

The Boston Red Sox Wednesday, June 12, 2019

*** *The Boston Globe***

Red Sox pitcher Brian Johnson close to being activated

Nora Princiotti

The Red Sox pitching staff should soon be getting a boost.

Lefthander Brian Johnson is likely to be activated this week after a protracted rehab assignment. Johnson's last start, Sunday for Triple A Pawtucket, went well, and manager Alex Cora said Tuesday that he shouldn't need another one.

"He feels good, he actually threw the ball well the last one," Cora said. "The next coming days we'll talk about what decision we're going to make, where we go. But he felt good, he felt good overall as far as, like, the way he attacked hitters, his delivery, his arm, which is the most important thing."

Johnson has been on the injured list since April 6 with left elbow inflammation. He has had six rehab outings for Pawtucket, as well as Double A Portland.

Sunday's performance indicated he is ready, or close to it, to rejoin the Red Sox. Johnson pitched four innings and gave up one run and four hits with two walks and six strikeouts. He said he felt much more comfortable with his command than he had in previous rehab outings.

"I was just missing a lot, and my misses were just bad misses over the plate and obviously, I was getting hit," Johnson said. "So now that I kind of can feel like I can throw whatever I want in any count, that's what kind of allowed me to start having success."

Johnson said he'd also felt comfortable in his rehab start prior to the one Sunday and, after stringing two good performances together, was eager to get back to Boston.

It's possible Johnson could start Sunday against the Orioles. That's the spot in the rotation that was filled Tuesday by Darwinzon Hernandez.

The Red Sox could also use Johnson out of the bullpen. Cora brought up Johnson's name as one way to reinforce that group other than a trade, when asked if he felt the team needed to acquire another reliever.

"I think there's certain guys that are going to come out off the DL that are going to help us out, starting with BJ," Cora said. "He's going to put us in a good spot as far as not going to certain guys in certain situations if we go with him in the bullpen, or if he starts he's going to benefit us the other way with another guy in the bullpen."

Brasier on leave

The Red Sox placed righthanded reliever Ryan Brasier on the bereavement/family medical emergency list.

Cora said he wasn't sure how long Brasier would be away but expressed his best wishes for the player.

"I don't know," Cora said. "We'll see. Keep your thoughts and prayers for him and his family and whenever he gets back, he gets back."

The Red Sox have Mike Shawaryn and Colten Brewer available as relievers who can provide multiple innings. Cora said he wasn't sure if they would need to make a move to call up a temporary reinforcement.

Eovaldi not throwing

Righthander Nathan Eovaldi is still shut down because of biceps tightness. Cora said Eovaldi is doing conditioning work but isn't throwing. There is no timetable for when he will begin doing so. Eovaldi had surgery to remove loose bodies in his elbow on April 23. He'd recovered quickly until his bullpen session was postponed over the weekend because of the setback . . . Steve Pearce started running Tuesday after hitting off a tee Monday. He is making progress toward his return from the 10-day injured list because of back spasms . . . Mitch Moreland still has not been cleared to resume baseball activities. Moreland is on the 10-day IL with a right quadriceps strain . . . The start time of Wednesday's game against the Rangers was moved up from 7:10 p.m. to 4:05 to accommodate fans who want to watch the Bruins game.

Darwinzon Hernandez a work in progress — like his team

Peter Abraham

Darwinzon Hernandez threw three shutout innings in a spring training game back in March, looking so good that it seemed premature to say the 22-year-old lefthander's best use to the Red Sox this season would be as a relief pitcher.

A quick trip to the seats behind home plate squashed that story idea.

"Oh, no, he's a reliever and probably a pretty good one," a scout said. "His command gets too streaky to start long-term."

Another evaluator concurred.

"Bullpen. He'll help them in the summer I think," he said.

That projection played out on Tuesday night against the Texas Rangers. In his first start for the Sox, Hernandez struck out the side in the first inning then punched out Nomar Mazara with a 96-m.p.h. fastball to start the second.

Eight of the next 14 batters reached base safely, five on walks. Hernandez threw only 42 of 86 pitches for strikes and allowed four runs.

That Hernandez has dynamite stuff can't be denied. He hit 98 with his fastball and threw some impressive sliders. But he missed low, high, inside and outside.

If Hernandez had some sort of plan of how he wanted to pitch the Rangers, it wasn't apparent.

"The stuff is great and all that," manager Alex Cora said. "But obviously he was erratic."

It shouldn't have been much of a surprise. Hernandez has averaged 7.1 walks per nine innings at Double A Portland this season.

But in short, more-focused stints, Hernandez could be a useful reliever for the major league team in another month or two.

The Sox have done the absolute right thing developing him as a starter because you have to give a talented pitcher that opportunity. But at some point they'll have to change the path he's on. It doesn't seem to be working.

In that sense, Hernandez is much like the team he played for on Thursday: Talented but flawed and something sure has to change.

A 9-5 loss against the Rangers was the aesthetic low point of the season as the Sox lost for the fifth time in six games and fell back to .500 at 34-34.

Sox pitchers walked eight and there were two errors including a routine popup that Rafael Devers let bounce out of his glove.

Andrew Benintendi was ejected in the fifth inning after he grounded out then Cora followed him to the clubhouse after unleashing what seemed to be weeks of pent-up rage on first base umpire Vic Carapazza.

Benintendi, whose usual idea of emotion is a raised eyebrow, said he hadn't been ejected since a minor league game in 2016. He was upset with the pitch prior to the ground out, a borderline changeup that plate umpire Angel Hernandez called a strike.

"I was frustrated," Benintendi said. "All I said was, 'You suck.' Angel didn't even know I was thrown out until I went back out there so obviously he didn't hear that."

Cora was angry that Benintendi was ejected while he was walking away from the play and stuck up for him.

But that wasn't the worst part of the night. Hunter Pence hit a fly ball down the line in right field in the sixth inning that Brock Holt tried to make a leaping grab of. Holt missed the ball and got caught up in the front row of the stands.

The ball rolled along the warning back toward the visitors' bullpen. Pence raced around the bases for an unchallenged two-run inside-the-park homer.

The ball actually came to a dead stop and sat there as Pence scored. The fans were closer than any Red Sox player.

Holt said he assumed the ball had gone over the fence.

"I had no idea it was still in play. That's kind of embarrassing on my part," said Holt, who on Monday night ran through a stop sign and was thrown out at the plate to end the ninth inning of a 3-3 game the Sox went on to lose.

"I've got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me."

It was the seventh loss in the last eight home games. They all need to a better job.

"You can see it. I think guys are frustrated," Holt said. "We try not to be but games like tonight, it's embarrassing. We're not playing well. We're not playing up to our capabilities."

The Bruins season ends Wednesday and the Sox will have the full attention of the sporting public. There's not much to like.

If the players are frustrated, as Holt said, wait until they see how the fans start to react if this keeps up.

The Red Sox have plenty of problems, and they were on display Tuesday

Nora Princiotti

Eight walks, two ejections, two errors, and an inside-the-park home run all mingled in the unsavory baseball potpourri that was a 9-5 Red Sox loss to the Texas Rangers on Tuesday night.

Boston has lost three straight and is 1-5 on this homestand with two games to go. The Red Sox have lost seven of their last eight home games and now two in a row to the Rangers, who entered the series 10-18 on the road. The Sox are .500 for the first time since the first day of June.

“We absolutely have to be better than this if we want to compete,” said manager Alex Cora.

There are problems aplenty, but near the top of the list is that, because of injuries and choices in roster construction, the Red Sox are relying on several inexperienced pitchers who look overmatched.

On Tuesday, they gave the ball to 22-year-old Darwinzon Hernandez, a talented prospect with electric stuff who struggled with command in his first major league start.

Hernandez struck out seven but walked five and gave up four runs, three earned, in three innings. His night was done after 86 pitches, and he became the first Sox starter to throw more balls (44) than strikes (42) in an outing of at least 50 pitches since Wade Miley in April 2015.

“He’s still learning, but you see the stuff. It’s really good. We’ve just got to keep developing him,” Cora said.

Hernandez, through a translator, said he wasn’t sure if his problems were mechanical or otherwise. He was sharp initially, striking out the first four batters he faced, and then became erratic and overreliant on his fastball, which was dropping in velocity.

“After the first inning I just lost my control a bit,” Hernandez said. “I tried to be as consistent as possible, but it’s just one of those days where I didn’t have a good outing.”

Hernandez, Ryan Weber, Colton Brewer, Mike Shawaryn, Josh Taylor, Josh Smith, and Bobby Poyner make up an inexperienced bunch, but the Sox have needed all of them within the last week. On Tuesday, the eight walks given up by Boston pitchers tied a season high.

The offense kept pace for a bit. The Sox scored a run in the second inning and two more in the third, when Rafael Devers smashed a two-out, two-run triple into the triangle to end an 0-for-20 slump. After Hernandez gave up a run at the start of the fourth, he turned the 4-3 game over to Brewer, who finished the inning without further damage.

Then Poyner came in and gave up two runs in the fifth and another three in the sixth. Those three runs were scored on an inside the park home run by Hunter Pence, whose ball rolled to a stop in right field before Brock Holt realized that it was in play and not in the stands.

“That’s kind of embarrassing on my part,” Holt said. “Got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me, I don’t know if I would have been able to keep Hunter to a triple there or what, but I’ve got to go get that ball.”

Overall, Poyner went three innings and allowed five runs, all earned, on six hits, two walks, and two strikeouts.

J.D. Martinez hit an RBI double in the seventh to tack on a run for the Red Sox. Mookie Betts did the same with a solo home run in the ninth.

Red Sox reliever Bobby Poyner was touched for five runs and six hits in three innings Tuesday. Andrew Benintendi and Cora were both ejected in the fifth inning. Benintendi was tossed by first base umpire Vic Carapazza as he walked back to the dugout after grounding out.

Benintendi had disagreed with a called strike by home plate umpire Angel Hernandez on the first pitch of his at-bat. He didn't say anything to Hernandez at the time but said, "You suck," as he was walking to the dugout. Carapazza heard him and took issue.

"I ground out and was frustrated and I mean, all I said was, 'You suck.' Angel didn't even know I was thrown out until I went back out there, so obviously he didn't hear that," Benintendi said. "I'm 100 feet away. Vic throws me out walking back to the dugout and I was surprised."

It was Benintendi's first ejection in the majors.

After the game, Hernandez told a pool reporter he wasn't at liberty to discuss the ejection or whether it was standard for a base umpire to eject a player for arguing balls and strikes until he'd submitted his report the following day.

"He violated the rules of the game," Hernandez said.

Cora came out to argue Benintendi's ejection and got the boot from Carapazza, too. Cora's main point was that Benintendi wasn't really arguing since he was walking to the dugout. But he made it colorfully.

"Benny's screaming at Angel, but he's going to the dugout," Cora said. "It's not like he's arguing with Angel. I just didn't agree with it."

Circumstances of the ejections aside, it looked as if frustrations were boiling over. The Red Sox are 14-23 against teams .500 or better and have struggled at home.

"I think guys are frustrated," Holt said. "We try not to be, but games like tonight, it's embarrassing. We're not playing well, we're not playing up to our capabilities. That's the frustrating part, because we know we're good."

*** *The Boston Herald***

Andrew Benintendi surprised by ejection

Jason Mastrodonato

Andrew Benintendi insisted that all he said while walking off the field Tuesday night was, "You suck."

The words were said as Benintendi faced his own dugout. They were meant for home plate umpire Angel Hernandez, a controversial figure in the game due to some unusual strike zones and a few infamous calls.

And yet it was first base umpire Vic Carapazza who threw Benintendi out of the game from his spot on the first-base line, marking the first ejection of Benintendi's career.

"I wasn't expecting that at all," Benintendi said after the Red Sox' 9-5 loss to the Texas Rangers. "I'm walking back to the dugout and he throws me out walking back. I didn't know until I was halfway through the dugout."

Benintendi was mad about a first-pitch borderline strike call in the bottom of the fifth inning.

"I thought it was off the plate, but I didn't say anything to Angel," Benintendi said. "I grounded out and I was frustrated and all I said was, 'You suck.' Angel didn't even know I was thrown out until I went back out there. Obviously he didn't hear that and I'm 100 feet away. Vic throws me out walking back."

Benintendi was shocked.

“If you’re getting thrown out for saying ‘you suck,’ there should be multiple ejections each game,” he said.

Hernandez was interviewed by a pool reporter after the game but offered little explanation.

“He violated the rules of the game,” Hernandez said. “I’m not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow.”

Manager Alex Cora ran out of the dugout to defend Benintendi and got himself ejected, too.

“I’ve got to go out there and defend my player,” Cora said. “I didn’t agree with that. It’s not like he’s at the plate screaming at Angel. That’s not the first time somebody disagrees and screams from afar at the umpire.”

It was Cora’s first ejection of the season as the Sox fell to 34-34 on the year.

There was another weird play in the sixth, when Hunter Pence lifted a fly ball near Pesky’s Pole and Brock Holt narrowly missed a leaping catch at the wall. The ball then bounced behind Holt and rolled toward the warning track, but Holt thought it was a home run and never bothered to turn around and look for the ball.

Neither did Mookie Betts, who was late to chase it down from center field.

Pence scored easily on an inside-the-parker.

“The ball was slicing away from me, and when I ended up two rows deep in the stands, I assumed it had gone out,” Holt said. “I had no idea it was still in play. That’s kind of embarrassing on my part. Got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me. I don’t know if I would’ve been able to keep Hunter to a triple there, but I’ve got to go get that ball and get it in.”

Cora, who had been ejected at that point, said he hadn’t seen enough of the play on video to know if Betts should’ve hustled to the ball quicker.

As Red Sox lose again, Darwinzon Hernandez flashes both upside and downside

Jason Mastrodonato

In an era when strikeouts are king, home runs are a constant and pitchers are desperate to avoid contact, the Red Sox clearly have found a modern-day pitcher in Darwinzon Hernandez.

