

The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, November 6, 2018

*** *The Boston Globe***

Can the Yankees turn the tables on the Red Sox in 2019?

Nick Cafardo

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Because he's a good sport and I have known him for years, when Yankees assistant general manager Tim Naehring walked into the GM Meetings here I kiddingly said, "Hey Tim, enjoy the World Series? How about those World Series champion Boston Red Sox, huh?" "

Naehring took it all in stride and smiled.

So did Brian Cashman, the Yankees' GM who had his own fun with it.

"The Red Sox winning doesn't change the hunger level of trying to deliver a championship sooner than later for our fan base," Cashman said.

"The hunger and the effort and the passion's there — despite the horrible outcome that took place in the World Series this year."

The Yankees likely will kick the tires on a lot of pitchers. Patrick Corbin likely will be high on the list. Maybe even Nathan Eovaldi, a pitcher Cashman once had and let go after a few months after Eovaldi needed Tommy John surgery.

"We need to reinforce our pitching," Cashman said. "We'll gravitate toward anything that makes sense [free agents or via trade]. I'm interested in adding more than just one pitcher. I need, I think, to add multiples."

Cashman couldn't get into specific players he might be targeting, but he did say, "I'm going to be engaging the entire landscape on the free agent market. I'm not going to say who and when, but we will make sure we check every box in terms of evaluating what's available and the cost associated with what's available in both marketplaces — free agents and trades."

And so that's the mind-set of the Yankees, one of the two other teams to win 100 games this season, and a team the Red Sox destroyed in the playoffs.

While Cashman will always say that what the Red Sox did will not affect what he does, you know that isn't quite true. It's one of those baseball white lies that all GMs tell at this time of the season when they're trying to put their team together.

Last year, when the Yankees acquired Giancarlo Stanton and were making major acquisitions for a team that had taken Houston to Game 7 of the ALCS, the Red Sox' Dave Dombrowski made similar remarks.

Except Dombrowski's were spot on. The Red Sox won it all.

So now the Red Sox are the hunted. There will be teams trying to duplicate the Red Sox way, though most of them can't compete on a financial level with the Red Sox, who could again have the highest payroll in baseball.

Eovaldi's agents, the Levinsons, are already here trying to see what the landscape is for their client this offseason. The righthander's bound to be in great demand as a free agent. In a perfect world, Eovaldi would

likely return to the Red Sox as the third or fourth starter on a talented staff. But as Dombrowski has pointed out on a few occasions, it's unrealistic to think that you can bring back a championship team in its entirety. Still, if you had the opportunity to bring back one of the Sox free agents, Eovaldi would probably be the unanimous choice because he was so important to the cause.

Dombrowski arrived here Sunday night ahead of most of the GMs. He didn't meet with the Red Sox media until later in the day, a sign he was already working on things. The Red Sox have the tough task of repeating, which hasn't been done since the Yankees did it from 1998-2000, three teams that Cashman helped build after he took over as GM from Bob Watson.

So Cashman really is the last GM who can brag about a three-peat. But that was 18 years ago. He did build a World Series winner with the Yankees in 2009. No current general manager can boast of four World Series championship teams, an accomplishment that will surely land him in Cooperstown one day.

But in the here and now, it's Dombrowski's turn to go for the back-to-back. And with a competitive team like the Yankees and the resilient low-budget Rays in the division, it won't be easy. The Astros will remain a top team. The Indians are always good, despite the fact they'll have defections.

The A's, who won 97 games, could keep adding to their team though their payroll will continue to be one of the lowest in baseball.

In the National League, the Dodgers will continue to be good, as will the Brewers and Braves. The Cubs could resurface as a major team.

But the fun of it is that the Red Sox and Yankees always will be the two teams that baseball is most interested in. The networks love the rivalry because they still draw the big ratings. And even though there's more than enough Red Sox-Yankees fatigue, it regenerates year to year.

In 2018, the Red Sox one-upped the Yankees. Who knows if the Yankees will turn the tables on them in 2019? That's for Dombrowski and Cashman to duke it out this offseason.

Both, however, know that even if you win November and December, it doesn't mean you win October.

Mookie Betts named finalist for AL MVP, but not J.D. Martinez

Peter Abraham

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Mookie Betts finished second to the Angels' Mike Trout in the voting for Most Valuable Player in 2016. Now he has a chance to flip it the other way.

Betts, Trout, and Jose Ramirez of the Indians are finalists for the American League MVP per an announcement by the Baseball Writers' Association of America on Monday.

The award will be given out Nov. 15.

Betts's manager on the Red Sox, Alex Cora, joined Kevin Cash (Rays) and Bob Melvin (Athletics) as the finalists for Manager of the Year. That will be presented Nov. 13.

The voting was conducted before the start of the postseason by a 30-person panel of two writers from each AL city.

Betts is considered a heavy favorite to become the first MVP from the Sox since Dustin Pedroia in 2008. Betts had a 1.078 OPS over 136 games with 84 extra-base hits, 30 steals, 129 runs, and 80 RBIs.

That J.D. Martinez was not among the three finalists was likely a reflection of having made 62 percent of his starts as the designated hitter. That left Martinez with a 6.4 WAR as calculated by Baseball-Reference.com, well below Betts (10.9), Trout (10.2), and Ramirez (7.9).

“I think J.D. deserved to be in there,” Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said.

Martinez, who hit .330 with 43 homers and 130 RBIs, won the Hank Aaron Award for top offensive performer in the AL.

Trout has finished in the top two in AL MVP voting in five of the previous six seasons. Ramirez was third in the voting last year, when Houston’s Jose Altuve beat out Yankees slugger Aaron Judge.

The manager of the year voting is a study in contrasts. Cora, in his first season as a manager, guided the Red Sox to 108 wins and the AL East title. But he took over a 93-win team that increased its payroll to over \$230 million.

Cash led the low-budget Rays to 90 wins despite the loss of several key players to trade. His innovative use of “openers” led to the Rays having a 3.75 earned run average, second in the league.

Melvin’s Athletics started the season with a \$71 million payroll and won 97 games.

Chris Sale was not a finalist for the Cy Young Award. Corey Kluber (Indians), Blake Snell (Rays), and Justin Verlander (Astros) were.

Sale was 12-4 with a 2.11 ERA but pitched only 158 innings. Snell was 21-5 with a 1.89 ERA over 180 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings. Kluber led the league with 215 innings and was 20-7 with a 2.89 ERA. Verlander was 16-9 with a 2.52 ERA in 214 innings.

Ohtani vs. Yankees

Shohei Ohtani is a finalist for the AL Rookie of the Year award, along with two Yankees infielders, Miguel Andujar and Gleyber Torres.

