

The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, November 13, 2018

*** *The Boston Globe***

Craig Kimbrel declines \$17.9m qualifying offer — but could still re-sign with Sox

Peter Abraham

Craig Kimbrel on Monday officially declined a one-year, \$17.9 million qualifying offer from the Red Sox.

The closer remains eligible to return to the Sox. But if he does not, the team would receive a compensatory pick after the fourth round of the amateur draft in June.

Lefthander Patrick Corbin (Diamondbacks), catcher Yasmani Grandal (Dodgers), outfielder Bryce Harper (Nationals), lefthander Dallas Keuchel (Astros), and outfielder A.J. Pollock (Diamondbacks) also rejected their offers.

Lefthander Hyun-Jin Ryu of the Dodgers accepted his.

The value of the qualifying offer is based on the mean salary of the game's 125 highest-paid players from the previous season. A player can receive an offer once in his career.

For the 30-year-old Kimbrel, free agency should be a bonanza.

The seven-time All-Star has a 1.91 earned run average over nine seasons and 14.7 strikeouts per nine innings, the most for any pitcher in history with at least 500 career innings.

Kimbrel has a 2.44 ERA in 187 games over three seasons with the Red Sox and has 108 saves, third in team history.

Kimbrel has saved 40 or more games five times in his career. Only Hall of Famer Trevor Hoffman (9), Mariano Rivera (9), and Francisco Rodriguez (6) have more.

There were two red flags last season. Kimbrel averaged 4.5 walks per nine innings, the second-highest rate of his career. He also allowed seven earned runs on nine hits and eight walks over 10⅓ innings in nine playoff games.

Kimbrel did not blow any saves in the postseason but allowed at least one run in five of his appearances.

If the Red Sox lose Kimbrel, righthanders Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier are candidates to close. There are several free agent possibilities, Zach Britton and Andrew Miller among them.

If the Red Sox were to sign Corbin, Grandal, Harper, Keuchel, or Pollock — which is unlikely — they would lose their second-highest and fifth-highest draft picks along with \$1 million in international bonus pool money.

. . .

Steven Wright had arthroscopic surgery on his left knee in New York on Monday. That procedure, which was to remove scar tissue, came 18 months after what was termed successful cartilage restoration surgery.

The same surgeon, Dr. Riley Williams, handled this latest surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery in Manhattan.

The Red Sox offered no timetable beyond that Wright was preparing to return “in the 2019 season.”

The knuckleballer started last season on the disabled list recovering from surgery, then returned to the DL in June for more than two months. Wright earned a spot on the postseason roster but was removed after his knee locked up before Game 1 of the Division Series.

Wright pitched in 20 games and had a 2.68 ERA.

Dustin Pedroia had cartilage restoration surgery on Oct. 25, 2017, and had a second procedure nine months later. Like Wright, his status for next season also remains uncertain.

Here’s one thought on each player who was on the Red Sox World Series roster

Chad Finn

The Red Sox won the World Series 16 days ago Tuesday. They’ve sprayed their champagne, reveled with the city on the duck boats, and scattered for the offseason. It’s over, and it has been for a while, but their achievements are still on replay in my mind, and I miss writing about them.

So here’s a thought on each of the players who were on the World Series roster, plus one more. Consider this the transition to 2019. . . at least until I can’t resist writing about the glorious ’18 season one more time, and maybe one more time after that too.

Mookie Betts: I know Sox fans adore the likely ’18 American League Most Valuable Player . . . and yet, sometimes I feel like his feats are slightly underappreciated. This is a 25-year-old who put together a 30-30 season (32-30 actually), won the batting title (.346), led the league in slugging (.640), scored 129 runs, played spectacular defense in right field, and conducts himself with even more grace than he plays with. I’m not sure there are five more likable stars in modern Red Sox history.

Andrew Benintendi: The power outage was strange — he didn’t homer after Aug. 31 — but man did he ever made up for it with his glove in the postseason. Expecting a giant step forward in ’19.

Steve Pearce: He’s third in this lineup since he was third in the lineup during Game 5 of the World Series. He was pretty good too, if I recall correctly. He’s always been a capable hitter (.783 career OPS) but who knew he was Stretch Armstrong at first base. Keep him, please.