The 22-year-old left-hander made his first major league start Tuesday night and flashed dazzling stuff, though he lost command early and departed in the fourth inning with the score tied.

Colten Brewer got his team to the fifth, but Bobby Poyner let it unravel (five runs in three innings) on a night manager Alex Cora was ejected and the Red Sox went on to an ugly 9-5 loss to the Texas Rangers.

It was the third consecutive loss for the Sox, who are 1-5 in their past six and have fallen back to .500 at 34-34. With a lot of time to go, they’re three games behind the Rangers for the second wild card spot.

“It’s not good baseball right now, to be honest with you,” Cora said. “It’s not fun. ... We have absolutely have to be better than this if we want to be in the hunt.”

But the takeaway from Tuesday wasn’t a botched catch attempt by Brock Holt that turned into an inside-the-park home run, nor was it the bullpen, which continues to have depth issues and holds a 6.31 ERA in the past 15 days.

The story was Hernandez, who brought life to a ballpark that hasn’t seen much energy from the home team in some time.

“You saw flashes of greatness,” Cora said.

Hernandez struck out the side in the first inning, when Shin-Soo Choo and Danny Santana each went down swinging on 98-mph fastballs, then Elvis Andrus looked silly striking out on a slider.

Hernandez started the second inning with a bull’s eye on the low-and-outside corner to strike out Nomar Mazara.

Four very good major league hitters, four punchouts.

“I told him that was probably the worst thing that happened, you strike out the first four guys and probably try to strike everybody out after that,” Cora said.

Forget what happened next, because it’s almost too predictable to get hung up on. Hernandez has spent most of the year in Double-A Portland because he’s prone to drastic losses in command (32 walks and 49 strikeouts in 40 innings with the Sea Dogs). A statue could draw a walk against him if the timing is right.

After the strikeout of Mazara, he walked the next two on 11 pitches. The Rangers ended the second inning with a 1-0 lead when he gave up a ground-rule double to right field (though Mookie Betts initially took two steps in on a ball that flew just over his head).

The third inning was peak Hernandez: two runs on one hit, three walks and two strikeouts.

“I just lost my control a bit,” he said.

Said Cora, “The game speeds up on him.”

Rafael Devers dropped a routine fly ball to begin the fourth, Hernandez gave up a single to the next batter and the Red Sox pulled the plug as he departed a 3-3 game with nobody out in the inning.

Hernandez’ final line was a weird one: three-plus innings, three earned runs, three hits, five walks and seven strikeouts. He’s now struck out 11 batters in 5½ innings at the major league level.

“I know I can succeed at this level,” he said.

Overall, the Red Sox obviously need better from their starting pitchers. But they weren’t getting any better from the guys who have been pitching in this spot — Ryan Weber, Josh Smith and the now-injured Hector Velazquez.

The three of them have combined to make 12 starts and have allowed 32 earned runs in 38½ innings for an ERA of 7.51 and an average of three innings per start.

If the Sox want to search for upside, it could be worth sticking with Hernandez to see what he can do until Nathan Eovaldi is ready, which could be a while given he’s yet to start throwing after it was revealed he was dealing with bicep tendinitis.

Hernandez clearly has sky-high potential. Even with sporadic stuff, he generated seven whiffs on his electric fastball, more than the other three pitchers generated on their fastballs in any of their 12 starts.

It’s not quite mid-June, which means the .500 Red Sox still have another month or so to figure out if they’re going to be buyers or sellers at the July 31 trade deadline. Dave Dombrowski told NESN on Tuesday that he needs to see more from this team before he decides.

Is more of Smith, 31 years old, or Weber, 28, going to reveal anything new to the Sox they don’t already know?

There's a lot of information to be gathered by letting Hernandez pitch regularly while he's working with big league coaching.

"He's still learning," Cora said. "You see the stuff. It's really good. We just have to keep developing him, helping him out, and he'll be a good one."

At the very least, let Hernandez pitch out of relief. The Sox have been desperate to find consistency in the back end of the bullpen. His stuff could play up even bigger in that role, which is probably better than keeping their top pitching prospect on a bus to and from the minors every couple weeks.

The Red Sox have nothing going right now. Hernandez has something, no matter how raw it might be.

Time for Red Sox to identify a closer

Tom Keegan

The pendulum always swings too far in one direction and is followed by a correction. That goes for clocks in need of repair, the stock market, and baseball, especially baseball.

Generations ago, many baseball managers ignored the data and let their ample guts make too many of the decisions for them. Now, the managers' guts tend to be much smaller, perhaps in part from lack of use.

Data is good, but baseball's pendulum has swung too far. Too much of a good thing. A specific inning for a particular baseball team demonstrates that as well as anything.

The Red Sox don't have a closer because they choose not to have one. Instead, they base decisions on matchup data and treat the late innings as interchangeable, which they are not from an emotional standpoint.

"That's who we are in the bullpen," Cora said. "That's our nature, and we'll put them in spots where we feel they're going to be successful."

On paper, that sounds sound. In practice, it doesn't work because it discounts the human element. Numbers don't study minds. Only humans can study humans in that way.

Some pitchers are made for the ninth and all the heat that comes with it. Think: Dennis Eckersley and Mariano Rivera. They were really good. They knew it and one lousy outing wasn't going to alter their thinking.

It's strange that Cora, who seems to have a strong understanding of emotions, discounts them when it comes to the ninth inning, even though baseball doesn't have a more emotion-packed role.

"A lot of people have their thoughts of the ninth inning," Cora said. "Those three outs are bigger than the first 24. There are others who feel that there are people ready for that one (inning), they can do it better."

Asked if he said he sees merit in the idea that some relievers are better suited for the ninth-inning pressure, Cora said: "I don't. I really don't. I just think that you execute pitches, you get people out."

Expecting all pitchers to treat all late innings the same is not realistic.

"I never have asked that question to pitchers, and I bet if you ask them they'll tell you that they can do the job in the seventh, eighth, or ninth. They're not going to tell you, 'Ah, I can't do it in the ninth,'" Cora said.

He's right about that, which makes it a question not worth asking. But it is worth counting the number of ninth-inning sweat beads, measuring the size of them and noting whether they come closer to resembling those of Eckersley with the A's or those of Calvin Schiraldi closing for the Red Sox in the 1986 World Series.

Even ninth-inning data shows that relying on matchup data alone in assigning roles based on opposing hitters ignores the human element.

Matt Barnes has the best stuff in the bullpen, but has a 4.50 ninth-inning ERA with a 1.60 WHIP. Maybe if he had been made the closer from Day 1 he could have made it happen. Too late.

In the ninth, Ryan Brasier has a 6.75 ERA. Not only that, in eight innings of ninth-inning work, he has surrendered three home runs. Next.

And then there's Brandon Workman. The data's limited, so it's like starting from scratch, only better because what little data there is should fill him with confidence. Beyond the numbers, though, he seems to have the right mindset.

For one thing, he doesn't seem like the type to overthink things. For another, he seems to be able to purge rough outings. Case in point: He had an awful spring in 2018, yet was surprised he started the season in Triple A.

Short memories suit the role perfectly. So before mortgaging an important piece or two of the future, why not give Workman the ball in the ninth on a regular basis and see what happens?

No 'proclamation' yet: Dombrowski must see Red Sox improve before talking trades

Jason Mastrodonato

The Red Sox need pitching reinforcements, and they're likely to get some if the team starts playing better. Manager Alex Cora acknowledged on Tuesday that the Sox will need to add pitchers before the July 31 trade deadline, which is all-encompassing for the first time after the elimination of the Aug. 1 non-waiver trade deadline.

"We're always looking for ways to improve," he said. "That's what the organization has done. I do feel that we've got to put ourselves in a situation that, yeah, if we do this we're going to be elite again. So thinking ahead, yeah, it's great, it's always great because that's what we do. But we need to get this right first and go from there."

President of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said on NESN's pregame show Tuesday that it's not yet clear if the Red Sox will be buyers at the deadline.

"Before we make any proclamation, we need to find out how else we play from here," he said. "And (to find out) what Steven Wright does in that regard."

Dombrowski said it's most important to find "somebody who can pitch with a lead late in the game." He said the pitchers the Red Sox have are capable of doing that.

Wright, who is rehabbing from the same knee surgery that may have ended Dustin Pedroia's career, is also serving an 80-game suspension for violating MLB's performance enhancing drug policy.

"He's been doing great, pitching on a consistent basis," Dombrowski said on NESN. "He hasn't missed any time with the knee whatsoever. It's the same situation (as Pedroia), that knee will never be 100 percent. But he's doing better than he has done in a couple years."

The Sox are looking at using the knuckleballer exclusively out of the bullpen when he's eligible to return on June 25.

Lefty coming back soon

Brian Johnson was one of the team MVPs last year, Cora has said. Now he's nearing a return from an elbow injury and could soon bolster the Red Sox staff.

Being able to provide long relief and the occasional spot start is something Johnson did well a year ago, but the Sox have been missing those innings in 2019, with Johnson and Hector Velazquez on the injured list.

A former first-rounder in 2012, Johnson has excelled with his high-80s fastball because of an electric curveball he can use to induce weak contact. The Sox aren't sure if they'll insert him into the rotation or the bullpen when he comes back, but there's no arguing that the Sox need more pitchers.

"He's going to put us in a good spot as far as like, not going to certain guys in certain situations if we're going with him in the bullpen," Cora said. "Or if he starts, he's going to benefit us the other way, with another guy in the bullpen."

Darwinzon Hernandez answers call

Darwinzon Hernandez is still developing but the Red Sox haven't had the luxury of giving their prospects time to develop this year, instead calling them to the big leagues to contribute right away.

Hernandez was called up for the third time this season to start Tuesday's game. Cora said he's not sure if Hernandez will stay in the rotation or go back to Double-A Portland afterward.

To make room for Hernandez, Ryan Brasier was put on the bereavement list as he deals with a family emergency.

"Just keep your thoughts for him and his family," Cora said. "Whenever he gets back, he gets back."

Nathan Eovaldi, recovering from elbow surgery and now dealing with biceps tendinitis, has yet to resume throwing after a setback last week.

Holt takes the blame

Looking back at Monday's 4-3 loss to the Blue Jays, Cora said he couldn't blame acting third base coach Andy Barkett for Brock Holt's baserunning gaffe.

Holt tried scoring from first on a double by Marco Hernandez with the game tied and two outs in the ninth inning, but was thrown out by a mile at home. Barkett originally waved Holt in, but then threw up the stop sign as Holt rounded third.

Holt ran through it and told reporters Tuesday it was his fault for not seeing it.

"It was a late stop," Cora said. "For us, you go over the scouting report, there are certain guys who are early stops because they're so good defensively that you stop him right away. And there's others that hits a late stop — it doesn't mean Andy was late throwing the hands up. It's that you have to wait, wait, wait, wait and at the last possible moment you stop him."

Cora added, "It's not that Andy made a bad decision." . . .

Mitch Moreland has yet to begin running after being placed on the injured list with a quad strain. Fellow first baseman Steve Pearce (back strain) has begun running and will take swings on Wednesday.

*** *The Providence Journal***

Ninth-inning numbers are glaringly bad for Red Sox bullpen

Bill Koch

Consistency has eluded the Red Sox in most areas this season, but the ninth inning isn't one of them.

Boston's pitchers have been poor when it comes to recording what should be the last three outs of a game. Monday night was another example in a 4-3, 11-inning loss to the Texas Rangers.

Matt Barnes was the culprit this time, as Nomar Mazara touched him for a two-run single to erase what was a 2-1 lead. Barnes avoided the loss thanks to Brock Holt's game-tying single in the bottom half of the inning, but the Red Sox squandered a chance to chalk up a relatively routine victory on another night when Chris Sale was dominant.

"I just sucked tonight," Barnes said. "That's plain and simple."

Boston's collective earned-run average in the ninth now sits at an even 6.00, its worst in any inning of a regulation game. Red Sox pitching allows its highest batting average at .286, its highest slugging percentage at .490 and its highest OPS at .860. Boston simply hasn't been able to hone in on an adequate replacement for Craig Kimbrel, who finally ended his prolonged free agency by signing a three-year deal with the Cubs last week.

"On a daily basis it might be someone different," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "That's who we are in the bullpen. That's our nature."

Winning the last two World Series showed Cora a different way to do things in relief. Ken Giles and Kimbrel were largely ineffective for the Astros and Red Sox, respectively, and their clubs captured championships almost in spite of their efforts in October. Starting pitchers were employed to paper over the cracks, a remedy not available to Cora prior to the end of summer.

For now, Cora has to rely on Barnes, Brandon Workman, Heath Hembree, Marcus Walden and Ryan Brasier. All five right-handers have enjoyed stretches of dominance and futility over the season's first two months, leaving the manager with few trustworthy alternatives. The long leash that served Cora well last season — Joe Kelly's playoff performance is a prime example — has betrayed him in 2019.

"A lot of people have their thoughts about the ninth inning — that those three outs are bigger than the first 24," Cora said. "There are others who feel there are people who are ready for that and can do it there."

"I don't know. I really don't know. I just feel that we're trying to maximize our talent and maximize our strength in matching up."

Brasier (1.32 ERA prior to May 2, 6.00 since), Barnes (1.50 ERA prior to May 19, 9.82 since) and Walden (1.37 ERA prior to May 19, 5.59 since) have all regressed considerably. Hembree (5.56 ERA prior to April 23, 0.52 since) has done the opposite. Workman's lone real blemish came April 17 at Yankee Stadium when he allowed three earned runs and recorded a lone out — he's surrendered just six hits and three earned runs in his last 21 2/3 frames.

"Every part of a baseball team — bullpen, bats, starters — goes through little ups and downs," Brasier said. "I think we're just in a little rough patch right now. Every day, coming in and trying to get out of it."