The two-way Japanese sensation was 4-2 with a 3.31 ERA as a starting pitcher before an elbow injury forced him off the mound. He finished out the season exclusively as a designated hitter, hitting .285 with 22 home runs and 61 RBIs. He joined Babe Ruth as the only players ever to hit 15 homers and pitch 50 innings.

Ohtani had Tommy John surgery after the season and is not expected to pitch in 2019.

Andujar, 23, hit 47 doubles, tied for the second-most by a rookie in major league history, while the 21-year old Torres had 24 homers and 77 RBIs. They are the first teammates to finish top three in Rookie of the Year voting since Wil Myers and Chris Archer with Tampa Bay in 2013.

Milwaukee’s Christian Yelich is the favorite for NL MVP, with Colorado’s Nolan Arenado and Chicago’s Javier Baez also revealed as top vote-getters. Yelich hit .370 with 10 homers and a 1.313 OPS in September while the Brewers topped the Cubs for the NL Central title.

The Mets’ Jacob deGrom, Washington’s Max Scherzer, and Philadelphia’s Aaron Nola are the top three for the NL Cy Young Award, with deGrom favored to win for the first time despite a 10-9 record.

Scherzer is a three-time winner, including the past two NL awards.

Milwaukee’s Craig Counsell, Colorado’s Bud Black, and Atlanta’s Brian Snitker were named NL Manager of the Year candidates, while Atlanta’s Ronald Acuna Jr., Washington’s Juan Soto, and Los Angeles’s Walker Buehler are the top three for NL Rookie of the Year.

Steinbrener, Piniella on Hall of Fame ballot

Late Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, former managers Lou Piniella, Davey Johnson, and Charlie Manuel, and six players headed by former Red Sox closer Lee Smith are on the 10-man ballot for the baseball Hall of Fame's Today's Game Era committee to consider next month.

Harold Baines, Albert Belle, Will Clark, Orel Hershiser, and Joe Carter also are on the ballot for the 16-man committee, which meets Dec. 9 at the winter meetings in Las Vegas. The committee considers candidates from 1998 to the present, and a candidate needs at least 75 percent of the vote to be elected.

Any candidate picked will be inducted July 21 along with any players elected by the Baseball Writers' Association of America in a vote announced Jan. 22. Mariano Rivera and the late Roy Halladay join a ballot with top returnees Edgar Martinez and Mike Mussina.

When the Today's Game Era committee last met two years ago, former baseball commissioner Bud Selig and Braves executive John Schuerholz were elected.

Smith's highest voting percentage during 15 years on the Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot was 50.6 percent in 2012. He received 34.2 percent in his 15th and final appearance in 2017.

The Hall has four committees. Modern Baseball (1970-87) meets in December 2019 and Golden Days (1950-69) and Early Baseball (before 1950) in December 2020.

The 16 voters this year will be announced later.

Dave Dombrowski playing catch-up at GM Meetings

Peter Abraham

CARLSBAD, Calif. — There is no downside to winning the World Series. Let's make it perfectly clear that Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski is not complaining in the slightest.

But one side effect of winning and the days of celebration that follow is that Dombrowski and the rest of the Red Sox baseball operations staff are behind in their preparations for the offseason.

It would be typical for Dombrowski to arrive at the General Manager's Meetings already having a solid idea of what the other 29 teams are looking to accomplish. This season he's doing that on the fly with the help of his top assistants.

The Sox won't have their organizational meetings until Monday in Boston. That will be when they really dig into free agents and formulate a plan for the offseason.

But if something were to develop that required quick action, the Sox can still act.

"I think we're prepared," Dombrowski said Monday night. "I've read all the reports. We have a lot of people here to catch up. We're prepared to move forward if something happens."

Speaking in a raspy voice because of a case of laryngitis, Dombrowski considered having the organizational meetings last month but didn't want to distract from the playoffs.

"I don't think it's good to have meetings during the World Series," he said. "Guys should be focused on having fun, not getting reports written, books turned in, and grading the players. But it is different."

Other teams also cut down on their communication with the Sox. To compensate, the Sox have nine staffers here.

“We don’t have a lot of information from some clubs . . . we’ll make up the ground quickly,” Dombrowski said. “It’s a little different, sure.”

. . .

For the moment, no members of the coaching staff are being considered for jobs with other teams . . . Dombrowski offered no comment when asked if the Sox had interest in lefthander Yusei Kikuchi, who is expected to be made available by the Seibu Lions. But it’s unlikely the Sox would want to add another lefthanded starter. Kikuchi is being represented by Scott Boras . . . The Mets retained former Sox coaches Gary DiSarcina and Ruben Amaro Jr. But DiSarcina will move to third base after being the bench coach and Amaro will become an adviser to new GM Brodie Van Wagenen after spending last season as the first base coach.

Red Sox taking suggestions for renaming the PawSox

Dan McLoone

With the Red Sox’ Triple A affiliate set to move from Pawtucket, R.I., to Worcester in April 2021, the organization is looking for a new team name. Through Nov. 26, fans can submit their suggestions for the Red Sox to consider for a new nickname.

The team has been known as the Pawtucket Red Sox, but now fans can submit their ideas and reasoning at PolarPark.com or in writing at numerous ballot boxes throughout the city of Worcester. Polar Park will be the team’s new home in that city.

“We’re eager to hear from fans around Central Massachusetts and all of New England as we determine the ideal name for the Triple A affiliate of the world champion Boston Red Sox in Worcester,” said PawSox executive vice president and general manager Dan Rea III in a news release.

An initial suggestion to continue on with the Sox brand and call the team the WooSox has been met with strong opinions on both sides.

“To Woo or not to Woo, that is the question,” said PawSox president Charles Steinberg in the same news release. “We have heard from those who would like to call the team the WooSox, and we have heard impassioned pleas from others to not call them the WooSox. So we ask, ‘What’s in a name?’

“We hope the flavorful conversation and creative juices flow right through the last drop of gravy at Thanksgiving dinner.”

The team is open to any suggestions but prefers ones with a tie to the community. The organization expects to produce content on its social media platforms explaining some of the nominations and their connection to Worcester over the next month. You can follow along on Twitter at @PawSox.

Why the 2004 Red Sox were still better than the current champions

Dan Shaughnessy

It’s been a less than a week since the duck boats carried our 2018 Red Sox down Boylston Street’s Canyon of Heroes. We’ve basked in after-parties and watched the CoraMen visit Puerto Rico and flash bling at Celtics and Patriots games. We’ve ordered 119-win swag from the Globe store and await a stash of commemorative Red Sox stuff at holiday time.

The 2018 Red Sox are beloved and bejeweled, a role model for Team Above Self. New England will forever remember them fondly.

But you know what they are not?

They are not the greatest Red Sox team of all time.

They are not even the best Sox team of this century.

