Series title, Price will be honored along with other award winners at the chapter's 96th annual dinner on Jan. 26 in Manhattan.

Mets ace Jacob deGrom was selected New York player of the year Friday, and teammate David Wright took the Joe DiMaggio Toast of the Town award. Former general manager Sandy Alderson, who stepped down last summer after his cancer returned, was saluted with the Arthur and Milton Richman You Gotta Have Heart award.

Yankees GM Brian Cashman will receive the Joan Payson/Shannon Forde award for community service. Longtime broadcaster Ken Singleton was tabbed for the Casey Stengel You Could Look It Up award, 40 years after he finished runner-up for AL MVP.

Mets outfielder Brandon Nimmo was an overwhelming choice for the Ben Epstein/Dan Castellano Good Guy award. Media relations dean Jay Horwitz got the William J. Slocum and Jack Lang Award for Long and Meritorious Service as he transitions to a new role as vice president of alumni public relations and team historian.

Kershaw finds value staying with Dodgers

The Willie, Mickey & The Duke award will go to the 1969 Miracle Mets on the 50th anniversary of their championship season.