The simple solution would seem to be acquiring some outside help, and that will require Boston to tread water long enough until non-contenders begin selling off their pieces in July. That's also not Cora's department — president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski would be tasked with making any roster

upgrades. Bringing in Steve Pearce and Nathan Eovaldi prior to last year's deadline went a long way toward bringing the Red Sox a fourth title this century.

"We're always looking for ways to improve," Cora said. "That's what the organization has done. We've got to put ourselves in a situation where, yes, if we do this, we're going to be elite again.

"Thinking ahead, yes, it's always great. That's what we do. But we need to get this right first and go from there."

Rangers 9, Red Sox 5: Cora, Benintendi ejected as Boston slips back to .500

Bill Koch

Andrew Benintendi was ejected. Alex Cora followed suit.

The outfielder and the manager weren't subjected to the finish Tuesday night at Fenway Park. Perhaps it's just as well.

The Red Sox dropped back to the .500 mark for the second time in 10 days. This eight-game home stand will end with a losing record regardless of what happens over the next two meetings with the Rangers.

Boston continues to stagger along in defense of its World Series championship. Any semblance of momentum the Red Sox hoped to build while sleeping in their own beds has passed, with Texas cruising to a 9-5 victory.

Boston has reached four games over .500 twice this season. The Red Sox dropped four straight from May 28-June 1 and have now lost five of six since Friday. They're just 34-34 and looking up at the Rangers and a host of others in the chase for the second American League Wild Card berth.

"It's not good baseball right now to be honest with you," Cora said. "It's not fun. We know we can be better. We know that."

This one officially unraveled with one out in the bottom of the fifth. Benintendi grounded routinely to short and appeared to bark at home plate umpire Angel Hernandez regarding a first-pitch strike call. First-base umpire Vic Carapazza ejected Benintendi and did the same to Cora after coming out of the dugout to defend his player.

"All I said was, 'You suck,'" Benintendi said. "That was it. Angel didn't even know I was thrown out until I went back out there, so obviously he didn't hear that."

"I've got to go out there and defend my player," Cora said. "I didn't agree with that. He's not at the plate screaming at Angel. That's not the first time someone's disagreed and screamed from afar at the umpire." It was a 6-3 game at that point, and Texas added on three more runs in the next half-inning to settle matters for the evening. Nomar Mazara grounded an RBI single up the middle and Hunter Pence lifted a towering fly down the line in right. Brock Holt made a leaping bid and the ball cleared his glove, brushing the angled wall and rolling toward the visiting bullpen for a two-run inside-the-park homer.

"I had no idea it was still in play," Holt said. "That's kind of embarrassing on my part. I've got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me."

Boston's frustrations have been building throughout the season, and this night was no different. Danny Santana snapped a 3-3 tie in the fourth with a sacrifice fly to left and Ronald Guzman smacked a two-run double off the Green Monster to widen the cushion for the visitors in the fifth. The Red Sox never came within striking distance again.

Darwinzon Hernandez struck out the side in order in the top of the first and ran his fastball up to 97.7 mph. The quality of the Boston left-hander's raw stuff was undeniable while making his first start in the big leagues. The Rangers managed just six balls in play over the course of 18 batters, and only three of those were hits.

"The stuff is great and all that, but he was erratic," Cora said. "You saw flashes of greatness in the strike zone early on."

The flipside of the coin for Hernandez is his lack of command, and five walks in just three innings had the rookie in constant trouble. Three of those men came around to score, as Rougned Odor lined an RBI double to left in the second and Asdrubal Cabrera sent a two-run single to center in the third. Hernandez required 86 pitches to record just nine outs, and he threw only 42 of those for strikes.

"After the first inning I just lost my control a bit," Hernandez said through translator Bryan Looor-Almonte. "I tried to be as consistent as possible with it, but it was one of those days where I just didn't have a good outing."

Boston was able to keep pace early. Xander Bogaerts drilled a solo home run to left-center leading off the second and Rafael Devers snapped an 0-for-20 skid with a two-run triple to the triangle in the third. The Red Sox managed just two more runs over the final six frames, as J.D. Martinez cracked an RBI double in the sixth and Mookie Betts led off the ninth with a solo homer to left.

Bill Reynolds: Time for us to give back to 'Big Papi'

Bill Reynolds

Once upon a time, back in a horrible time in Boston history, David Ortiz had one of his finest public moments.

It was in April of 2013, five days after the horrific Boston Marathon bombings that ripped through Boylston Street near the race's finish line like a nightmare, killing three people and injuring hundreds.

It was a fragile time in the country, never mind Boston, one in which the national mood often felt vulnerable, as if things were changing and we had too little control of them.

And there on one gray afternoon in Boston was Ortiz, standing before a large, enthusiastic audience at Fenway Park.

"This is our f..... city," he told the roaring crowd. "And nobody's going to dictate our freedom. Stay strong."

That, arguably, was Ortiz's finest moment as a Red Sox player, for it not only far transcended baseball, it spoke to a vast civic pride, a powerful reminder that this was about real life. It was about so much more than just the Green Monster, the green grass of Fenway, or even a Major League Baseball game, as special as that can be. It also was a powerful reminder that great athletes could be more than just heroes on the field, but inspirational leaders in the community, too.

That was Ortiz's great gift to all of us during that sad and tragic time, even if we really didn't know the significance of it back then. But it was those powerful words that talked about a comeback, powerful words that spoke of more sunny afternoons at Fenway Park if we just stayed strong. It also came at just the right time, a time when Boston had just taken a big symbolic hit, and was trying to get off the ropes. The time when all of New England needed the big heart and strong swords of David Ortiz. And he certainly delivered.

Now it's payback time.

Ortiz, one of the most popular players in the long history of the Red Sox, was shot at a Santo Domingo bar over the weekend. He underwent surgery in his native country, then was transported to Boston, where he had more surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital. The retired slugger, who we all affectionately know as “Big Papi,” is listed in stable condition, and word was he took his first steps on Tuesday since the shooting.

The hope here is that Big Papi will be back to his old self, and soon. For he long ago had come to resemble a larger-than-life character, with a bright, broad smile at the ready. Wasn’t that always part of David Ortiz’s vast appeal, one that even transcended being a Red Sox superstar and maybe the best clutch hitter in franchise history? The fact that he was different and unique, the fact that he always seemed to be having fun, seemed like a star in his own story. Wasn’t that always such a large part of his charm?

There’s no question he’s got a ton of it.

“Big Papi.”

No last name needed.

As if he were born to be a star. And a star he was, through all the games, and all the years, and the three championships, of course. And unlike so many others who stayed at the party too long, Ortiz left baseball when he was still a great hitter. How’s this for a final act — a .315 batting average, 38 home runs and a league-leading 127 RBI to end his career in 2016.

But these are now trying times for David Ortiz, harder than any fastball he’s faced, a story that seems almost surreal. One of the greatest players in the long history of the Red Sox shot in his native Dominican Republic.

Say it ain’t so.

But it is.

The kind of news that all but stops you in the street, the kind of news that’s not only like a wound to the heart of every baseball fan, but to every fan of life.

The kind of news that tells us David Ortiz now needs us the way we once needed him just a few years ago.

*** *MassLive.com***

David Ortiz shooting: second suspect arrested as Boston Red Sox legend recovers at Mass. General

Christopher Smith

A second suspect has been arrested in connection with the David Ortiz shooting.

Per the Associated Press, "A spokeswoman for the national prosecutor’s office in the Dominican Republic says a second person has been arrested in the investigation into the shooting of former Red Sox star David Ortiz. There is no public indication the man is the suspected shooter.

“Spokeswoman Julieta Tejeda reported the arrest to a group of journalists via WhatsApp on Tuesday night. She declined to provide further details.”

Ortiz was shot in the lower back Sunday night while sitting at a table at Dial Bar and Lounge in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Ortiz was transported to Boston on Monday in an air ambulance the Red Sox arranged. He then underwent exploratory surgery at Mass. General Hospital.

His wife Tiffany Ortiz released a statement Tuesday via the Red Sox.

In it, Tiffany said her husband "underwent a successful second surgery. He is stable, awake, and resting comfortably this morning in the ICU where he is expected to remain for the next several days."

Alex Cora, Andrew Benintendi ejected: 'I've got to go out and defend my player,' Cora says

Chris Cotillo

Andrew Benintendi's simple message for home-plate umpire Angel Hernandez led to Benintendi getting ejected for the first time in his career.

"I grounded out and was frustrated and all I said was, 'You suck,'" Benintendi said.

Benintendi, who disagreed with a called strike earlier in his fifth-inning at-bat against Rangers starter Ariel Jurado, yelled as he walked toward the dugout. First-base umpire Vic Carapazza immediately threw him out.

Cora and Benintendi were tossed by first-base umpire Vic Carapazza.

Benintendi was shocked.

"If you're getting thrown out for saying, 'You suck,' there should be multiple ejections each game," Benintendi said. "I think it was just a situation where I was surprised. It stinks."

Sox manager Alex Cora immediately ran out to talk with Carapazza and was promptly thrown out himself. Cora thought Benintendi's ejection was an overreaction by the umpiring crew.

"I've got to go out and defend my player," Cora said. "I didn't agree with that. It's not like (he's) at the plate screaming at Angel or whatever. It's not the first time somebody screamed from afar to the umpire. I let him know and that was it."

Benintendi didn't think Hernandez even heard his comment and said Hernandez wasn't initially aware Carapazza had thrown him out. The umpire, speaking to a pool reporter after the game, declined to get into details.

"He violated the rules of the game," Hernandez said. "I'm not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow."

The ejection was the third of Cora's managerial career and perhaps the most animated he has been all year. The outburst didn't do much to fire up the Red Sox, who fell back to .500 with a 9-5 loss.

"I didn't agree," Cora said. "Beni was screaming at Angel but he was going to the dugout. It's not like he's arguing with Angel. I just didn't agree with it."

Red Sox's Holt calls Pence inside-the-park homer 'embarrassing,' his fault; did Betts do enough?

Christopher Smith

Brock Holt made a leaping attempt against the wall to try to catch Hunter Pence's 325-foot fly ball down the right field line.

He missed it. The baseball rolled around in right field to the 380-foot sign near the visitor's bullpen.

Pence made it all the way around the bases for an inside-the-park home run before any Red Sox player even touched the ball. Center fielder Mookie Betts walked over and grabbed the ball from under the wall after Pence scored.

It was an ugly play during an ugly 3-hour, 40-minute game. The Red Sox lost 9-5 to the Rangers to drop to .500 (34-34) and 10-20 against teams with winning records.

"I got in the stands a little bit and I thought the ball went over the fence," Holt said. "So it's one of those things where I kind of got to know where the ball is. But the ball was slicing away from me. And when I ended up two rows deep in the stands, I figured, or I assumed, it had gone out. I had no idea it was still in play. So that's kind of embarrassing on my part. Got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me. I don't know if I would have been able to keep Hunter to a triple there or what but I've got to go get that ball and get it in."

Holt never realized it wasn't a home run over the wall until he saw Betts retrieve the ball.

"Not until I turned around and saw Mookie go get it," Holt said. "I saw the ball out there and I was kind of wondering where it came from. So yeah, just went into the stands. Most balls from a righty are going that way. Most of them curve around that pole. When I didn't get it and I was in the stands, I just assumed I was three or four rows deep. So had no idea it was still in play. Yeah, I've got to pay better attention."

Could Betts have made a better effort to get to the ball and keep Pence to a triple? Betts left before reporters arrived in the clubhouse.

Cora didn't see the play live because he received an ejection during the fifth inning.

"The angle that I have from the video, I can't tell from there," Cora said when asked about Betts' hustle. "Actually, I can't talk about the play because I haven't talked to the guys (Betts and Holt)."

Red Sox's ugly loss includes 8 walks, simple inside-the-park homer, 2 ejections (Cora, Benintendi)

Christopher Smith

Red Sox pitchers walked eight batters.

Rangers' Hunter Pence hit an inside-the-park homer against Boston reliever Bobby Poyner.

Meanwhile, first base umpire Vic Carapazza ejected both manager Alex Cora and left fielder Andrew Benintendi during the fifth inning after Benintendi grounded out. Benintendi likely argued about a strike call during his at-bat.

This one was ugly and lasted 3 hours, 40 minutes. The Red Sox lost 9-5 to the Rangers here at Fenway Park on Tuesday. Boston dropped to 1-5 on the homestand and 15-17 at Fenway Park.

The Red Sox also dropped to .500 (34-34) and 10-20 in games against teams with winning records.

Top pitching prospect Darwinzon Hernandez made his first major league start. He struggled with his control, throwing more balls (44) than strikes (42). He allowed four runs, three earned, five walks and three hits while striking out seven in three innings.

The 22-year-old's lack of control is not too surprising considering he has walked 32 batters in 40 1/3 innings for Double-A Portland this year.

“He dominates and then all of a sudden one inning just happens,” Cora said before Tuesday’s game. “He loses his command and all that. So that’s something we have to pay attention to. As far as the stuff and how he’s attacking guys, everyone’s pleased with the way he has been throwing the ball.”

Poyner allowed five runs in 3 innings of relief.

Mookie Betts jogged from center field to pick up Pence’s inside-the-park homer after Brock Holt made a leaping attempt against the right field wall. Pence could have jogged around the bases himself and scored easily.

Xander Bogaerts tied Mitch Moreland for the team lead in home runs with 13.

He connected on a 91.6 mph two-seamer from Rangers starter Ariel Jurado and sent it 422 feet to center to tie the game 1-1

Rafael Devers two-run triple in the third tied it 3-3. It marked his second triple of the season and second of his major league career.

Why Darwinzon Hernandez, Boston Red Sox rookie, got first major-league start Tuesday

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox turned to top prospect Darwinzon Hernandez for his first major-league start Tuesday night simply because they liked how he matched up against the Rangers.

“It’s the lefties,” manager Alex Cora said. “Actually, of all the candidates, he was the best fit for this team. That’s why we went with him tonight.”