The 2004 Red Sox were better.

In the thrill of the moment, on the postgame platform at Dodger Stadium last Sunday, Red Sox/Globe owner John Henry anointed his 2018 champs the greatest Red Sox team ever.

These worthy Sox certainly won the most games. They were also ultimate professionals, a team that should serve as a role model for high school and Little League coaches across New England. The '18 Sox had no divas and put the team ahead of themselves. To a man.

But they were not better than the '04 guys.

The 2004 Sox had David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez in the primes of their careers. Like the 2018 Sox, the '04 guys went 11-3 in the postseason, beating two teams that won more than 100 games. The '04 Sox won their final eight postseason games, four straight against the 101-win Yankees and a Series sweep against the 105-win Cardinals.

They had four players with Hall of Fame numbers (Ortiz, Ramirez, Pedro Martinez, and Curt Schilling), a Hall of Fame general manager (Theo Epstein for sure someday), and potentially a Hall of Fame skipper in Terry Francona. They were better behind the plate (Jason Varitek or Sandy Leon?) and in center field (sorry, JBJ fans).

The 2018 Red Sox, for all their achievement, had World Series lineups with Steve Pearce batting third and Brock Holt batting sixth. This makes them something less than the 1975 Reds.

This is a sports argument, so let's not get emotional or personal. Saying that the '04 guys are better than the '18 guys does not diminish what we just witnessed.

For the sake of clarity, I'm narrowing the framework of this argument. We're not going to introduce Bob Ryan's vaunted 1912 Red Sox champs who actually had the top winning percentage in franchise history.

We won't get into the Cardiac Kids of 1967, who go down in history as the most important Red Sox team.

We won't even debate "most memorable." In my view, that one's not even close; the 2004 team is most memorable because it ended an 86-year drought and came back from a 3-0 ALCS deficit against the Yankees. This was the greatest sports story of them all. Biblical. Case closed.

So let's make it simple. Which team was better? The 2004 Jack Daniels-swilling, Manny-willing, Curse-busting Idiots . . . or the 119-win, buttoned-down, relentless team that got the job done without the traditional Red Sox brush fires, nonsense, and drama?

Give me the '04 team. It's just a better team.

Rotations: Schilling, Martinez, Derek Lowe, Tim Wakefield, and Bronson Arroyo (aggregate 73-46) vs. Chris Sale, David Price, Rick Porcello, Nathan Eovaldi, and Eduardo Rodriguez (aggregate 61-26). We know today's starters don't get as many decisions, but history will show that the '04 quintet was better. Pedro is a Hall of Famer and Schill has potential HOF numbers. None of the '18 guys have Schilling's (11-2) postseason pedigree. Wakefield was a 200-game winner and Arroyo went on to make 30 or more starts in each of his next nine seasons. Edge: 2004

Bullpens: Start with the closers. Keith Foulke gave up one run in 14 postseason innings in 2004. Craig Kimbrel was a hot mess in the 2018 postseason and basically lost his job by the end of the World Series.

Elsewhere it's close. Joe Kelly, Matt Barnes, and Ryan Brasier in the postseason were every bit as good as Foulke, Mike Timlin, and Alan Embree. Edge: '04, only because of Foulke in the postseason.

Catcher: Everyone would take Varitek over Leon and Christian Vazquez. Not even close. Varitek was a three-time All-Star, franchise catcher. Edge: '04.

Infield: Kevin Millar, Mark Bellhorn, Orlando Cabrera, Billy Mueller vs. Steve Pearce/Mitch Moreland, Ian Kinsler/Brock Holt, Xander Bogaerts, Rafael Devers/Eduardo Nunez. There was a lot of change in both infields in both seasons. The '04 guys started with Nomar Garciaparra at short. Mueller was a veteran, the '03 AL batting champ. Millar hit .297 in '04. I like the 2018 guys here because Bogaerts was better than anyone in '04 and Moreland and Nunez both hit pinch three-run homers in the World Series. Edge: '18.

Outfield: This is a smorgasbord. The '04 guys had Manny in left, Johnny Damon in center, and Trot Nixon in right. Today's Sox feature Andrew Benintendi, Jackie Bradley Jr., and MVP designee Mookie Betts. Defensively, the 2018 guys win easily. But Manny went .308/43/130 and Damon .304/20/94 with 19 steals. There's no JBJ .234 in the bunch. Edge: '04.

DH: Anybody ready to take J.D. Martinez over David Ortiz? Just yet? Both were great. J.D. in 2018 went .330/43/130. Ortiz in '04: .301/41/139. Edge: Ortiz. For now. Postseason and longevity.

In the dugout, we have Terry Francona vs. Alex Cora. This is like the DH discussion. Both were great. But Francona dealt with much more nonsense and has a lengthier résumé. Cora had one great year. I'm still siding with Tito.

Upstairs we have Dave Dombrowski vs. Theo Epstein. Both made key midseason acquisitions. Theo made the Nomar blockbuster, acquiring Cabrera and Doug Mientkiewicz, and got Dave Roberts from the Dodgers. Dombrowski picked up Eovaldi, Pearce, and Kinsler. Theo is going to the Hall of Fame. Dombro might make it to Cooperstown. Edge: Theo.

The 2004 Red Sox won 10 fewer games than the 2018 team. They were a wild-card entry. It took them longer to figure things out. But they went 51-18 (.739) after Aug. 6, including postseason.

So there.

Let's strap the 2004 World Series winners into the DeLorean and deliver them into 2018 for a seven-game series at Fenway Park, with David Price matched up against Curt Schilling in Game 1.

I'm taking the '04 guys in six games, with Series MVP Schill spraying champagne and asking, "When do we go to the White House?"

*** *The Boston Herald***

Red Sox notebook: Team turns page at meetings

Michael Silverman

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Barely more than a week after they left Los Angeles as World Series champs, Dave Dombrowski and the Red Sox baseball operations staff returned to Southern California yesterday on a new quest, trying to build a repeat champion.

But as the general managers meetings kicked off, Dombrowski allowed that it was a good feeling to hear congratulations from his peers.

“Yes, it is nice — it’s everybody’s goal, it’s what we all try to do — some years it works, some years it doesn’t,” Dombrowski said. “I’ve been close a lot of times but it’s nice to get it done and have that feeling, sure.”

Dombrowski, who is battling laryngitis, was not complaining at all that the Red Sox championship run meant a late start to their offseason. But it has slightly delayed their routine. The organization will meet next week in Boston, rather than before these meetings.

“I don’t think it’s good to have meetings during the World Series,” Dombrowski said.

“We don’t have a lot of information from some clubs, they don’t call you as much, because they don’t want to bother you. There are guys being really aggressive. We’ll make up that ground quickly but it’s different, sure.”