J.D. Martinez: He hit like David Ortiz and brought a dedicated, professional approach to the clubhouse. If he provides a similar sequel in ’19, he has to be considered one of the great free-agent signings in franchise history. Maybe he already is.

Xander Bogaerts: I’ve heard his 2018 season (.288/.360/.522, 23 homers, 45 doubles) referred to as a career year, and I suppose it was even though he already owns a pair of Silver Slugger awards. The next step is to turn an excellent regular season into an excellent postseason.

Brock Holt: I’ll admit it: I thought he might be done after he hit .200 in ’17 while dealing with post-concussion symptoms. Instead, he came back and delivered a truly valuable season while validating Red Sox’ fans longstanding appreciation for him. His cycle against the Yankees in Game 3 of the ALDS is a permanent part of Red Sox lore.

Rafael Devers: He needs to want it, and wanting it means getting in better shape. But I’ve been confident that he’s going to be a genuine offensive star, and his go-ahead RBI single in the ninth inning of World Series Game 4 fully convinced me. He’s not just talented. He’s fearless.

Christian Vazquez: I’m not sure he’s a better hitter than Blake Swihart or a better defender than Sandy Leon, but he’s probably the most complete catching package on the roster.

Jackie Bradley Jr.: Won his overdue first Gold Glove and delivered the most improbably clutch postseason performance by a Red Sox outfielder since Troy O'Leary in the 1999 ALDS. JBJ defenders, and I am one, will feel vindicated right up until he goes 4-for-May. Hey, he's streaky, and it sure worked out well in October.

Pitchers

Chris Sale: No idea what to expect going forward, at least in terms of durability, given that he pitched 17 innings from Aug. 1 on in the regular season before leaving it all out there with 15½ innings over five appearances in the postseason. The shoulder is still a mystery. But he looked pretty good driving Manny Machado to his knees to end it.

David Price: He was more defiant than gracious after his World Series redemption, but I can't really blame him, and he was right — he does hold all the cards. Might even be an ace in there for '19.

Rick Porcello: What a bulldog. I used to think of him first as one of the most obscure Cy Young winners of all time. Now I think of him as a pitcher who did everything the Red Sox needed, and whenever they needed it, to win.

Nathan Eovaldi: Logically, it may not be prudent to get into a bidding war for his services given his injury history, modest career comps (Dave Giusti, Jay Tibbs, Jhoulys Chacin), and the reality that the perception of him will never be higher than it is now. Sentimentally, you hope the Red Sox give him every dollar he wants. I'm cool with sentimentality here.

Eduardo Rodriguez: Don't know about you, but I loved the Gronk Spike of his glove after his excellent start in Game 4 was ruined by Yasiel Puig's three-run homer. More encouraged about him than I've ever been.

Craig Kimbrel: He's one of the most accomplished closers of all-time, but some team is going to be paying a lot of money for his decline.

Matt Barnes: Deserves the first crack at closing, if Alex Cora actually goes with a conventional closer. Struck out 106 in 72 innings between the regular season and postseason.

Ryan Brasier: The find of the season had a 1.60 ERA in the regular season, a 1.09 ERA in the postseason, and an admonishment of Gary Sanchez that was as impressive as any of his feats on the mound.

Related: Kimbrel declines \$17.9m qualifying offer — but could still re-sign with Sox

Joe Kelly: The JBJ of pitchers. Talented, streaky, maddening, and absolutely brilliant when the Red Sox needed him most. He's going to make a lot of money to be someone else's enigma, but he's assured of being remembered well around here.

Heath Hembree: The kind of bullpen arm you need in the regular season, but don't quite trust in the big moments. Throws hard, can get you roughly a strikeout an inning, but is too homer-prone for the closing scenes.

Drew Pomeranz: As far as I know, he's still sitting alone in the bullpen at Dodger Stadium.

Reserves

Mitch Moreland: A Moreland-Pearce platoon works for me. I'll never forget how his three-run homer in the Game 4 comeback at Dodger Stadium immediately flipped a switch with the crowd. All of a sudden, it was Fenway West Coast.

Sandy Leon: He played 82 games this year. He should play about 60 next year, max. But he's the quintessential trusted backup.