Cora had used Ryan Weber and Josh Smith in spot starts since Hector Velazquez was placed on the injured list but decided to go with Hernandez with an open spot Tuesday. Texas has four lefties in their lineup against him-- Shin-Soo Choo, Nomar Mazara, Rongel Odor and Ronald Guzman.

Cora said he hoped to get six innings out of Hernandez, who tossed 2 1/3 scoreless relief innings in his big-league debut April 23 against the Tigers. The manager’s message to the rookie was to be aggressive in the strike zone against the Rangers.

“There’s no lack of confidence with him. He understands his stuff and he knows,” Cora said. “I think you try to simplify the gameplan. We want him to use all his pitches, but at the same time-- at certain times-- attack the zone. His stuff is that good. We saw it when he got called up. We saw it in spring training. He’s a guy that with pure stuff, he can make mistakes in the strike zone and can get people out.”

Hernandez owns a 5.13 ERA in 40 1/3 innings in Portland and has struggled with command at times. He has walked 32 batters 40 1/3 innings and has been prone to the big inning at times.

“It seems like, for everything we talk about him, he dominates and then one inning just happens,” Cora said. “He loses his command and all that. That’s something we have to pay attention to. As far as the stuff and how he’s attacking guys, everyone’s pleased with the way he has been throwing the ball.”

Hernandez might not remain in the rotation for long, as the Sox are considering activating lefty Brian Johnson to start Sunday in Baltimore. Cora hopes Tuesday’s test is a positive one for the 22-year-old.

“As far as his development-- go out there and dominate today and then we’ll talk about whatever happens,” Cora said. “We need a starter today and we felt he’s a good fit for tonight.”

Brock Holt didn’t see stop sign from Boston Red Sox third base coach in ninth inning until he watched replay at home

Christopher Smith

Brock Holt didn't see Andy Barkett's stop sign on Marco Hernandez's double during the ninth inning Monday. He ran past the sign and got thrown out at home plate by about 20 feet.

He represented the winning run. The game remained tied 3-3. The Rangers eventually won 4-3 in the 11th.

Barkett initially waved his arms to Holt to run home. But he had put up the stop sign by the time Holt was rounding third base.

"I put my head down and when I looked up, the catcher had the ball," Holt said. "And I couldn't really do anything at that point."

Holt watched the replay when he arrived home Monday night.

"I talked to Andy earlier and said, 'Hey, man. That's on me,'" Holt said before the Red Sox-Rangers game at Fenway Park on Tuesday.

Holt took accountability. He also joked the Rangers announcers weren't too kind. He listened to them while watching the replay.

"They blew me up, man," Holt said. "Terrible base running. That was horrible.' And it looks bad. It looks bad watching it. I think my wife showed me a picture on Twitter of Andy doing this (stop sign) and I'm probably 15 feet from him. But I'm head down running, trying to score. But yeah, I kind of got a good laugh at them blowing me up. But it's just one of those things, man. We're trying to win a game. And that stuff happens."

Holt said he first glances at the third base coach whenever he rounds second base.

"Obviously with the ball down the right field line, I'm looking at him to let me know," Holt said. "As soon I saw this (Barkett waving him), mentally I thought something might have happened. I knew the ball had a chance of falling when it was hit, just because I saw where they were playing.

"I thought there might have been a bobble or it might have skipped away or something," Holt added. "So I was head down, trying to get to home plate to score. And I didn't even see him throw up the stop sign. It's just one of those things where he did his job. I did my job. It just didn't work out. That's a big run right there. That's game over if I score."

Boston Red Sox injuries: Nathan Eovaldi still shut down, Brian Johnson nearing activation

Chris Cutillo

Red Sox right-hander Nathan Eovaldi is still temporarily shutdown due to biceps tightness. Eovaldi, who underwent surgery to have loose bodies in his elbow removed April 23, had his bullpen postponed over the weekend due to the setback.

Eovaldi is receiving treatment and doing conditioning work, manager Alex Cora said. There is no timetable for when he'll throw next.

Eovaldi was progressing rapidly before the biceps issue, throwing two simulated games and stretching out to 73 pitches on the last road trip. He'll likely need a couple rehab outings before being activated once he feels better.

Johnson nearing activation

Lefty Brian Johnson (left elbow inflammation) will likely be activated this week after a prolonged rehab stint. Johnson has made six rehab outings for Portland and Pawtucket, most recently tossing four innings for the PawSox on Sunday.

Johnson has been on the injured list since April 6. His rehab assignment expires Saturday, so the Sox will have to make a move at some point soon.

“He feels good,” Cora said. “He actually threw the ball in the last one. In the upcoming days, we’ll talk about what decision we’re going to make. He felt good overall, the way he attacked hitters and his delivery, his arm.”

Johnson appears to be a candidate to start Sunday against the Orioles. The Sox have an open spot in the rotation that is being filled with lefty Darwinzon Hernandez on Tuesday night.

“Let’s see what happens tonight and we’ll make decisions accordingly,” Cora said.

Pearce, Moreland progressing

First basemen Steve Pearce (low back strain) and Mitch Moreland (right quad strain) are progressing from their injuries but aren’t close to returning.

Pearce, who has been out since May 31, ran today at Fenway Park and will start swinging Wednesday. Moreland, who hit the IL on Friday, has not yet started baseball activities.

Moreland’s injury was initially feared to be serious but it appears he avoided a long-term ailment.

“He’s reacting well to treatment but once he starts running and swinging, we’ll know more,” Cora said.

Brasier’s return TBA; Thornburg heads back to Pawtucket

Reliever Ryan Brasier was placed on bereavement/family medical emergency leave Tuesday. The reason is unknown.

Cora wasn’t sure when Brasier will return. He will miss a minimum of three days and a maximum of seven.

“We’ll see,” Cora said. “Keep your thoughts and prayers for him and his family. Whenever he gets back, he gets back.”

Reliever Tyler Thornburg (rip impingement) had his bags packed before the game and appeared to be heading down to Pawtucket to continue his rehab assignment. The righty threw a clean inning in his first rehab outing Sunday.

Righty Steven Wright, who is eligible to return from suspension June 25, is also rehabbing at Pawtucket, as is infielder Tzu-Wei Lin. Righty Hector Velazquez (low back strain) also remains on the IL.

Boston Red Sox call up Darwinzon Hernandez, put Ryan Brasier on bereavement list

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox recalled lefty Darwinzon Hernandez from Double-A Portland and placed reliever Ryan Brasier on the bereavement/family medical emergency list Tuesday afternoon.

Hernandez will make his first career major-league start against the Rangers on Tuesday night. The lefty is Boston’s top pitching prospect and has posted a 5.13 ERA in 10 appearances (nine starts) for the SeaDogs this year.

This will be Hernandez's third stint with the big-league club this year. The southpaw pitched 2 1/3 scoreless innings out of the bullpen against the Tigers on April 23 and spent one day with the Sox in Houston last month but did not pitch.

Brasier will miss at least three games while on leave and can miss a maximum of seven. The righty owns a 3.77 ERA in 31 games this season.

*** *The Lawrence Eagle Tribune***

Five Takes: Will these Red Sox ever wake up?

Chris Mason

A bizarre night at Fenway Park saw an inside-the-park home run, both managers ejected, and the Red Sox continuing to free fall.

When it finally ended, the scoreboard on the Green Monster read: Texas 9, Boston 5.

With another loss, the Red Sox have slipped back to .500 on the season and sit a distant third in the AL East race.

Here are five takes from a weird evening:

1. Way too many walks

Red Sox pitchers never gave their team a chance in this one. Darwinzon Hernandez got his first start, and though it's easy to see why the 22-year-old prospect is highly-touted — his stuff is filthy — the lefty lost his command for minutes at a time and struggled to throw strikes. He pitched into the fourth inning, where he couldn't retire a batter.

Colten Brewer and Bobby Poyner weren't much better behind him, and as a staff the Sox walked eight batters in the first 4 1/3 innings.

Five of them came around to score, and by the sixth Boston trailed 9-3. They'd never dig out of that hole.

2. Welcome to The Angel Hernandez Show

Only a crew run by Angel Hernandez could infuriate the Red Sox and Rangers in a matter of minutes, but that's exactly what the umpires managed to do in the fifth inning.

After a borderline strike call, Andrew Benintendi grounded out and chirped back at Hernandez. First base ump Vic Carapazza threw him out as Benintendi was walking back to the dugout.

This infuriated Alex Cora, who was also tossed as Benintendi screamed from the top step.

Not to be outdone, Hernandez ejected Rangers skipper Chris Woodward in the next half inning, after his second base umpire signaled a player safe and then decided to rule him out. Woodward wanted to challenge the call, but was apparently a second too late and the ump granted him no leeway.

Heaven forbid Darwinzon would be the Hernandez that got the most attention last night.

3. Holt can't handle HR

After Benintendi's ejection, the Red Sox shifted their outfield and Brock Holt found himself in right field. Hunter Pence drove a ball into the corner, Holt leapt for it, missed badly, and caught himself on the stands.

Then he just hung on as the ball rolled into no-man's land, and Pence touched home plate with the most uncontested inside-the-park home run you'll see. Mookie Betts hadn't made his way over from center, so a Red Sox outfielder had yet to touch the ball.

4. Xander still hitting

True to form, while most of his teammates struggled Xander Bogaerts was still able to produce. The shortstop blasted a mammoth home run — his 13th of the season — and finished the evening 2 for 3 with a walk. He's quietly putting together another career year.

5. Is this rock bottom?

Six games into this homestand, the Sox are 1-5 and have fallen back to 34-34 on the season. They're eight games out of first place, and well beyond any sort of championship hangover excuse. The Sox have the talent to be far better than this, but the fact is they haven't been.

Will they ever wake up?

Angel Hernandez's crew ejects Andrew Benintendi for remarkably soft reason

Chris Mason

Surprisingly, mild-mannered Andrew Benintendi was ejected for the first time in his career tonight. Less surprisingly, it was a member of Angel Hernandez's crew that did the honors. First base umpire Vic Carapazza ejected Benintendi in the fifth inning of a 9-5 loss... for arguing balls and strikes?

Yes, the first base ump. You read that correctly.

Benintendi didn't like a first-pitch strike call, and after grounding out, he chirped something at home plate as he walked to the dugout, and Carapazza tossed him with his back turned.

The left fielder must have yelled something really bad, right?

"All I said was, 'You suck,'" Benintendi said. "Angel didn't even know I was thrown out until I went back out there. Obviously he didn't hear that and I'm 100 feet away. Vic throws me out walking back to the dugout and I was surprised.

"If you're getting thrown out for saying you suck, there should be multiple ejections each game," Benintendi added.

Alex Cora shared his player's evaluation of the umpiring, and was promptly ejected, too. After the game Hernandez was asked by a pool reporter why Benintendi was thrown out.

"He violated the rules of the game," Hernandez replied. "I'm not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow."

Is it common or standard practice for a base umpire to eject a player for arguing balls and strikes?

"I'm not at liberty to discuss that until I submit the report tomorrow," Hernandez repeated.

That clears things up.

Oh, and not to be outdone, Hernandez personally ejected Rangers manager Chris Woodward in the next half inning for being too slow on a challenge. What a show.

*** RedSox.com**

Cora, Beni tossed as frustrations peak for Sox

Ian Browne

Friendly Fenway is turning into frustrating Fenway for the Red Sox.

After a 9-5 loss to the Rangers that included the ejections of outfielder Andrew Benintendi and manager Alex Cora in the bottom of the fifth, Boston slipped back to .500 (34-34) for the season.

"We're not good right now," said Cora. "We're playing .500 baseball. Tomorrow we have Rick Porcello followed by David Price. We have to pitch better. We have to put together better at-bats. We just have to be better. I've been saying that all season long. We've been very inconsistent at what we do. Tomorrow we have to show up and try to win a ballgame. Find a way. But we absolutely have to be better than this if we want to be in the hunt."

Most surprisingly, the Sox are 15-17 at home. That includes losing five out of six on the current homestand in which they have two games left, both against the Rangers.

"Very surprised," Cora said. "This is a place that's tough for opposition to come here and play. It seems like this year we haven't been good since Day 1. We still have plenty of games at Fenway, so we expect this to turn around."

Frustrations boiled over in the bottom of the fifth inning. Benintendi had just grounded out to shortstop and was angry about a called strike by home-plate umpire Angel Hernandez on the first pitch of the at-bat.

Once in the dugout, Benintendi became incensed when he realized that first-base umpire Vic Carapazza had just ejected him as he walked off the field.

"I wasn't expecting that at all. I'm walking back to the dugout and he throws me out walking back," said Benintendi. "I didn't know until I was halfway through the dugout. Yeah, I mean, I thought [the pitch] was off the plate. But I didn't say anything to Angel. I grounded out and I was frustrated and all I said was, 'You suck.' Angel didn't even know I was thrown out until I went back out there. Obviously he didn't hear that and I'm 100 feet away. Vic throws me out walking back to the dugout and I was surprised."

Benintendi came back onto the field to argue. Cora then came out to express his disapproval -- with both Carapazza and crew chief Hernandez. Cora was then also ejected.

"I've got to go out there and defend my player," said Cora. "I didn't agree with that. It's not like he's at the plate screaming at Angel whatever. That's not the first time somebody disagrees and screams from afar at the umpire, so I just let him know and that was it."

Hernandez, in an interview with a pool reporter, didn't provide any details of why Carapazza threw Benintendi out.

"He violated the rules of the game," Hernandez said. "I'm not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow."

The ejections were the first two of the season for the Red Sox. Cora had just one ejection all of last season. For Benintendi, it was the first of his career.

The sequence was also a sign of how things are going for the Red Sox right now.

“You can see it,” said utility player Brock Holt. “I think guys are frustrated. We try not to be, but games like tonight, it's embarrassing. We're not playing well. We're not playing up to our capabilities. We know we're good. We haven't clicked. We haven't put it together. That's something we need to [do to] get going, because we have talent in this clubhouse and we feel like we're a good team. We just haven't been that good team yet.”