The GMs meetings get underway in earnest today for two days of internal talks between team leaders on a number of issues including sign stealing, pace of play and trade deadlines. Before and after those get-togethers, teams will meet with an array of agents and free agents to begin the courting process. In addition, general managers will huddle among themselves to begin trade discussions.

Dombrowski said last week the Sox’ No. 1 need is bullpen help. At the moment, they are not expected to be one of the primary suitors for closer Craig Kimbrel, but it’s much too early to eliminate them from the discussion. Kimbrel is expected to reject the Red Sox’ qualifying offer by next week’s deadline and then sign a multiyear deal with another club.

The Red Sox could also lose free agent Joe Kelly, who upped his stock considerably with his impressive October.

Nathan Eovaldi and Steve Pearce are also on the list of free agents the club would like to resign.

“I wouldn’t tell you who we’re going to prioritize — I’ve also said that as much as we’d like everybody back, it’s probably very difficult in today’s game with rules and all that but we’ll see what happens,” Dombrowski said.

He hinted last week the Red Sox may deal from a position of strength in the catching department, and trade one of their three — Sandy Leon, Christian Vazquez or Blake Swihart.

The Red Sox also will monitor the second base department because it’s not known if Dustin Pedroia can return next season. Brock Holt and Tzu-Wei Lin are internal options, but they may want to upgrade.

The two biggest names on the free agent market are shortstop Manny Machado and outfielder Bryce Harper, each of whom is expected to sign a contract for 10-plus years.

Other names that will draw attention over the next two days include former agent and new Mets GM Brodie Van Wagenen; Chaim Bloom of the Rays and Farhan Zaidi of the Dodgers who are in the running to be the new Giants GM; and Yusei Kikuchi, a left-handed Japanese starter who was just posted and can be had at a hefty price as Scott Boras will represent him.

Betts, Cora finalists

Mookie Betts and Alex Cora each have a one in three chance of winning some more hardware.

The Baseball Writers’ Association of America announced the finalists for its major awards last night. The winners will be announced next week.

Betts joins Mike Trout of the Angels and Jose Ramirez of the Indians as finalists for the AL MVP award. Cora, Oakland’s Bob Melvin and Tampa Bay’s Kevin Cash are the finalists for AL Manager of the Year.

“Thrilled for them,” said Dombrowski. “Mookie, as valuable as anybody in the league. I think J.D. (Martinez) deserved to be in there, but they’re both good players. He did win the Hank Aaron award, so that’s good.

“And Alex, the year he had, surprised people. I hope they both win.”

Big names

Finalists for NL MVP are Christian Yelich of the Brewers, Nolan Arenado of the Rockies and Javier Baez of the Cubs, while the NL Manager of the Year derby is down to Colorado’s Bud Black, Milwaukee’s Craig Counsell and Atlanta’s Brian Snitker

Cy Young Award finalists are Corey Kluber (Indians), Ian Snell (Rays) and Justin Verlander (Astros) in the AL and Jacob deGrom (Mets), Aaron Nola (Phillies) and Max Scherzer (Nationals) in the NL.

AL Rookie of the Year finalists include the Yankees duo of Miguel Andujar and Torres Gleyber along with Shohei Ohtani of the Angels. The NL award is down to Ronald Acuna Jr. of the Braves, Walker Buehler of the Dodgers and Juan Soto of the Nationals.

Betts an AL MVP finalist; Cora finalist for AL Manager of Year

Michael Silverman

CARLSBAD, Calif. – Mookie Betts and Alex Cora have a one in three chance of winning some more hardware next week.

In the top three BBWAA award voting results announced today, Red Sox right fielder Betts joins Mike Trout of the Angels and Jose Ramirez as a finalist in AL MVP voting. Cora, Oakland’s Bob Melvin and Tampa Bay’s Kevin Cash are the finalists in the AL Manager of the Year voting.

Manager of the Year winners will be announced next Tuesday, Nov. 13, with the MVP’s announced on Thursday Nov. 15.

Rookie of the Year winners will be announced on Monday, Nov. 12, with the Cy Young winners on Wednesday Nov. 14.

The other finalists:

NL MVP: Christian Yelich, Brewers; Nolan Arenado, Rockies; Javy Baez, Cubs

AL Cy Young: Corey Kluber, Indians; Ian Snell, Rays; Justin Verlander, Astros

NL Cy Young: Jacob deGrom, Mets; Aaron Nola, Phillies; Max Scherzer, Nationals

NL Manager of the Year: Bud Black, Rockies; Craig Counsell, Brewers; Brian Snitker, Braves

AL Rookie of the Year: Miguel Andujar, Yankees; Shohei Ohtani, Angels, Torres Gleyber, Yankees

N: Rookie of the Year: Ronald Acuna Jr., Braves; Walker Buehler, Dodgers; Juan Soto, Braves.

*** *MassLive.com***

MLB GM Meetings 2018: Previewing what Dave Dombrowski, Red Sox will do at GM Meetings

Chris Cotillo

CARLSBAD, Calif. -- Just over a week after celebrating a World Series title in Los Angeles, Dave Dombrowski heads back to California this week for the annual GM meetings. Though it's rare for actual trades or signings to take place at the meetings, the three days at the Omni La Costa Resort and Spa are an important first step in a busy offseason.

Dombrowski and his staff will be tasked with beginning to turn the page and turn the Red Sox into contenders to repeat in 2019. Here's a preview of what to expect this week:

Explore early markets for Nathan Eovaldi and Craig Kimbrel

The first order of business for Dombrowski and his staff in Carlsbad will be to gauge the market for Boston's top two free agents, Craig Kimbrel and Nathan Eovaldi. While it's not expected that they'll be able to re-sign both, the Sox do have interest in reuniting with both.

Kimbrel is the top closer available this winter and Eovaldi's market is expected to be robust after his stellar postseason performance, so neither guy will be cheap. Considering Kimbrel's stock trended down in 2018 and the Sox do have some internal options to replace him (Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier), Eovaldi may be the team's top target.

Free agents like Kimbrel and Eovaldi almost never sign during the GM meetings, but their agents will be in town for face-to-face sit-downs with general managers. It'll be a good chance to see what their asking prices look like at the beginning of the winter.

Work to get something done with Steve Pearce

If there's one Red Sox free agent who could sign early in the winter, it's Steve Pearce. With Mitch Moreland constantly dealing with health issues over the last two years, Pearce makes a ton of sense as a candidate to re-sign, with his value being higher than expected after his improbable run to being named World Series MVP.

Pearce has said publicly that he's very interested in re-signing with Boston and could be inclined to get a deal done quickly. He'll have his share of suitors after impressing in October, with the Red Sox right at the top of the list as a very good fit.