Ian Kinsler: As far as veteran cameos on a Red Sox champion go, he's not going to be remembered like, oh, Doug Mientkiewicz, let alone Orlando Cabrera or Dave Roberts. But he played a steady second base until that time he didn't. He must have had the deepest exhale when the Sox won it all.

Blake Swihart: Can you still be a prospect at 27 years old? That will be his age in April, and he's still trying to establish himself as a major-leaguer. He's had an unfortunate career path, with obstacles that were more the Red Sox' fault than his. I think he can hit, but it might take a change of address to prove it.

Eduardo Nunez: His three-run homer in the seventh inning of Game 1 of the World Series turned a 5-4 lead into an 8-4 advantage, making a win pretty close to a formality. It was the most overlooked clutch hit of the postseason. He'll be back next year to provide occasional pop while suffering three apparent career-ending injuries per week.

Dustin Pedroia: He's got three World Series rings now, tied with David Ortiz for the most of any Red Sox player this century. Slap an asterisk on this one if you want since he played just three games, but I'm not writing off a comeback and a quest for a fourth.

*** *The Boston Herald***

Craig Kimbrel says no thanks to Red Sox' qualifying offer

Jason Mastrodonato

It's officially time for the Red Sox to start thinking about a new closer.

Craig Kimbrel yesterday rejected his qualifying offer for a one-year contract worth \$17.9 million to stay with the Sox. He will test the free agent market.

"We anticipated he would reject it," Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said.

The Sox will receive a compensatory pick if Kimbrel signs elsewhere, but because they were above the luxury-tax threshold in 2018, that pick won't come until after the fourth round of the draft next June.

It was long assumed Kimbrel would go this route, given the 30-year-old has just entered free agency for the first time in his career and might not get another chance to cash in for a big payday. He has a chance to push Aroldis Chapman's record contract for a reliever of five years and \$86 million.

Some of Kimbrel's numbers were down in 2018, but he still held hitters to a lower contact percentage (62.7) than any pitcher in the majors while finishing the year with a 2.74 ERA and 1.00 WHIP with 96 strikeouts in 62 ⅓ innings.

Kimbrel was less effective in the postseason, when he had a 5.81 ERA with just 10 strikeouts to eight walks in 10 ⅓ innings, though he did convert every save chance.

Dombrowski said at the GM Meetings last week the Sox wouldn't consider any other moves on the relief market until they knew what Kimbrel was going to do.

Now that he's decided to test the market, they can consider making Kimbrel a better offer or look elsewhere.

"I don't think we'll go in with that idea of closer by committee," Dombrowski said last week. "I can't tell you what's an established closer. I mean, Ryan Brasier has closed games for some established big league clubs. Is Matt Barnes? I don't think we'd feel uncomfortable with either one of them. Could there be other alternatives? Sure."

Jeurys Familia, Zach Britton, David Robertson, Adam Ottavino, Andrew Miller, Kelvin Herrera and Joe Kelly are among the other top relievers available in free agency this winter.

The Red Sox payroll is expected to be more than \$215 million as currently constructed, according to Cot's Baseball Contracts, with at least seven players making eight-figure salaries.

But they'll need to find a way to address the bullpen, where Kimbrel and Kelly are free agents and only Brasier and Barnes remain among proven set-up arms. Dombrowski said soon after the World Series ended the bullpen would be his priority this offseason.

Steven Wright might be able to help, but he had arthroscopic surgery on his left knee yesterday. He still hopes to pitch in 2019.

The Sox also have eyes on some awards.

The Manager of the Year will be announced tonight and Alex Cora is a finalist. Cy Young announcements are tomorrow, and on Thursday, Mookie Betts could be crowned the American League MVP.

Betts is entering his second year of arbitration and is expected to earn \$18.7 million, according to MLB Trade Rumors' projections. He'll be eligible for arbitration a third and final time after the 2019 season before he's eligible for free agency after 2020.

*** *MassLive.com***

Boston Red Sox free agency: Craig Kimbrel declines qualifying offer

Chris Cotillo

Free-agent closer Craig Kimbrel has declined the Red Sox' qualifying offer, president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski confirmed Monday afternoon.

Boston issued Kimbrel a one-year, \$17.9 million offer on Nov. 2. The All-Star closer had 10 days to either accept it and return to the Red Sox or decline and be tied to draft pick compensation in free agency. With the offer declined, the Sox will receive a compensation pick after the fourth round of June's draft if he signs elsewhere.