In the sixth, things got bizarre as Holt, who moved to right field from his original left field spot after Benintendi's ejection, raced over into the right-field corner and tried to make a play on a fly ball by Hunter Pence. Holt got twisted up by the side wall as his glove went toward the seats.

As Holt got his legs tangled on top of that wall, the ball appeared to glance off his glove and then bounced far away from him, which he didn't realize as he assumed the ball had gone into the stands for a traditional home run. In reality, it was sitting on the warning track just feet behind him.

Pence roared around for a two-run, inside-the-park homer to put the Sox in a 9-3 hole from which they wouldn't recover.

“I got in the stands a little bit and I thought the ball went over the fence,” said Holt. “Just one of those things where I've kind of got to know where the ball is. The ball was slicing away from me, and when I ended up two rows deep in the stands, I assumed it had gone out. I had no idea it was still in play. That's kind of embarrassing on my part. Got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me. I don't know if I would've been able to keep Hunter to a triple there, but I've got to go get that ball and get it in.”

After the messy game was over, the Red Sox had little choice but to hope that Wednesday would be the day they begin to resemble who they think they should be.

“Yeah, it's not going the way we'd want it to go,” said Benintendi. “We're not playing our best baseball. It's been a grind so far. All you can do is come to the field every day and try to catch a hot streak and just try to do one thing at a time until everything starts clicking.”

*** *ESPN.com***

Navy draft pick embraces double challenge: Duty first, Red Sox soon

Joon Lee

More than four years before he was drafted in the fourth round by the Boston Red Sox, before he cemented a career path in professional baseball, before he became the highest MLB draft selection from the Naval Academy, Noah Song needed to make a decision about what he wanted to do with his life. The choices were simple, but the decision was anything but. Song had received an offer to play baseball at the Naval Academy, his only opportunity to play Division I baseball, something he had long dreamed of doing. The idea of playing pro baseball out of high school wasn't even a possibility, let alone a consideration.

But the Navy came hand in hand with service time, which requires a level of commitment beyond the typical collegiate sports scholarship. While growing up, Song never gave his dad, Bill -- a commander with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department -- the impression he would have a future in the military. So to make sense of it all, Noah drew up a pros-and-cons list with Bill and his mom, Stacy, jotting down all of their thoughts.

"I mean, for an 18-year-old to make that kind of decision, it's pretty tough," Noah said. "Obviously, no matter how badly you want to play baseball, you can't go there if you're not willing to do the military commitment."

His parents framed the opportunity simply: Don't think of this as mandatory service time. This is a career path, a job concretely in place once graduation day arrives.

On some nights, as the decision weighed on his mind, he struggled to fall asleep. Song started learning about what a job serving the public might look like when he began to understand what exactly his dad's job entailed. When junior year of high school came around, as the rest of his classmates began figuring out what they wanted to do with their lives, Song started looking into the deeper meaning of a working life. For years, he had understood that his dad, who has been with the sheriff's department for more than 28 years, served his community, but he didn't understand what that actually meant. When Bill would tell his kids about work, he often noticed Noah listening intently.

"I think he liked the whole part about it, the profession, the moral and ethical part, the honorable profession," Bill said.

Growing up, Noah said the Song home carried a familial culture of doing the little things -- and doing the little things well.

"It's like your daily honor," Noah said. "You don't cheat on any tests. You never do anything like that. It's just honestly something as simple as picking up your own trash off the group, just not littering. Just very, very simple things."

Bill, who moved to the United States from South Korea as a 5-year-old, said his family's roots carry significant influence over the family's culture inside the home. When Noah was growing up, the family would gather for major holidays and bring a potluck of Korean food, most notably barbecue, bulgogi and mandu.

"All of our [extended] families are the same, as far as the moral and ethical," Bill said. "They all really feed off each other, all of [Noah's] cousins. The cousins are all of the same character, so it really wasn't hard for them."

For Noah, being raised by a police officer meant paying attention to every detail. Paying attention to the small details would eventually help build the bigger picture, his parents taught him.

"It's very, very, very small details all around, but it all adds up at the end of the day," Song said.

Having a distinctive last name brought with it a greater sense of responsibility.

"You want to really honor the family name more than anything," Song said. "It's like if you taint the family name, you're seen as an outcast, not because anybody hates you, but just because that's just kind of how it naturally ends up."

All of this prepared him for his visit to the Naval Academy, where Song asked endless questions about what would be expected of him, not even asking about the possibility of pro baseball. When he eventually signed his letter of intent, Song fully expected his baseball career to end after his senior season, as his future career in the Navy became the biggest reason to go to school in Annapolis, Maryland.

"Obviously, everybody on my baseball team's kind of like, 'Oh, well are you going to be able to be drafted? Are you going to be able to go pro?'" Song said. "I was like, 'Well, if you go to Navy, that's not what's on your mind really.'"

Song entered Navy baseball similar to many other recruits: a tall frame with a room to grow throwing in the mid-80s. Like he sees in a lot of college freshmen, Navy baseball head coach Paul Kostacopoulos saw an anxious 18-year-old in Song.

"Especially when you embark in something like the United States Naval Academy, you're going to be cautious," Kostacopoulos said. "You're going to be a little bit anxious of what is going to be in front of you."

However, Song quickly stood out, even among the players on the baseball team, impressing the coaching staff with his ability to always make adjustments and adapt. The results started speaking for themselves when the righty was named the Patriot League rookie of the year and a Louisville Slugger Freshman All-American, landing on the radar of pro scouts.

By the time junior year arrived, as more scouts trickled into the stands for games, Navy's coaching staff and Song's family began realizing he had a chance to also play baseball professionally. The velocity had steadily increased over the previous two seasons to 95 and 96 mph, while he added in a slider, which would be a major strikeout pitch during his senior season. Song entered the draft after his junior season, but he told teams he would not sign unless he received a seven-figure signing bonus, which he would need to help repay the government for his collegiate education. Signing after his junior year would also require him to forgo his service -- the reason he had come to the Naval Academy in the first place.

"I told him that if he got seven figures, I'd put him in the Uber taxi myself to get him to go," Kostacopoulos said. "But it was never more than that, joking about it."

Undrafted, he returned to Navy for his senior year, and quickly earned the reputation as one of the best collegiate pitchers by leading the nation with 161 strikeouts and posting a 1.44 ERA. The accolades followed too. Song was named a finalist for the Golden Spikes Award, given annually to the best amateur player in the country, and he became the Naval Academy's first player named as a first-team All-American in baseball. As his draft stock ticked upward, as his one concrete career path slowly become two, Song began to step back and take stock of everything that had changed and why everything had changed the way it had.

Song is the ninth Navy baseball player picked in the MLB draft, and he hopes to become the third graduate to reach the majors, behind Mitch Harris, a 13th-round pick of the Cardinals in 2008, and Nemo Gaines, who played for the Senators in 1921. Billie Weiss/Boston Red Sox/Getty Images

"I started to take pride in the way that I was raised," Song said. "Because you start to go and even though you're around the best of the best at the Naval Academy, sometimes you feel like everybody wasn't raised the same as you and you're kind of wondering why is that? Why do I feel different than everybody else or why do I picture things a different way? I think it really comes down to how you were raised by your family and your environment."

Song told ESPN he is planning on signing his contract with the Red Sox in the next week, although the paperwork is still being reviewed by the Navy. MLB.com values the 137th overall pick of the draft at a \$406,000 signing bonus. From there, the 22-year-old will report to the short-season Single-A Lowell Spinners before reporting to flight school in Pensacola, Florida, on Nov. 1 to start training as a naval flight officer and begin a five-year commitment to serve. Like Navy athletes of the past, such as NBA legend David Robinson, Song will become eligible in two years to petition to serve the remaining three years of his service in the reserves. But without his four years in Annapolis, Song said he would not even be in position to pursue a professional baseball career.

"There was the education. That's free tuition, and that's huge because you realize there's no student debt, which is huge," Song said. "I mean, you're already starting off ahead of the game as it is already and I think no matter what you tell everybody who's going to commit to Navy, no matter what, they don't truly feel the greatness of that until they graduate, because right now, I have no student debt, I'm way ahead of the curve, I'm getting paid as an officer, obviously, and it's just the greatest thing."

When he arrives in Pensacola, Song will begin introductory flight school and learn the emergency protocols of working on an aircraft. Deemed too tall at 6-foot-4 to operate planes and helicopters in the field, Song will learn how to be a flight mission commander, as well. But he also is aware that two years away from competitive baseball is a long time.

"I'll try and keep up with baseball and throwing shape as much as I can, but at the same time, it's not going to be at the expense of my military career," Song said. "It's not going to be so that I'm incompetent in the military, by any means, so just trying to find that balance. And that's why I love the Naval Academy, because obviously I've had a taste of the military experience and the baseball experience balancing at the same time, so as long as I can keep that same mindset, it'll just keep me mentally engaged for both."

The road to the big leagues is already long enough without a two-year gap between pitches thrown in a competitive game. Song is the ninth Navy baseball player picked in the MLB amateur draft, and he hopes to become the third graduate to reach the majors, behind Mitch Harris, a 13th-round pick of the St. Louis Cardinals in 2008, and Nemo Gaines, who played for the Washington Senators in 1921.

Song hopes to become an ambassador for sports in the Navy and an ambassador for the Navy in sports, and as Kostacopoulos notes, potentially change the trajectory of what a Naval Academy baseball player can accomplish.

"He's got two pretty big responsibilities, and I truly don't know the answer to that," Kostacopoulos said of how Song will handle the challenges of being a serving officer and then a professional athlete. "It's going to take a special person to make this work. I do think he is that special person."

Real or Not? Taken down by Texas, Red Sox have lost their way again

David Schoenfield

This is not something anyone expected to see on June 11:

Texas Rangers: 36-30

Boston Red Sox: 34-34

After all, last year the Red Sox won 108 games, won the World Series and brought the entire team back this season. The Rangers finished 67-95. They were 41 games worse than the Red Sox in the win column and 340 runs worse than the Red Sox in run differential. Their big offseason moves were signing Lance Lynn and trading Jurickson Proffar. They signed 36-year-old veteran Hunter Pence to a minor league contract at the outset of spring training. The forecasts for the Rangers weren't particularly optimistic.

Yet here we are after the Rangers beat the Red Sox 9-5 at Fenway Park on Tuesday night, their second straight win to begin a four-game series. If the season ended today the Rangers would be the second wild card in the American League and the Red Sox would go home as one of the most disappointing teams in recent years. This play is symbolic of the seasons for both clubs.

Pence lofts a little fly ball down the right-field line. Brock Holt and Mookie Betts don't perform good baseball. Pence circles the bases with a two-run inside-the-park home run. Pence now has as many or more home runs as Khris Davis, Rhys Hoskins, Kris Bryant, J.D. Martinez or Paul Goldschmidt, to name a few noteworthy sluggers. He's a potential All-Star. Rangers fans are loving the surprise season from their hometown hero (Pence went to Arlington High School).

What has happened to the Red Sox? Obviously, they miss Craig Kimbrel and the rotation got off to that horrible start, but they had appeared to right the ship. Instead, now they're teetering again like a luxury cruise liner with a bad case of norovirus. Check out their past eight series, working backward:

0-2 vs. Rangers

1-3 vs. Rays

3-0 vs. Royals

1-2 vs. Yankees

1-2 vs. Indians

1-2 vs. Astros

3-1 vs. Blue Jays

1-2 vs. Astros

They're 6-1 against the woeful Royals and Blue Jays, and 5-13 against the good teams. They're now 10-20 on the season against teams currently .500 or better. One thing to wonder about, playing more pop psychologist than statistical analyst: last year, Betts, Martinez and Chris Sale were so good it just seemed to lift the entire team. You had two superstars to carry the offense and take the pressure off of everyone else and, at least until Sale was injured in August, maybe the best starter in the majors to dominate every fifth day.

Well, Sale got off to that horrible start, Martinez has had some back issues cut into his production and Betts has been excellent -- just not as excellent. The air of invincibility that those three carried last season hasn't been there, cutting into some of that "we're going to find a way to win" attitude that the 2018 Red Sox maintained all season and into the playoffs. Holt and Betts not hustling after the ball on Pence's home run is representative of how the Red Sox simply haven't been as locked in as they were in 2018.

Pence -- now hitting .284/.345/.585 -- isn't the only surprise on the Rangers. Mike Minor, 5-4 with a 2.52 ERA, has been one of the best starters in the American League. Joey Gallo had taken his game to a new level before an oblique strain sidelined him. They found Danny Santana off the scrap heap and he's hitting .299/.338/.490. Nonetheless, it's a team with clear concerns: They've run through 12 starting pitchers, Rougned Odor has a .250 OBP, the bullpen hasn't been particularly stellar, Ronald Guzman and Nomar Mazara aren't tearing it up.

Which team is most likely to get there? I'd still bet on the Red Sox. FanGraphs playoff odds still heavily favor Boston as well:

Red Sox: 90-72, 61.3% playoff odds

Rangers: 80-82, 3.8% playoff odds

One reason for the pessimism regarding the Rangers is that they've outperformed their BaseRuns stats by four wins while the Red Sox have underperformed by three. That's another way of saying the Rangers have been clutch and the Red Sox haven't -- and you can't project those trends to continue.

Still, the Rangers have put themselves in position to make a wild-card run. In a league with as many bad teams as the AL has, it makes sense that we'd see a surprise team. Maybe that will be the Rangers.

The Astros have found their DH: Yordan Alvarez homered in his first game in the majors Sunday and he homered in his second game in Houston's 10-8 win over the Milwaukee Brewers:

OK, it was hardly a monster mash, but the 21-year-old Cuban displayed his raw power by hitting it out without even putting a big swing on the ball, making him the first player in Astros history to homer in his first two games. Alvarez had hit .343/.443/.772 at Triple-A with 23 home runs in 56 games. I don't think he needs to worry returning to Round Rock.