Start exploring market for bullpen alternatives

With both Kimbrel and Joe Kelly potentially departing in free agency, it's considered likely that the Sox will add at least one reliever this winter. The free-agent market presents the most robust market, with a bunch of bullpen arms projected to sign three-year deals.

Boston was linked to Jeurys Familia, Zach Britton and Kelvin Herrera at the trade deadline, coming especially close on a deal with Washington for Herrera before ultimately falling short. Adam Ottavino, David Robertson, Joakim Soria and Cody Allen are among the other top available arms, while a reunion with Andrew Miller is also seen as a possibility if Miller is healthy.

The relief market was the first to gain traction last winter, with a handful of arms signing during the winter meetings in December. The same could be true this time around, with teams still valuing bullpen pieces more than ever.

Gauge trade interest in catching surplus

Dombrowski said it's unlikely that the Sox will carry all three catchers again next season, so it's a definite possibility that at least one of the Christian Vazquez-Sandy Leon-Blake Swihart trio will be traded at some point before spring training. With a few teams in need of catching help, the GM meetings will give the Sox

a chance to see which catcher is drawing the most interest and begin the process of feeling out potential serious suitors.

Swihart drew trade interest throughout the season and even requested a trade at one point, but the Sox may be more inclined to move either Leon or Vazquez considering they have Swihart under control through 2022. Vazquez likely has more value in the minds of other clubs at this point.

Touch base with stars on potential extensions

It's no secret that the core of the Red Sox is about to get expensive, with J.D. Martinez potentially opting out and testing free agency along with Xander Bogaerts, Chris Sale and Rick Porcello and Mookie Betts' deal being up a year later. While it'll be virtually impossible for Boston to retain all those players, it's worth looking into what it would take to extend them early this winter.

Ownership has expressed a willingness to make Betts a member of the Sox for life and Martinez said he'd be willing to sign a longer-term agreement at the All-Star Game earlier this year. It'll be tough to convince some of the game's premier players to sign before testing the market, but Dombrowski and his staff will try.

Consider re-working Alex Cora's contract

Managerial contracts are torn up and re-written all the time, so it would come as no surprise if Alex Cora got a new deal this winter. While he's signed for two more years and has a club option for 2021, he made just \$800,000 in 2018, ranking 28th out of the 30 managers at the beginning of the year.

The trophy speaks for itself, but the way Cora has gained the trust of his players in his first year shows that he deserves a raise. The front office likely has it on their agenda this winter.

Begin considering second base depth options

The Red Sox are hopeful Dustin Pedroia will be back for Opening Day, but it still makes sense to explore some insurance options at second base. Ian Kinsler could be one, but options like Logan Forsythe, Asdrubal Cabrera, Daniel Murphy and others are out there as well.

There are a ton of second basemen available as free agents, so it's likely the Sox will add at least one on a low-cost deal by spring training. They had both Kinsler and Brandon Phillips in the system in 2018 and are likely to do something similar next year.

The Sox' weeklong celebration was a good reason for them to be a bit behind on their off-season work. Now it's time for Dombrowski and Co. to touch base with the rest of the league. Stay tuned as the rumors start trickling out of Carlsbad over the next three days.

MLB GM Meetings 2018: Boston Red Sox expected to retain entire coaching staff

Chris Cotillo

No Red Sox coaches are currently up for jobs in other organizations, president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski told reporters (including Pete Abraham of the Boston Globe) on Monday night. Barring something unforeseen, the entire Sox coaching staff will be back.

Bench coach Ron Roenicke was rumored to be a candidate for the Rangers managerial opening over the weekend, but that job went to Dodgers third base coach Chris Woodward. Assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett was rumored to be a candidate for hitting coach jobs with Texas and Pittsburgh, though he seems to have confirmed he'll return to Boston with a tweet Monday.

Boston also kept its coaching staff together after its last World Series championship, with John Farrell retaining his entire staff for the 2014 season.

Alex Cora spoke frequently throughout the season about the effectiveness of his staff, so he'll surely be thrilled to have all of his assistants back for a second season.

Boston Red Sox star Mookie Betts an AL MVP finalist but J.D. Martinez isn't; Chris Sale not among AL Cy Young finalists

Christopher Smith

Mookie Betts is one of the three finalists for the AL MVP award. But Red Sox slugger J.D. Martinez isn't.

Angels' Mike Trout and Indians' Jose Ramirez are the other two finalists. The AL MVP will be announced Nov. 15 at 6 p.m.

Betts led the AL in runs (129), batting average (.346) and slugging percentage (.640). He belted 32 home runs with 47 doubles, five triples, 80 RBIs, 30 stolen bases, a .438 on-base percentage and 1.078 OPS.

Trout led the AL in on-base percentage (.460) and OPS (1.088). He hit 39 homers, 24 doubles, four triples, drove in 79 runs and scored 101 runs.

Ramirez slashed .270/.387/.552/.939 with 39 homers, 38 doubles, four triples, 105 RBIs and 110 runs.

Red Sox ace Chris Sale was not among the AL Cy Young finalists.

Indians' Corey Kluber, Rays' Blake Snell and Astros' Justin Verlander were announced finalists. The AL Cy Young will be announced Nov. 14 at 6 p.m.

Red Sox manager Alex Cora is a finalist for the AL Manager of the Year award with Rays' Kevin Cash and Athletics' Bob Melvin.

The AL Manager of the Year will be announced Nov. 13 at 6 p.m.

*** *RedSox.com***

Betts (MVP), Cora (MOY) are BBWAA finalists

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The World Series champion Red Sox could be collecting some more shiny hardware in the near future.

Alex Cora was selected as one of three finalists for the American League Manager of the Year Award, while superstar right fielder Mookie Betts joins Mike Trout (Angels) and Jose Ramirez (Indians) as the three finalists for the AL Most Valuable Player Award. Finalists in both leagues for the Baseball Writers' Association of America honors were revealed Monday night on MLB Network.

Somewhat surprisingly, Sox slugger J.D. Martinez is not an MVP finalist despite finishing first in the AL in RBIs (130), and second in homers (43) and batting average (.330).

Cora is aiming to be the first Red Sox skipper to be Manager of the Year since Jimy Williams in 1999. He certainly has a compelling case, as Boston's 108 wins represented the second-highest total for a rookie manager in MLB history, trailing only the 109 victories Ralph Houk accumulated for the 1961 Yankees. The Manager of the Year Award in both leagues will be announced on Nov. 13.

"He put together a clubhouse that had more unity than I had ever seen," Red Sox owner John Henry said of Cora. "It showed day-to-day perseverance, sense of purpose, dedication every day. He had them ready every day. On every level, he was a superior manager. He was every bit as good as our best player."