Kimbrel was expected to decline all along, as he's expected to command a large four- or five-year deal on the open market. The Cardinals, Braves, Phillies and others are rumored to have interest along with the Red Sox, who remain interested in a reunion.

Kimbrel was one of seven free agents to receive an offer this fall, along with Bryce Harper (Nationals), Dallas Keuchel (Astros), Yasmani Grandal and Hyun-jin Ryu (Dodgers) and A.J. Pollock and Patrick Corbin (Diamondbacks). Of those seven, only Ryu accepted, making him just the sixth free agent out of 80 to accept the qualifying offer since the system was put into place in 2012.

Kimbrel was the first Red Sox player to receive the offer since 2013, when Jacoby Ellsbury, Mike Napoli and Stephen Drew all declined. Boston also made the offer to David Ortiz in 2012 but worked out a two-year deal with him before the acceptance deadline.

Steven Wright surgery: Boston Red Sox knuckleballer undergoes left knee arthroscopy

Christopher Smith

Red Sox knuckleballer Steven Wright underwent a left knee arthroscopy and debridement Monday at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York.

Dr. Riley Williams performed the procedure.

Dr. Williams performed Wright's left knee cartilage restoration procedure in May 2017 and Dustin Pedroia's left knee cartilage restoration procedure in October 2017.

The Red Sox removed Wright from the ALDS roster after Game 1 vs. the Yankees because of knee soreness.

"Wright will continue to rehab and prepare for a return to pitching in the 2019 season," per a Red Sox press release.

Pedroia also underwent arthroscopic surgery in late July to remove scar tissue.

Boston Red Sox free agency: Joe Kelly wants to be with Red Sox for 'rest of (his) career'

Chris Cotillo

Joe Kelly's answer on where he wants to pitch next year is a pretty clear one.

Kelly, a free agent this winter, repeatedly said that he wanted to return to the Red Sox in an appearance on the Jim Rome Show on Monday.

"I don't even feel like a free agent because I still feel like I'm part of the Boston Red Sox," Kelly said. "I still feel like that's where I'm gonna be for the rest of my career. When people bring up free agency, I'm like, 'oh crap, I am a free agent.' I happened to pitch well in the postseason and now teams are gonna want me to play for their team."

Kelly said that it would be hard for him to find a situation more perfect than the one he experienced with the Red Sox in 2018, citing the strong relationships between players and families. After reaching the majors with the Cardinals, he has found a home with the Sox since being acquired at the 2014 trade deadline.

"It almost feels like the old travel ball days where you grew up with a team for multiple years, you stayed the night at each other's houses and ate dinner with their parents," Kelly said.

Kelly recently returned to his home in California and is currently in the process of unpacking his belongings from the season. Once that's done, he'll start talking to teams about signing.

"Deep down inside, I still feel like I'm on the Red Sox even though technically I'm not," Kelly said. "It's gonna be fun to see what teams are interested in me. Hopefully, I can be a Red Sox though, for the rest of my career."

*** *RedSox.com***

Kimbrel rejects \$17.9 million qualifying offer

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- Closer Craig Kimbrel on Monday rejected the \$17.9 million qualifying offer he received from the Red Sox and will instead pursue a multi-year deal in free agency.

At last week's General Managers Meetings, Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said he didn't expect Kimbrel to take the offer, but was waiting to know for sure before pursuing an arm for the bullpen.

Now that Dombrowski knows, expect him to actively scour the market -- both via free agency or a trade.

It was a trade that allowed Dombrowski to get Kimbrel three years ago, when Boston dealt Manuel Margot, Logan Allen, Carlos Asuaje and Javy Guerra to the Padres in exchange for one of the best closers in the game.

The Red Sox have no regrets about that trade. Kimbrel was an All-Star in all three of his seasons in Boston, saving 108 of 119 opportunities for a team that won the American League East three straight years and won the World Series last month.

The Red Sox -- along with the other 29 MLB teams -- are all eligible to sign Kimbrel as a free agent.