Tuesday night in home runs: Maybe we'll make this a regular feature. Let's see ...

Alvarez hit that ball out even though it looked as if he were merely chipping a ball onto the green at Pebble Beach. The Astros hit four home runs in the game. The Brewers hit three in a loss, including Christian Yelich's 25th.

From the first pick to the late-round steals, keep up with the players your team just made a part of its future plans.

The Atlanta Braves hit four home runs in the second inning of their 7-5 win over the Pittsburgh Pirates -- and five in the game, all off Chris Archer. That's two days in a row we have had a pitcher surrender five home runs (and don't forget the four in a row the Washington Nationals hit off Craig Stammen on Sunday).

The New York Yankees hit three home runs in a 12-5 win over the New York Mets, including Gary Sanchez's 20th. Sanchez was the DH and in eight games as a DH he has hit .333 with seven home runs.

The Mets responded with three home runs to win the second game of the doubleheader 10-4. Pete Alonso hit a three-run blast in the first inning off James Paxton, his 22nd in 66 career games. Most home runs through 70 career games:

Jose Abreu: 26
Cody Bellinger: 25
Matt Olson: 24
Gary Sanchez: 23
Wally Berger: 23

Eloy Jimenez hit his first home run at home in his young career. It went only 462 feet.

Until tomorrow ... enjoy your baseball.

*** *WEEI.com***

There are no easy answers for Red Sox' woes

Rob Bradford

The Red Sox are in a bind.

They sit at .500, eight games out of first place in the American League East and three games in back of the Wild Card leaders. Worst of all, this team is trudging through life with very little answers when it comes to what might lead it out of this muck. That was put on display once again in the Red Sox' latest loss, a 9-5 defeat at the hands of the Rangers Tuesday night. (For a complete recap, [click here.](#))

"We're not good right now," Cora said after his team's latest loss. "We're playing .500 baseball. Tomorrow we have Rick followed by David. We have to pitch better. We have to put better at-bats. We just have to better. I've been saying that all season long. We've been very inconsistent at what we do. Tomorrow we have to show up and try to win a ballgame. Find a way. But we have absolutely have to be better than this if we want to be in the hunt."

For those who are screaming to blow it up ... good luck with that.

Let's start there.

OK, you want to fix this with trades. Besides getting another bullpen arm what would be the obvious target? Let me answer that for you, there isn't one. These pieces that Dave Dombrowski put in place carried you to a World Series championship last year which is why we keep thinking something different is around the corner.

Sure, Mookie Betts' contract is up after next season. But do you really think the best course of action is to try and win without one of baseball's best players, even if it means securing pieces for a brighter future? Same thing with J.D. Martinez. He can opt-out after this season. But the same thing holds true, your hopes and dreams for a resurgence in 2019 is still tied to riding the bat of this guy.

Maybe you entertain a deal involving Jackie Bradley Jr. considering his contract status and value around the league, but where will that get you. Especially now that he is hitting a bit, the center field still undoubtedly means more to this Red Sox team that it does for another team. Want to upgrade at first base

or second base? Are you going to do better than the upside of Mitch Moreland and Michael Chavis, respectively?

This feels like a sink or swim situation when it comes to the lineup. That is the Red Sox' uncertain lot in life.

Another issue -- which is perhaps the biggest one -- is the Sox' inability to fill in the gaps left by Nathan Eovaldi, Brian Johnson and Hector Velazquez . Tuesday night it was Darwinson Hernandez's turn. Before him, it was Josh Smith and Ryan Weber. This was perhaps the most egregious miscalculation on behalf of Dombrowski, not realizing how fortunate the Red Sox were that Johnson and Velazquez not only produced in 2018 but that they were healthy enough to do so.

Outside of Velazquez and Johnson last season, the Red Sox had exactly two desperation spot starts, coming from Jalen Beeks and William Cuevas. For the entire 2018 season, no minor-leaguers needed to be rushed, with the team's lack of organization depth not exposed a single time. That certainly hasn't been the case this time around.

OK, you want to count on the improved health of Moreland, Eovaldi, Steve Pearce and even Steven Wright. Go ahead. It seems like a pretty big leap of faith to think there are going to be no more physical hiccups and even if there aren't the 2018 reliability is on the horizon.

As Alex Cora keeps proclaiming, the guys they have simply have to play better. Early in the season, that seemed like a plausible solution. Now it feels almost like an unlikely path.

They are not who we thought they were, and that's the biggest problem of all.

Both Andrew Benintendi and Alex Cora were thrown out of Tuesday night's game, with Benintendi initially being tossed after shouting back at home plate umpire Angel Hernandez after crossing first base.

"Yeah, I mean, I thought it was off the plate," said Benintendi of the call he disagreed with. "But I didn't say anything to Angel. I ground out and I was frustrated and all I said was, you suck. Angel didn't even know I was thrown out until I went back out there. Obviously, he didn't hear that and I'm 100 feet away. (First base umpire) Vic (Carapazza) throws me out walking back to the dugout and I was surprised."

Cora would be tossed after coming out to defend his player.

"Benny, he disagreed with the first pitch of the at-bat," the manager said. "And he hit the ground ball and he screamed something to Angel. But everybody saw it. He was walking toward the dugout but they didn't like what he said and they threw him out. I've got to go out there and defend my player. I didn't agree with that. It's not like at the plate screaming at Angel whatever. That's not the first time somebody disagrees and screams from afar at the umpire so just let him know and that was it."

Tiffany Ortiz releases statement on condition of husband

Rob Bradford

The following is a statement released by the Red Sox Tuesday on behalf of Tiffany Ortiz, the wife of David Ortiz.

"David arrived at Massachusetts General Hospital last night and underwent a successful second surgery. He is stable, awake, and resting comfortably this morning in the ICU where he is expected to remain for the next several days.

"On behalf of me and my family, I want to thank John and Linda Henry, Tom Werner, Sam Kennedy and the Boston Red Sox for all that they are doing for David and our family, as well as Dr. Larry Ronan and the amazing staff at Massachusetts General Hospital.

“Lastly, I want to thank everyone for the outpouring of support and love that we have received during this incredibly difficult time. We ask for privacy as David works towards recovery.”

It was reported earlier Tuesday that Ortiz underwent "exploratory" surgery at Mass General into the early morning hours and that a full recovery was expected.

*** *NBC Sports Boston***

How Red Sox could blow this team up if they don't start playing better, and five stars they could trade

John Tomase

David Price may have been on to something.

Back in April, the Red Sox left-hander issued a warning after a two-game sweep at Yankee Stadium.

"If we don't play better, there's going to be a lot of changes around here," he told the Boston Globe. "I remember when Boston won the World Series in 2013. In 2014, they were trash. Trash . . . If we don't start playing better, J.D. Martinez, Mookie Betts, maybe myself, we could get traded."

What sounded over the top and alarmist suddenly feels within the realm of possibility, even if it's not exactly likely. But if the Red Sox continue nose-diving against their playoff competition, we shouldn't discount the chance of the defending World Series champions placing their finger on the button. Maybe it's time to start thinking about a purge.

On Tuesday night, they delivered yet another dreadful performance in a 9-4 loss to the Rangers. Red Sox pitchers walked eight batters, including five by rookie Darwinzon Hernandez, who should've been nowhere near a big-league mound after posting a 5.13 ERA at Double A and walking more than seven batters per nine innings, but such is the state of the roster that manager Alex Cora had nowhere else to turn.

They allowed an inside-the-park home run when right fielder Brock Holt crashed into the fence near the Pesky Pole chasing a Hunter Pence fly and then just stayed there. They made a pair of errors, including a dropped pop-up by third baseman Rafael Devers that led to the go-ahead run. They handed the game to the dregs of the pitching staff, with predictable results, dropping to .500 at 34-34 in the process. Baseball-Reference now places their odds of reaching the playoffs at 22.6 percent.

"We absolutely have to be better than this if we want to be in the hunt," Cora said.

And so now we wonder: was Price right? Could the Red Sox sell? And if so, how big should they think?

Let's toss around a few names that would normally be considered untouchable, because they're integral to the repeat effort, but what the hell, we're approaching desperate times.

1. MOOKIE BETTS

Trading the defending MVP in his prime is insane . . . unless you're convinced he won't sign a long-term extension, in which case moving him now and starting a rebuild shouldn't be off the table.

Some talented players have delivered massive hauls at the trade deadline, whether it's the Indians turning Bartolo Colon into Cliff Lee, Brandon Phillips and Grady Sizemore in 2002, the Rangers flipping Mark Teixeira to Atlanta for future All-Stars Elvis Andrus, Neftali Feliz, and Matt Harrison five years later, or more recently, the Yankees very smartly transforming relievers Andrew Miller and Aroldis Chapman into Gleyber Torres, Clint Frazier, and Justus Sheffield, among others.

Moving Betts with a year of team control remaining would be waving a white flag on the season, but the Red Sox need to realistically balance the cost of going all-in for a wild card spot vs. retooling to remain competitive moving forward.

And if Mookie is going to walk anyway? Then it's not so crazy.

2. ANDREW BENINTENDI

Some of us (me) have been predicting Benintendi would win a batting title for three years now, but he hasn't really put things together yet. Still only 24, and under team control through the 2022 season, Benintendi would hold tremendous value on the trade market, where he could perhaps address holes in the bullpen, as well as the farm system.

There's real risk in surrendering him, especially when he's in the midst of a disappointing season, but with so much uncertainty on the horizon — Will J.D. Martinez opt out? How much longer will Betts be here? Who replaces Rick Porcello? — acquiring legitimate depth would have a real purpose on a roster that has suffered serious erosion.

3. MICHAEL CHAVIS

The bloom has come off that rose after a hot start, but 10 homers in his first month and positional flexibility make Chavis an attractive target. The Red Sox never expected the rookie to make such an impact; otherwise he would've opened the season on the roster. Now that opponents have found a potentially serious flaw in his swing, attacking him up in the zone with power and inducing him to chase off-speed pitches away, the Red Sox might be best served maximizing his value while they can.

Trading Chavis would leave them awfully thin at first and second base, but another bullpen arm is more important at this point than a strikeout-prone infielder.

4. RICK PORCELLO

If the Red Sox fall in the standings, then Porcello could be an option for contenders seeking an experienced starter, à la Jake Peavy in 2013.

The Red Sox don't seem interested in retaining Porcello — an argument can be made that he should've received the \$68 million they gave Nathan Eovaldi — and if they're going to bid him farewell anyway, they might as well get something for him while they can.

As Dallas Keuchel and Craig Kimbrel taught us this winter, there's no guarantee a departing free agent will return a draft pick, anyway.

5. DAVID PRICE

He brought it up, so we might as well consider it. Price has already been moved at the deadline twice in his career, going from the Rays to the Tigers in 2014, and from the Tigers to the Jays a year later.

He is the ace of the Red Sox at the moment and coming off a scintillating postseason that erased any doubts over his ability to win in October. He could alter the trajectory of the postseason if he's moved. He's owed \$96 million through 2022, when he'll be 36, and even if the Red Sox eat a lot of that money, removing him from the books while adding younger, cheaper talent would give them more flexibility to retain players like Betts or Martinez.

Hey, it was his idea.

Here's what Andrew Benintendi said to Angel Hernandez that led to ejection

John Tomase

There are right ways and wrong ways to voice frustration with umpires. Andrew Benintendi and Alex Cora assumed the player had done it the right way when he yelled in the direction of home plate umpire Angel Hernandez while walking back to the dugout after a groundout on Wednesday.

First base umpire Vic Carapazza saw things differently. He ejected Benintendi and then Cora in the fifth inning of the 9-5 loss to the Rangers on Tuesday night at Fenway Park.

So what exactly did Benintendi say?

"All I said was, 'You suck,'" Benintendi said.

That was enough for Carapazza. Asked by pool reporter Alex Speier of the Boston Globe why Benintendi was ejected, Hernandez said he couldn't discuss the matter until filing a report with the league on Wednesday.

"He violated the rules of the game," Hernandez said. "I'm not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow."

It was a frustrating moment in a frustrating night for the Red Sox. Benintendi doesn't even believe Hernandez heard the insult.

"I mean, if you're getting thrown out for saying you suck, there should be multiple ejections each game," he said. "I don't know. I think that it was just a situation where I was surprised. It stinks."

Added Benintendi: "I said, you suck and I know Angel didn't hear me because when I went back out there, Angel was trying to get the game going and he said, let's go, let's go. I said, Angel, Vic threw me out. I don't think he knew that, so obviously he didn't hear that. You know, it stinks, we're out there trying to win a game and I want to be a part of it. Can't do that when I'm in here."

The Red Sox have bigger reasons to be frustrated, like how they're playing.

"We're not good right now," said manager Alex Cora, who was ejected defending Benintendi. "We're playing .500 baseball. Tomorrow we have Rick [Porcello] followed by David [Price]. We have to pitch better. We have to put better at-bats. We just have to better. I've been saying that all season long. We've been very inconsistent at what we do. Tomorrow we have to show up and try to win a ballgame. Find a way. But we have absolutely have to be better than this if we want to be in the hunt."

Holt explains why he made no effort to chase Pence inside-the-park home run in ugly Red Sox loss

John Tomase

The play made no sense. How could Brock Holt expend legitimate energy chasing down Hunter Pence's slicing drive towards the Pesky Pole, and then just completely give up as the ball rolled around the fence for an inside-the-park home run?

Holt's answer speaks to one of the primary reasons the Red Sox find themselves back at .500 after a listless 9-5 loss to the Rangers -- carelessness.

It turns out Holt thought Pence's shot had cleared the short right field fence as Holt crashed into it. That led to the embarrassing visual of Holt lying atop the fence like a cat lazing in a tree while Pence circled the bases and center fielder Mookie Betts jogged towards the ball in no-man's land.