Under Cora, the Red Sox improved their regular-season win total by 15 from last season. The 43-year-old drew rave reviews for the way he communicated with his players and for the way he blended analytics in to his daily life in the dugout. A's manager Bob Melvin and Rays manager Kevin Cash are the other two AL Manager of the Year Award finalists.

Nobody thrived more under Cora than Betts, who stayed in the leadoff spot for the entire season. Betts had the best Baseball Reference WAR (10.9) for a position player since Barry Bonds in 2002.

Betts was a force in every way possible, winning the batting title with a .346 average, while adding 47 doubles, five triples, 32 homers, 129 runs, 80 RBIs and 30 stolen bases. The 26-year-old was second in MLB with a 1.078 OPS and he earned his third straight AL Gold Glove Award for his defensive excellence.

"Thrilled for them," said Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski. "Mookie was as valuable as anyone in the league. I think J.D. deserved to be in there, but there are other good players. He did win the Hank Aaron Award, so that's good for him. And Alex, with the year he had, it would be surprising for him not to be a finalist. I hope they both win."

This is the second time in three years Betts has been a finalist for AL MVP. In 2016, he finished second to Trout. The MVP Awards for both leagues will be announced on Nov. 15.

"He impacts the game like no other player in the big leagues -- running the bases, playing defense, hitting for power," Cora said. "You see the numbers. It was a special season for him."

*** *WEEL.com***

One year after his introduction, it turns out Alex Cora knew what he was talking about

Rob Bradford

A year ago Tuesday. That was when we were formally introduced to Alex Cora, manager of the Boston Red Sox.

The narratives flying around that day are now somewhat hard to fathom. Is Cora too inexperienced? How will he deal with David Price? Is he too close with Dustin Pedroia? Will he be able to co-exist with Dave Dombrowski? And there was more.

Much of it all now seems silly. A world championship will do that.

But looking back at the transcript of that Fenway Park press conference what stands out is how right Cora was that day. A first-year manager always goes into their new existence promising bigger and better. That's usually how they get the job in the first place. Upon a year-long review, these words actually meant something.

Let's take a look back at what Cora said that day, and what actually happened ...

CORA: "We put a pretty good coaching staff, they relate to me, they're gonna be an extension of me, we're going to connect with players, be genuine and be accessible and that's the most important thing. This year I learned that talking to players is not bad. Having a good relationship with players is not bad. Doing that, you're going to get the best out of them. People might think that crossing that line is not helpful but I see it the other way around and I lived it. You embrace them, you tell them how good they are and when you

have to twist their arm and tell them that's not good enough, they're going to respond to you. That's my goal here. I want players to respond to me, respond to the city and if we do that, we're going to be in good shape."

WHAT HAPPENED: "This year I learned that talking to players is not bad." When the Red Sox players universally went out of their way to praise Cora's approach throughout the season it was this sort of thing they pointed to as being perhaps the biggest difference-maker.

CORA: I don't think experience is going to be an obstacle for me. I think I'm prepared. I'm surrounded by people from top to bottom who have experience – Dave Dombrowski, Tony La Russa, Ron Roenicke, the coaching staff. These guys, they've been around and they're going to help me out. It's not about just me. It's about the staff that is around me, the people that are going to support me. I'm going to be fine, and I'm going to have a blast, too. I'm looking forward to the challenge."

WHAT HAPPENED: There was some concern that the presence of Dombrowski, La Russa and even Roenicke might be oil and water when it came to Cora. It was a concern that percolated a bit when Dombrowski chose to deliver the first round of cuts instead of his manager. But the dynamic actually seemed solid, with Cora clearly showing an ability to relate to both the younger players and older executives while being secure enough to do it the way he ultimately wanted. La Russa's existence may have been the eye-opening, with the Hall of Famer adding an affable air of experience to the organization.

CORA: "This team is good. That's the first thing. We're going to be all right. As a manager, I'm going to be genuine with people and we're going to do what we're supposed to do on the field. We're going to have fun doing it, too."

WHAT HAPPENED: There wasn't one team meeting to address an issue regarding how players were approaching the game. As Rick Porcello noted in September, that is far from the norm when it comes to major league teams. It suggested the right tone was set early and lasted until the final celebration.

CORA: "When they invest money in this, as coaches you have to embrace the information. And then you have to filter this information and give it to the players. At the end of the day, you know who wins games? The players."

WHAT HAPPENED: Ultimately, the information was embraced, leading to the players winning the games. The combination of analytics and talent doesn't always end up in an embrace, but this time it did.

CORA: "We're going to have a connection with them and we're going to use the information. There's going to be different formations, probably, defensively. We're going help this infield to be better. The outfield, they're amazing defensively, so we don't have to make too many adjustments, but there are going to be certain adjustments that come from upstairs that are going to make this team better."

WHAT HAPPENED: Initially the outfielders wanted no part of the cards in the hats or the new analytics, going on record to say they were going to figure it out themselves. Next thing you knew Mookie Betts was waving his card in the air, thanking the coaching staff for the positioning tip. According to BaseballSavant.com, the Red Sox shifted on 15 percent of their opponents' plate appearances, up four percent from the year before. Against left-handed hitters, the infield shifted 43 percent of the time compared to 32 percent the year before. It seemed to work.

CORA: "And the most important thing you have to do as a manager, you have to delegate. You have to trust your coaches. I saw it first-hand this year. The staff that we put in together, I'm very excited, I'm very happy that we have those guys and I'm going to delegate because I can't do it all."

WHAT HAPPENED: Perhaps the best example of this was the dynamic between Cora and his hitting coaches (Tim Hyers, Andy Barkett) and pitching coaches (Dana LeVangie, Brian Bannister). They were clearly the ones putting specific plans in place while offering key in-game opinions at the manager's side during games.

CORA: "Too close to players, that doesn't exist."

WHAT HAPPENED: It's something this new world of baseball is coming to understand more than ever.

CORA: "Base-running is another way you can take advantage of the opposition, in an era where there's a lot of people who are quote-unquote out of position, you can put pressure on defenses. Stealing bases, I think the Red Sox over the years have done an outstanding job, is another tool, another weapon you can take advantage of it. We have a bunch of athletes here, and we're going to preach that. It should be fun. There's not going to be one way we're going to beat you but we're going to find a lot of ways to take advantage of your weaknesses and try to take advantage and win games."

WHAT HAPPENED: The Red Sox were third in the majors in stolen bases, but more importantly second overall in stolen base percentage (in a virtual tie with the most efficient team, the Dodgers). The combination of Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi, Jackie Bradley Jr. and Xander Bogaerts stole successfully 78 times in their 90 attempts.