When the 2018 season ended, the Red Sox had the highest payroll in MLB. With several key players (Mookie Betts, Xander Bogaerts, Jackie Bradley Jr., et al.) expected to receive significant salary increases through arbitration, the Sox might be looking to spend less on a closer than it will take to retain Kimbrel.

The free-agent market has several quality relievers, including Adam Ottavino, Jeurys Familia, Joakim Soria, David Robertson, Andrew Miller and Zach Britton.

Miller is an intriguing player to watch, having already pitched for the Red Sox from 2011-14. The lanky Indians lefty is coming off an injury-plagued 2018, when he pitched in just 37 games and had a 4.24 ERA.

That drop in durability and performance could bring down Miller's price to a level that gets the Red Sox in the game for his services. It was former Red Sox general manager Ben Cherington who traded Miller to the Orioles for Eduardo Rodriguez on July 31, 2014.

However, Dombrowski also has history with Miller, as his Tigers took him with the sixth overall pick in the 2006 Draft. Dombrowski wound up trading Miller to the Marlins a year later as part of the blockbuster that brought Miguel Cabrera to Detroit.

Dombrowski has mentioned righties Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier as internal candidates to replace Kimbrel in the closer's role. Even if that happens, the Red Sox are still likely to acquire at least one key reliever.

Joe Kelly, a postseason hero for the Red Sox, is also a free agent.

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 would be after the fourth round is completed.

*** *WEEI.com***

Craig Kimbrel turns down chance to take qualifying offer

Rob Bradford

Craig Kimbrel has turned down a chance to make a guaranteed \$17.9 million next season.

The closer has decided to not accept the qualifying offer extended by the Red Sox. By doing so he turns his back on a one-year guaranteed deal in favor of testing the free agent market. MLB Trade Rumors projects Kimbrel as ready to make the fifth-most lucrative deal in the open market, predicting a four-year, \$70 million deal.

If Kimbrel signs with another club the Red Sox will receive a draft pick somewhere in the vicinity of the fourth round. (The later-round selection is due to penalties incurred by finishing with a payroll upwards of \$237 million.) The acquiring team would also be forced to surrender a draft pick.

The 30-year-old Kimbrel finished 2018 with 42 saves and a 2.74 ERA in 63 appearances. He struggled somewhat in the postseason, allowing at least one run in five of his nine appearances.

Kimbrel is considered the premier closer in free agency, with the likes of Jeurys Familia, Zach Britton, David Robertson, Andrew Miller, Kelvin Herrera and Adam Ottavino all figuring to get no better than three-year deals.

Seven free agents were extended qualifying offers, with only the Dodgers Hyun-Jin Ryu representing the only player to accept the one-year commitment. Those joining Kimbrel in turning their back at the qualifying offer included Yasmani Grandal, Bryce Harper, Patrick Corbin, A.J. Pollock and Dallas Keuchel.

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

Craig Kimbrel declines qualifying offer from Red Sox

Sean McAdam

In what was seen as merely a formality, closer Craig Kimbrel rejected the Red Sox qualifying offer worth \$17.9 million by the 5 p.m. Monday deadline.

The move doesn't preclude Kimbrel from re-signing with the Red Sox as a free agent, but does ensure that if he leaves and signs elsewhere, the Red Sox will receive a draft pick after the fourth round in next June's amateur draft.

Of the seven major league free agents who were given qualifying offers earlier this month, only Los Angeles Dodgers lefty Hyun-Jin Ryu accepted. That's in keeping with recent history, since only six players (of the 80 given qualifying offers) have accepted since the current system was introduced in 2012.

Kimbrel is viewed as the top reliever on the free agent market and has already attracted interest from the St. Louis Cardinals and Philadelphia Phillies. Kimbrel is looking for a multi-year commitment (likely four years or longer) from teams.

Acquired from the San Diego Padres after the 2015 season, Kimbrel has spent the last three seasons with the Red Sox, recording 108 saves and pitching to a 2.44 ERA. Kimbrel struggled mightily in the postseason with a 5.91 ERA in nine games, though he did manage to convert all six of his save opportunities.

If the Sox don't re-sign Kimbrel, they'll have to find a new closer from within their organization — president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski has mentioned Matt Barnes and Ryan Brasier as two internal options — or sign or trade for a closer. Andrew Miller, Zach Britton and Jeurys Familia are among the possibilities on the current free agent market.