"I got in the stands a little bit and I thought the ball went over the fence," Holt said. "Just one of those things where I've kind of got to know where the ball is. The ball was slicing away from me, and when I ended up two rows deep in the stands, I assumed it had gone out. I had no idea it was still in play. That's kind of embarrassing on my part. Got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me. I don't know if I would've been able to keep Hunter to a triple there, but I've got to go get that ball and get it in."

Holt believed he had a shot at the ball, but wasn't sure if it hit his glove. He had no idea it was live until it was way too late.

"Not until I turned around and saw Mookie go get it," he said. "I saw the ball out there and I was kind of wondering where it came from. Just went into the stands. Most balls from a righty are going that way, most of them curve around that pole, so when I didn't get it and I was in the stands, I assumed it was three or four rows deep. I had no idea it was still in play. I have to pay better attention."

The mental error was Holt's second in as many nights. He also ran through a stop sign by third base coach Andy Barkett for the final out of the ninth in a 4-3 extra-innings loss on Monday.

"I think guys are frustrated," Holt said. "We try not to be, but games like tonight, it's embarrassing. We're not playing well. We're not playing up to our capabilities. We know we're good. We haven't clicked. We haven't put it together. That's something we need to get going, because we have talent in this clubhouse and we feel like we're a good team. We just haven't been that good team yet."

Alex Cora doesn't buy that pitching in ninth is harder than seventh or eighth, even as Red Sox relievers struggle

John Tomase

It sure looks like the Red Sox have a ninth-inning problem, but Alex Cora doesn't see it that way.

One day after his bullpen coughed up yet another ninth-inning lead in a 4-3 loss to the Rangers, Cora expressed confidence in his core relievers and disputed the notion that pitching in the ninth is any different than the seventh or eighth.

He also admitted he can't explain why the team ERA is so much worse in the ninth (6.00) than the seventh (4.03) and eighth (3.49).

"It's one of those that a lot of people have their thoughts about the ninth inning, that those three outs are bigger than the first 24," Cora said. "There's others that feel there's people that are ready for that one. They can do it there. I don't know. I really don't. I just feel that we're trying to maximize our talent. Maximize our strength and match it up with them."

Does Cora believe the idea that the ninth is harder has merit?

"I don't," he said. "I really don't. I just think if you execute pitches you get people out. Yesterday, we didn't and we paid the price."

On Monday, Matt Barnes allowed two runs while trying to protect a 2-1 lead against Texas. The Red Sox forced extra innings before losing in 11 innings. Do the Red Sox need to acquire another arm?

"We're always looking for ways to improve," Cora said. "That's what the organization has done. I do feel that we've got to put ourselves in a situation that, yeah, if we do this we're going to be elite again. So, I think thinking ahead, yeah, it's great, it's always great because that's what we do. But we need to get this right first and go from there."

Cora expressed confidence in what has emerged as his core group: Brandon Workman, Barnes, Marcus Walden, and right-hander Heath Hembree. He hopes the impending return of left-hander Brian Johnson provides depth.

"I think we're still getting people out," Cora said. "That has been going on. You compare us to other bullpens, yeah the saves are not there, but we're still doing a good job. We're still matching up and finding matchups that are going to benefit us."

Now if they could just figure out the ninth inning . . .

Red Sox have a Matt Barnes problem and they need to get their most important reliever right again

John Tomase

It might have been Matt Barnes' finest performance of the season. We remember it as the Chris Sale 17-strikeout game, but Barnes was pretty damn good that May 14 night against the Rockies, too. Summoned to face the heart of the order in relief of Brandon Workman, who had failed to protect a 3-2 lead, Barnes retired all six batters he faced in the ninth and 10th, striking out five. He threw 26 pitches in a 5-4 loss. At that point, Barnes could make a case for most impactful reliever in baseball. He owned a 1.56 ERA in 17.1 innings and .148 batting average against with 33 strikeouts, despite drawing the heart of the order in tight games night after night after night.

Something has happened since then, however. On Monday, needing three outs to preserve a 2-1 win for Sale, Barnes allowed two singles and a double that gave the upstart Rangers a 3-2 lead in the ninth. The Red Sox rallied before falling in extra innings, leaving Barnes to offer a blunt assessment. "I just sucked tonight," he said. "Plain and simple." There's been more of that than anyone would like recently. One night after striking out five Rockies, Barnes was summoned into a brutal bases-loaded, no-out situation in relief of Eduardo Rodriguez. All three runners scored, giving Barnes a blown save and beginning a stretch that makes you wonder if the stress of being both the high-leverage guy and the last line of defense has taken a toll. Over his last 11 outings, Barnes owns an 8.00 ERA, with 10 hits and seven walks in nine innings. He has blown two saves and taken a loss while watching his ERA soar to 3.76, and the Red Sox will need to get him right if they want to compete for a playoff berth.

"He hasn't been as sharp, obviously," said manager Alex Cora. "We talked about it a few weeks ago, the way we were using him, using him against the middle of the lineup the whole time. We've been trying to give him a breather here and there, but he knows his job. He was in a situation here, three outs from winning the game, and we didn't complete the job." On Monday, Barnes' curveball failed him. He hung one to Danny Santana that the left fielder lined to center to start the one-out rally, and after Elvis Andrus doubled on a mislocated fastball, Barnes bounced a pair of curveballs to Nomar Mazara before leaving one center-cut that Mazara ripped to left for the go-ahead hit. "Santana, I was just trying to throw a backdoor curveball and just left it middle," Barnes said. "A single to the left side. The pitch to Andrus, that was the pitch I was trying to execute. I was trying to throw a fastball up and in on his hands and unfortunately for me, he was able to squeak it down the line and hit a double. Then after that, I made a poor pitch on the 3-1 count. Just have to be smarter than that. Just didn't execute enough pitches."

*** *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

As Bruins wrap, Red Sox about to be on their own – which could be a lonely place

Sean McAdam

For the last few weeks, the play of the Bruins has bought the Red Sox some cover, somewhat obscuring the fact that the defending champions can't get out of their own way.

On Wednesday night, win or lose in Game 7, the Bruins' season will end. A victory will result in yet another parade in Boston later this week and extend the distraction for another few days, but after that, there will be no place to hide from the demanding fans.

After that, the Sox will be on their own. And good luck with that. That's far from an enviable position.

For that matter, neither is third place in the American League East, a full eight games back of the division's twin frontrunners, New York and Tampa Bay.

After a sloppy 9-5 loss to the Texas Rangers Tuesday night, the Sox sit at .500, a study in mediocrity. They have no trouble rolling the many lousy teams the American League, but are no match for anyone with a winning record, as their record 14-23 against such clubs clearly indicates.

Tuesday night saw the Red Sox:

Issue a total of eight walks, with five of the hitters who walked eventually coming around to score. Dropping the most routine of popups (Rafael Devers) in the middle of the infield.

Failing to recognize that a ball came back into the field of play as the Rangers' Hunter Pence motored around the bases for an inside-the-park home run (Brock Holt).

Unable to be competitive in games in which a spot starter works. Rookie Darwinson Hernandez was tagged for four runs (three earned) in 3.1 innings. In the last four such games, fill-in starters have allowed 19 earned runs in just 12.1 innings.

Is this any way to defend a title?

"We're not good right now," said Alex Cora flatly. "We're playing .500 baseball. We've to pitch better, we've got to put up better at-bats. We've just got to be better. That's the bottom line. I've been saying that all season long. We've been very inconsistent at what we do. We absolutely have to be better than this if we want to be in the hunt.

"It's not good baseball right now, to be honest with you. It's not fun. We know we can be better; we know that."

By any measure, the Red Sox are thoroughly average. While they're two games over .500 away from home, they're now two games under at Fenway, a record so disappointing as to be unthinkable.

Fenway used to offer the Red Sox a distinct home field advantage, but not this season, when teams routinely come in and dominate. Unless the Sox can find a way to win the next two games and gain a split with the Rangers, they'll fall to 2-5-4 at home. Nearly halfway through the schedule, the Sox have won exactly two home series.

For comparison's sake, last year they had won three home series by April 15 – just one more measuring stick to serve as conclusive proof that 2019 is not at all like 2018.

"Very, very surprised," acknowledged Cora of his team's struggles at home. "This is a place where it's tough for the opposition to come here and play, but it seems like this year, we haven't been good since Day 1."

For the last month, the Sox have spun their wheels. When they won four straight on the road and returned home for a huge series with the Rays, there was hope that finally, they were ready to make their move. Instead, they lost three-of-four to the Rays in a series that came to symbolize everything that's gone wrong with their season: poor situational hitting; inconsistent starting pitching; and surprisingly sloppy play in the field and on the bases.

“We keep thinking, ‘OK, we’re going to get out of this, we’re going to get out of this,’” said Brock Holt. “We just haven’t yet. We haven’t played well, especially at home. We need to pick it up and do a better job. You can see it — I think guys are frustrated. We try not to be, but games like tonight, it’s embarrassing.

“We’re not playing well. We’re not playing up to our capabilities. That’s the frustrating part, because we know we’re good. We just clicked, we haven’t put it together and that’s something that we need to get going. We have talent in this clubhouse. We feel like we’re a good team. We just haven’t been that good team yet.”

The clock is ticking. After Wednesday night, they’re on their own, the only game left in town.

After that, without another team to distract them, people will notice. If, that is, they still care to notice at all.

BSJ Game Report: Rangers 9, Red Sox 5 – Rookie not ready in sloppy loss

Sean McAdam

Darwinzon not ready for prime time: The night began well enough for rookie lefty Darwinzon Hernandez. He struck out the side on 13 pitches in the first inning, then fanned the first batter in the second, too. But it was steadily downhill from there, as Hernandez walked the next two hitters he faced and four of the next eight, leading to three runs over the first three innings. But the middle of the fourth, he was done. “The stuff is great and all of that,” said Alex Cora. “But obviously, he was erratic. You saw flashes of greatness in the strike zone early on. I was talking to him afterward and I said, ‘Probably the worst thing that could happen was that you struck out the first four guys,’ and probably he was trying to strike everybody out after that. He’s still learning. You see the stuff and it’s really good, so we’ve got to just keep developing him and helping him out. He’ll be a good one.”

Holt offers an explanation for lack of hustle: It’s rare that an inside-the-park homer takes place at Fenway, but one happened in the sixth when Hunter Pence hit a twisting fly ball just beyond the foul pole in right. Brock Holt, not accustomed to play much right, went racing after the ball and leaped into the stands. But as he did so, the ball came back onto the field of play and rolled toward the wall in right, to the right of the visitor’s bullpen. Holt didn’t know the ball was in play and took his time climbing back onto the field as the ball lay on the warning track. “I got in the stands a little bit and I thought the ball went over the fence (with me),” said Holt. “It’s one of those things where I’ve got to know where the ball is. When I ended up two rows deep in the stands I assume that it had gone out. I had no idea that it was still in play. That’s kind of embarrassing on my part. I’ve got to do a better job paying attention. That one was on me.”

Umpires make themselves the show: It’s not often that you see both managers in a game ejected within minutes of one another, on unrelated plays. But that’s what happened Tuesday night, thanks to Angel Hernandez and his crew. First, first base umpire Vic Carapazza ejected Andrew Benintendi in the bottom of the fifth inning for shouting “You suck” in the general direction of home plate. Benintendi was frustrated that Hernandez had called the first pitch of his at-bat a strike, and voice his frustration, from almost 100 feet away from the plate, as he walked back to the dugout. “If you’re getting thrown out for saying ‘You suck,’ there should be multiple ejections each game,” said Benintendi. “It stinks.” Cora came out to defend his player and also was run by Carapazza. Then, in the top of the sixth, Hernandez ejected Texas manager Chris Woodward, who was enraged by Hernandez’s decision to not allow a replay challenge at second base on a close play because 30 seconds had elapsed. It was the first ejection of Woodward’s career as a manager, coach or player at any level. “Most give you the (warning),” Woodward said of the replay process. “I don’t have a 30-second clock in my head.”

SECOND GUESS

The Red Sox’ lack of starting pitching options has been made obvious in recent weeks, but in hindsight, it’s hard to believe that the organization thought that Hernandez was ready to start against a pretty good opponent. It’s well-documented that Hernandez hasn’t thrown nearly enough strikes at Double-A; did the

Sox think that graduating to the big leagues — even for just one spot start — was going to cure his control issues? Unsurprisingly, Hernandez encountered the same issues, walking five in just three innings.

ONE UP

J.D. Martinez: Martinez finally looked like his usual self at the plate, drawing a walk and banging two doubles in five plate appearances.

TWO DOWN

Bobby Poyner: Poyner came in from the bullpen for the fifth inning and was shelled for five runs on six hits over the next three innings.

Brock Holt: In addition to his mix-up and lack of hustle on the inside-the-park homer, Holt was hitless in four at-bats.

QUOTE OF NOTE

“We keep thinking, ‘We’re going to get out of this, we’re going to get out this.’ We haven’t yet.” – Brock Holt on the team’s play so far.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING:

The Red Sox have six outfield assists in the last nine games.

Alex Cora’s ejection was his third as a manager; Andrew Benintendi’s ejection was the first of his major league career.

Six of Mookie Betts’ last nine hits have been for extra bases.

Rafael Devers has 28 RBI in his last 28 games.

UP NEXT

The Red Sox and Rangers play the third game of their series Wednesday afternoon at 4:05, with RHP Rick Porcello (4-6, 4.86) vs. RHP Lance Lynn (7-4, 4.39).

*** *The Athletic***

As losses mount, so do frustrations, ‘embarrassments’ for sinking Red Sox

Jen McCaffrey

The frustrations of a season filled with disappointment boiled over in the fifth inning on Tuesday night in yet another Red Sox loss.

They haven’t been hitting. They haven’t been pitching. They’re falling farther back in the standings by day. It all came to a head in the middle innings.

Home plate umpire Angel Hernandez — who NESN broadcaster Dave O’Brien politely described as the “most controversial umpire in baseball” — missed calls throughout the night for both teams. In the bottom of the fifth inning, Andrew Benintendi came to the plate. The first pitch to the Sox outfielder was outside, but called a strike. After grounding out to shortstop, Benintendi headed back to the dugout frustrated, and let the umpire know.