CORA: "One thing, there are certain guys here that, they're going to get better. I expect Xander Bogaerts to be a better player. Mookie Betts, he had a great season, but I expect him (to be better). These guys are going to take a step, and when you see Xander driving the ball to left-center against Charlie Morton, I'm like, that's him. We're going to preach them to be aggressive. Not everybody has to take pitches. I get it. Work the count. But is it worth it to work the count now? Guys are throwing 98, 99. So, you hunt for a pitch available and you do damage with it. That's going to help us out."

WHAT HAPPENED: The key guys -- Benintendi, Betts and Bogaerts -- all saw significant upswings when it came to their OPS from 2017 to 2018. And Jackie Bradley carried an .827 OPS in the second half. Part of that was their approach, but the presence of J.D. Martinez can't be discounted either.

CORA: "In the minor leagues they talk it over there, but in the big leagues we talk about doing damage. It's not like we're reinventing swings. We had guys who made adjustments and they use the information the right way and that's what we're trying to do. We talk about it in the interview process. If they didn't believe what I was preaching in that interview in New York, I would probably be in Houston hanging out. They trust what I'm preaching. ... I want guys to do damage. Look for pitches and do damage. One thing you obviously don't do damage on is ground balls. You're not trying to hit fly balls but you have to hit the ball in the air. How you do that is getting a pitch that is available and putting a good swing on it early in the count, or wherever in the count, and do damage with it."

WHAT HAPPENED: The Red Sox placed second in the majors in both percentage of balls classified as "barrelled" and "hard hit," while finishing first in average exit velocity.

CORA: "I want to talk with him. This is about the 2018 Red Sox and moving forward and this guy is very important for me. Whatever I can do to help him out, I'm going to be there for him. And at the same time, whatever I can do for him to be successful, I have to be there for him."

WHAT HAPPENED: Whatever Cora did in terms of relating to David Price, it worked. Not only did the Red Sox get the results they were looking for from the starter, but the manager expertly navigated a few bumps in the road when it came to the pitcher's perception.

CORA: "Obviously you've got to play good defense in the infield. We're going to make certain adjustments doing that, but you have to pay attention to detail -- where guys are at, when can you steal bases, when can you go first to third? The value of the outs are very important."

WHAT HAPPENED: This proved more of a project that Cora probably anticipated, with the Red Sox carrying over their baserunning issues from the year before throughout the early part of 2018. They did improve, but for the season the Sox finished with the eighth-most unforced errors in the majors, totaling the third-most outs when trying to take an extra base.

CORA: "Rest. Being able to clinch early and have rest. I don't know. We'll see. Like I said, this team was almost there. This is a very talented team. Throughout the year, we're going to have certain situations that, you know, hopefully, we can have a great season, be ahead and rest the guys and put this team in a position to be successful in October. That's the most important thing."

WHAT HAPPENED: The bottom line was that they had guys not stumbling to the finish line in late October. For that they can thank Cora prioritizing rest, not only in September leading into the final month but right out of the gate back in April.

One year later, it seems like Cora knew what he was talking about.

Why Steve Pearce might be best fit for Red Sox

Rob Bradford

Winning the World Series MVP was a nice feather in Steve Pearce's cap. But that should have nothing to do with the Red Sox' desire to re-sign the 35-year-old.

The impetus for the Red Sox investing in Pearce is clear-cut: He might be their best option.

On the Sox' to-do list this offseason finding a right-handed-hitting complement to Mitch Moreland is up there. Kicking off last season, that would have been Hanley Ramirez. Then, after the Red Sox sent Ramirez packing, it became Pearce. For 2018, the plan all worked out, particularly in the postseason when Alex Cora's team got a 1.017 OPS out of its first baseman.

But is there a better way to go in 2019? Maybe not.

"Yeah," Pearce told WEEI.com when asked if he felt there was a much better chance at returning to Boston than he originally thought would present itself when acquired from Toronto. "I fit in with these guys. I hope to come back and defend a title with these guys next year. That's the goal."

For what the Red Sox need, Pearce would seem to fit the bill. He tears up lefty pitching, wouldn't seemingly cost more than a couple of years at relatively cheap money and has proven his worth both in the clubhouse and in the field. If there was no history in a Red Sox uniform the first baseman would still seem a logical offseason target.

If not Pearce, then who? That's a good question.

There is always the possibility for a trade we didn't see coming. But until that is surfaced, we're left with unpacking free agent candidates. Spoiler: There aren't a lot of great fits.

Daniel Murphy might be a consideration if he didn't hit left-handed. Same goes for Lucas Duda, Logan Morrison and Matt Adams. Switch-hitting Neil Walker? He's terrible against lefties. You could force the idea of Jed Lowrie, who has played a total of 11 major league games at first base but could also help offer insurance at second. That seems like a stretch. Mike Moustakas is a pipe dream and as much as we would love to entertain it, Adrian Beltre probably isn't keen on finishing his career playing a position he has never manned.

There is always the possibility the Red Sox give Sam Travis a whirl, and if he didn't hit just .258 with a .677 OPS at Triple-A this past season moving on from Pearce would seem more likely. But Travis did put up those numbers with Pawtucket, making such a major league commitment not seem very plausible.

The wild card at some point next season could be Michael Chavis, but the timing of the infielder's progression (and familiarity with first base) doesn't allow for a realistic Opening Day conversation.

That brings us back to Pearce.

"I'm going to sit back and take it all in and hopefully something good happens with the Red Sox where I get to come back here next year," he said.

Doesn't seem like a longshot.

A few free agents the Red Sox are probably paying attention to

Rob Bradford

What do the Red Sox need?

Usually heading into the GM meetings -- which are unfolding the next few days in Carlsbad, Calif. -- it's pretty clear there is a priority. Last year it was getting someone who could hit the ball out of the park. Hence, J.D. Martinez. This time the conversation is a bit murkier. Trade Blake Swihart? Can they rely on Dustin Pedroia? Should they go all-in for a Nathan Eovaldi to protect themselves in the present and the future? Is there a better option to complement Mitch Moreland at first base than Steve Pearce?

This much we do know: The Red Sox need to figure out will be their game-ending reliever in 2019.

To kick up the conversation here are some free agent names who might be in the mix to help satisfy the Red Sox' closing conundrum (with contract projections from MLB Trade Rumors):

Kelvin Herrera

Still just 28 years old, the former Royals/Nationals closer was the one reliever the Red Sox thought might be worth targeting at the non-waiver trade deadline. As it turned out, it's a good thing for the Red Sox the Nationals decided against putting Herrera on the market with the pitcher undergoing surgery on his foot (Lisfranc ligament) in late August. While the pitcher's recovery time is somewhat of mystery, getting such a talent on a discounted, one-year deal as a fail-safe for the likes of Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier would seem to be a solid approach. (MLBTR projection: 1 year, \$8 million.)

Zach Britton

The lefty was good but not great with the Yankees, often times succumbing to control issues. And Britton has certainly had his run of injuries issues, the most recent being the Achilles tendon ailment that delayed his 2018 debut until early June. But judging by that finish last season there still seems like a dominant closer in there, one which could probably be had for a palatable three-year deal. (MLBTR projection: 3 years, \$33 million.)

Andrew Miller

There are red flags when it comes to the lefty with injuries starting to pile up for the 33-year-old. He sputtered a bit down the stretch, including two ineffective outings in the American League Division Series. He would seem to be a risk worth taking, with Miller's stuff still there to offer the kind of lefty option which would seem to be a good fit in this bullpen. (MLBTR projection: 3 years, \$27 million.)

Joe Kelly

While many might want to discount the righty after seeing the worst he had to offer in the final three months of the regular season, what Kelly displayed throughout the postseason shouldn't be pushed aside. The Red Sox feel like they fixed him heading into the playoffs and evidently, they were right. Like all the aforementioned high-leverage relievers, there is a gamble in anointing the 30-year-old as something more than he represented in 2018. But, also as is the case with the other candidates, the upside might be worth the investment. (MLBTR projection: 3 years, \$27 million.)

Craig Kimbrel

With all the contract decisions coming the Red Sox way, it's difficult to imagine they take a legitimate run at the closer considering some of the arms on the horizon (Travis Lakins, Durbin Feltman, Darwinzon Hernandez), the pieces they already possess (Barnes, Brasier) and the intriguing, albeit slightly flawed, free agent options. (MLBTR projection: 4 years, \$70 million.)

Adam Ottavino

This one is intriguing, and not just because he went to Northeastern. Sure, the righty is 33 years old, and he has built his resume on a stellar 2018 after a really bad 2017. But Ottavino seems to have figured some things out, as his 112 strikeouts in 77 2/3 innings might suggest. (MLBTR projection: 3 years, \$30 million.)

David Robertson

He is representing himself, but it shouldn't be a tough sell. The 34-year-old is the picture of consistency at the backend of the bullpen, as Red Sox fans witnessed in their dealings with the Yankees. It's because of that reliability that, despite his age, Robertson still will join most of these other candidates in garnering a three-year deal. (MLBTR projection: 3 years, \$33 million.)

Joakim Soria

The 34-year-old might not offer the perception of a dominant closer, but if nothing else he will be cheaper than most of these other options. He is a guy who isn't afraid of the big moment. He also has a history with Dave Dombrowski, who traded for him in 2014. Probably more of a seventh- or eighth-inning guy if signed. (MLBTR projection: 2 years, \$18 million.)

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Examining the Red Sox' free-agent alternatives to Craig Kimbrel

Sean McAdam

CARLSBAD, Calif. — The start of the GM Meetings here today signals the unofficial kickoff to baseball's Hot Stove League.

The Red Sox — if they choose — will bring back every one of their starting position players from the team that just won the World Series and almost all of their starting rotation.

One area that's likely to undergo some changes is the bullpen, where closer Craig Kimbrel and postseason set-up hero Joe Kelly are both free agents.

The Sox extended a qualifying offer to Kimbrel last Friday, one he will surely reject in the next week. That means the Sox either reach a new multi-year agreement with him or let him go elsewhere, pocketing a fourth-round draft pick as compensation along the way and find a new closer for the 2019 season.

A look at some of the options available to them on free-agent market:

LHP Zach Britton

The Red Sox had some interest in Britton at the non-waiver trade deadline before opting to spend their capital on starter Nathan Eovaldi. Britton returned from an Achilles injury and pitched better later in the season. From 2014-2016, he averaged 40 saves per season. Somewhat atypically for a modern closer, Britton isn't strictly a power guy, getting many of his outs on the ground thanks to a fearsome two-seamer.

Would that dissuade the Sox, who, like a lot of teams, prefer the ball being kept out of play in save situations? His walk rate in 2018 (4.6 per 9 IP) was his highest since 2012, but that was likely tied to rust and needing to get his mechanics in order.

LIKELY COST: Three years, \$42 million.

LHP Andrew Miller

Miller picked a bad time to have an injury-filled year, restricting his earning potential as he heads into free agency. He pitched just 34 innings and posted a 4.24 ERA, his highest since making the switch from rotation to the bullpen. Miller's been beset by knee and hamstring issues the last few seasons, which will surely give teams pause, as well his age (he'll turn 34 in May). Healthy, he can be the most intimidating lefty reliever in the game, one capable of pitching in any relief role in the postseason. The good news for teams: his recent injury history will limit the kind of contract he can demand. The bad news for teams: his recent injury history.

LIKELY COST: Two years, \$20 million.

RHP David Robertson

Robertson hasn't closed much in the last year and a half (since returning to the Yankees via trade), but he has plenty of experience in the role, having amassed 137 career saves. Capable of multi-inning setup work, he's the oldest pitcher in this group (about a month older than Miller). He's coming off a somewhat off year (3.23 ERA), but other indicators are still strong (FIP of 2.97; WHIP of 1.033). Though a native of Alabama, Robertson owns a house in Rhode Island, which may make Boston an intriguing landing spot.

LIKELY COST: Two years, \$19 million.

RHP Adam Ottavino

He may not have the resume or name recognition of others, but Ottavino has a live arm and, after remaking himself last winter, blossomed and enjoyed a career year for the Rockies (0.991 WHIP; 112 strikeouts in 77.2 innings). He has only 17 career saves in eight major league seasons, though there's little doubt that he could handle the job. Has a Boston tie (he attended Northeastern), but living in New York, he's been linked to the Mets as a likely destination.

LIKELY COST: Three years, \$27 million.

RHP Kelvin Herrera

How differently might the Red Sox have played out if the Washington Nationals decided to sell-off Herrera at the end of July? The Red Sox had tried to obtain him from Kansas City, then, after the Royals flipped him to the Nats — only to have the Nats go belly-up in their pursuit of a playoff spot. Herrera pitched poorly for Washington, no doubt because of some injuries (foot, shoulder). Maybe the Sox wouldn't have gone for Eovaldi? Who knows? In any event, Herrera is a free agent and is the youngest of this bunch. He has plenty of postseason experience, having pitched for two pennant-winning Kansas City clubs. He's not a power guy (he's averaged just under a strikeout per inning over his career), but has a long track record of effectiveness, and thanks to his poor second half, could probably be had at a discount.

LIKELY COST: Two years, \$17 million

RHP Jeury Familia

The Red Sox were strangely disengaged when the Mets were auctioning off Familia in July, eventually sending him to Oakland. He's had difficulty in his career with lefties (.709 OPS) which could turn off teams, but he's been generally effective, and other than a leg injury in 2017, pretty durable.

LIKELY COST: Two years, \$18 million.