He claimed the only thing he said was, “You suck,” toward Hernandez out of frustration, but first base umpire Vic Carapazza took exception and immediately ejected Benintendi.

“I wasn’t expecting that at all. I’m walking back to the dugout and he throws me out walking back,” Benintendi said. “I didn’t know until I was halfway through the dugout.

“I ground out and I was frustrated and all I said was, ‘You suck,’” he added. “Angel didn’t even know I was thrown out until I went back out there (to argue the ejection). Obviously, he didn’t hear that and I’m 100 feet away. Vic throws me out walking back to the dugout and I was surprised.”

Manager Alex Cora raced out to Carapazza for an explanation and was subsequently ejected himself, his first ejection of the year and second overall as a manager.

“I’ve got to go out there and defend my player,” Cora said. “I didn’t agree with that. It’s not like he’s at the plate screaming at Angel whatever. That’s not the first time somebody disagrees and screams from afar at the umpire, so just let him know and that was it.”

In speaking with pool reporter Alex Speier of the Boston Globe, Hernandez, the crew chief, provided few answers as to why Benintendi was ejected by Carapazza.

“He violated the rules of the game,” Hernandez said. “I’m not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow.”

With Benintendi out of the game, Brock Holt moved from left field to right, Mookie Betts took over in center, and Sam Travis entered the game in left. In the top of the sixth, more craziness ensued.

The Rangers led 4-3 to open the inning when Nomar Mazara hit a one-out single with a runner on second. Betts tried to fire home but his throw went up the line, allowing the run to score and the runner to advance on an errant throw. On the very next pitch, Hunter Pence belted a shot toward Pesky’s Pole in right. Holt raced over to get it, jumped up against the wall near the pole, but missed it. But rather than pursue it further, Holt appeared to disengage from the play, lying against the fence as Pence circled the bases.

The ball rolled behind him toward the visitor’s bullpen and Betts was late running over to back him up. The play resulted in an inside-the-park home run, and later, Holt acknowledged his chagrin at his mental error.

“I got in the stands a little bit and I thought the ball went over the fence,” Holt said. “Just one of those things where I’ve kind of got to know where the ball is. The ball was slicing away from me, and when I ended up two rows deep in the stands, I assumed it had gone out. I had no idea it was still in play.

“That’s kind of embarrassing on my part,” he added. “Got to do a better job of paying more attention. That one was on me. I don’t know if I would’ve been able to keep Hunter to a triple there, but I’ve got to go get that ball and get it in.”

The next play of the added to the absurdity of the game. Asdrubal Cabrera followed Pence to the plate and hit a liner off the wall. It bounced to Travis in left who fired to second as Cabrera was trying to stretch it to a double. Second base umpire Jordan Baker initially ruled Cabrera safe, then immediately called him out.

The play appeared to be reviewable, but Rangers manager Chris Woodward was denied and when he ran out to argue, he too was ejected by Hernandez.

“Time expired,” Hernandez said via the pool report. “We were not going to review the play once time expired.”

Managers have 30 seconds to decide whether or not to ask for a review of a play and Hernandez said the time had passed on the clock.

On the NESN broadcast, analyst Jerry Remy called the umpiring “brutal.” That may have been the case. But that word that also aptly described the play of the Red Sox.

By the end of the inning, the Rangers expanded their lead to 7-3. The Sox tacked on a couple more runs but not enough to pull out a win as they fell to 34-34 overall and just 15-17 at home. Last season, they had just 24 total losses at home.

“Very surprised,” Cora said of their play at home. “This is a place that’s tough for opposition to come here and play. It seems like this year we haven’t been good since day one. We have still plenty of games at Fenway so we expect this to turn around.”

But it’s clear the frustrations are mounting and words of optimism feel hollow.

“You can see it,” Holt said. “I think guys are frustrated. We try not to be, but games like tonight, it’s embarrassing. We’re not playing well. We’re not playing up to our capabilities. We know we’re good. We haven’t clicked. We haven’t put it together. That’s something we need to get going, because we have talent in this clubhouse and we feel like we’re a good team. We just haven’t been that good team yet.”

*** *The USA Today***

Revered in Boston, David Ortiz is beloved in his native Dominican Republic

Gabe Lacques

In the pantheon of celebrity, the term “megawatt personality” gets tossed about casually, as if entire regions are illuminated by a star’s mere presence.

For David Ortiz, that metaphor applies in two locations: His hometown of Santo Domingo and his adopted city of Boston.

That duality has defined his life since 2003, when he joined the Red Sox and launched a career in Boston that included three World Series titles, nine All-Star appearances and 541 home runs.

Yet for as revered as he is in New England for helping the 2004 Red Sox break an 86-year title drought, he is perhaps even more cherished in the Dominican Republic, where, hours after an assailant shot him in the back while he relaxed at a Santo Domingo nightclub, former president Leonel Fernandez was by his side in the hospital.

“Just think of how big an impact he’s had in the city of Boston – he’s an icon on the Mount Rushmore of Boston athletes. But he is the guy in the Dominican Republic,” Red Sox assistant general manager Eddie Romero, a Puerto Rico native, said at a Monday press conference.

“He’s more famous than any president. You think Dominican Republic, you think Pedro Martinez and David Ortiz. I’ve been awed by the impact he’s had.”

Monday night, Ortiz once again made the trip from his island homeland to Boston, though this was like no previous journey.

As he was transported out of Abel Gonzalez Clinic to an ambulance, white sheets obscured his path down a hallway to keep well-wishers and news media at bay. He was loaded onto an air ambulance sent by the Red Sox and transported to Boston, where a police escort awaited at the airport.

As the motorcade approached Massachusetts General Hospital, another throng of news media and well-wishers awaited, seeing him through to the site of his recuperation.

The transport was in some ways symbolic. Ortiz, who retired after the 2016 season, now resides in Miami with wife Tiffany and two of their three children. But he made his legacy in Boston. Ortiz met his future

wife while playing for the Class A Wisconsin Timber Rattlers in 1996; she turned him into a Green Bay Packers fan while Tom Brady was just a freshman at Michigan.

In 2008, Ortiz became an American citizen, an oath that sealed his figurehead status in two nations, where he holds myriad interests: Business, philanthropic and personal.

Ortiz was in Santo Domingo last weekend to promote his Big Papi cigar collection and tend to his charitable organizations, according to Dominican journalist Dionisio Soldevila. He has hosted 11 David Ortiz Celebrity Golf Classics, a winter ritual that attracts athletic A-listers and myriad celebrities, from Ray Allen to Adam Jones, Ja Rule and a gaggle of Latin American stars such as Martinez, Manny Ramirez and Dellin Betances.

His charitable foundation provides critical cardiac care to children in need in both the Dominican and Boston, where it partners with Mass General, the hospital where Ortiz is now recuperating.

In 2011, Ortiz earned the highest off-field honor for a major leaguer, the Roberto Clemente Award, named for the Hall of Famer who died in a plane crash delivering supplies to victims of an earthquake in Nicaragua. Major League Baseball cited Ortiz's work with his foundation and additional outreach in conjunction with Mass General, along with his donation of time and supplies to victims of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

"The hands-on work he has done over the years and the money he has donated in Boston, Haiti and the Dominican Republic is a wonderful example for all players, and I know Roberto would have been very proud of his selection," Vera Clemente said then of her late husband.

Since his retirement, he's launched Big Papi Productions, a company whose first venture was a Fusion series, "Big Papi Needs a Job." Perhaps that's technically true, but between the production company, his work as a Fox Sports analyst, wine and cigar interests and charitable work, he does not lack for activity.

Nor adulation.

"It comes from the way he treats people," says Romero. "He treats everybody the same. I know everybody has been stirred by this incident. It doesn't surprise me that so many have tried to reach out and help."

So much remains unresolved in Ortiz's shooting. Police have refused comment on a possible motive and have arrested one suspect, Eddy Vladimir Feliz Garcia, who they believe pulled up with another man on a motorcycle and carried out the shooting.

The outcome may certainly frame Ortiz's future. The Dominican will always be home, of course, a place he roamed without security or a detail nor a care about broadcasting his whereabouts. Hours before the shooting, Dominican TV host Jhoel Lopez posted a photo of he and Ortiz on Instagram; Lopez was wounded in the leg in the shooting.

Major League Baseball and its organizations often fret about high-profile players returning to their homelands in the off-season.

In the Dominican, travel can be perilous, and young stars like Oscar Taveras and Yordano Ventura have been killed in winter accidents, with alcohol a significant factor in Taveras' death. Ortiz's mother, Angela, was killed in a car accident on Jan. 1, 2002.

"There are measures we try to taking in educating our players," says Romero. "It's a problem you encounter in a plot of places with high profile athletes, with money and exposure. There are factors to that that are out of our control.

"We hope that this is an isolated incident in David's case."

*** *The Dallas Morning News***

Amid chaotic umpire performance, Rangers come up with second straight win to go six games above .500

Evan Grant

To the question of what could possibly rile up California Cool, positive-thinking Rangers manager Chris Woodward to the point where he would lose himself in the moment and earn an ejection, there is now an answer.

Angel Hernandez.

While the Rangers and Red Sox were playing what was an ostensibly big series at Fenway Park for mid-June Tuesday, Ariel Jurado pitched six solid innings, Hunter Pence hit the first inside-the-park home run of his career, Asdrubal Cabrera had a big two-out, two-run single and Ronald Guzman a two-run double in the Rangers 9-4 win that pushed the Rangers a season-high six games above .500.

But you know who really took the game over: the umpires.

And so now, you'll get to read about umpires. Because isn't that what everybody wants to read about?

In the span of one inning that didn't involve a bean ball or the benches clearing, both Woodward and Boston manager Alex Cora were ejected by different umpires for wholly different incidents. Woodward has been playing or coaching professionally since 1995. He said this spring that he had never been ejected.

Oh, but Hernandez — working the plate for a Rangers game for the first time since Woodward was named manager — found a way to make the seemingly impossible possible.

It came over confusion as to whether time had expired on the 30-second time frame Woodward had to appeal for a review of a play at second base. When the manager got word from his staff that they did indeed want to appeal, Hernandez waved it off. Hernandez said the Rangers had used up their allotted 30 seconds.

"I had my hand up and I knew we had 30 seconds, but I didn't know where we were in terms of the 30 second clock," Woodward said. "Most umpires, if it gets close, will come over and give me an ultimatum: Yes or no? That didn't happen and I didn't understand it. When I literally put my hands up to ask for the replay, he waived it off. I just want consistency on that. I don't have a 30-second clock in my head; I'm not that gifted."

Hernandez, speaking to a pool reporter later, said Woodward had his back to him and there was no way to get his attention. Hernandez, however, was still standing near home plate when Woodward came out of the dugout. A video stream indicated that about 40 seconds passed between the instant of the out call and Woodward coming out of the dugout.

"Time expired," Hernandez said. "We were not going to review the play once time expired. These are rules. It's my job to enforce them."

When asked why he didn't give Woodward any kind of heads up, Hernandez said: "He basically had his back towards me. There was no way to get his attention. When he turned around, we were out of time. I guess he thought he was still in the time frame."

Hernandez said stadium operations officials are responsible for the time clock, but it doesn't appear that the countdown clock is visibly displayed in stadiums.

Woodward stalked Hernandez and did a good job of playing one-on-one defense, getting a hand in his face while moving with him. Put it this way: If there were a similar 30-second time clock for a manager to argue his point before being ejected, Hernandez's ejection probably wouldn't have been waived off for taking too long.

The ejection drew big cheers from the Rangers' dugout, which was well aware with how cool Woodward usually acts.

"We were all waiting for the first one and this was just the right time," Nomar Mazara said. "You know everybody is going to get upset at some point. He was out there trying to support his team."

And while the umpiring brouhaha took center stage, it could not detract from what the Rangers accomplished. After going nearly three years without a win at Fenway Park, they jumped on wild spot starter Darwinzon Hernandez, called up from Double-A, to win for a second straight night.

It guaranteed them a split of the four-game series, which means they won't leave Boston in any worse shape in the wild card standings than they began the road trip. Win one of the final two games and it puts them in excellent position to post their first winning road trip of the season.

The Rangers took advantage of Hernandez's walks in the first three innings and his successors after that. Five of their first six runs began life as an innocent little walk.

In the second, Pence and Cabrera had back-to-back walks before Rougned Odor doubled to score Pence. In the third, Cabrera's two-out single scored Danny Santana and Elvis Andrus, both of whom had walked. The fourth run began as a dropped pop up. And then Guzman doubled home Pence and Odor, who had both walked, in the fifth.

In the sixth, with one run already in and Mazara at first, Pence drove a ball along the very short right field line, which curves inward in the corner. Brock Holt dove into the stands to try to steal it but was only successful in knocking it back into the field of play. Holt got hung up on the wall and Mookie Betts had no chance to chase it down. It was a weird play.

It seemed like it would be the weirdest moment of the night.

Then Angel Hernandez said: "Hold my beer."

*** *The Fort Worth Star-Telegram***

Rangers beat Red Sox 9-5, but Hernandez's ejection of Woodward overshadows victory

Jeff Wilson

Hunter Pence collected his first career inside-the-park home run Tuesday night, and he, Asdrubal Cabrera and Ronald Guzman drove in two runs apiece as the Texas Rangers rolled past the Boston Red Sox 9-5.

The game was plagued by a combined 16 walks, five in three-plus innings by Red Sox spot starter Darwinzon Hernandez, and the ejections of both managers.

Alex Cora was given the heave in the fifth after Red Sox outfielder Andrew Benintendi was tossed by first-base umpire Vic Carapazza, and Rangers manager Chris Woodward was ejected an inning later by plate ump Angel Hernandez following a dispute on whether the Rangers could review a disputed call at second base.

It was the first ejection for Woodward as a manager.

Ariel Jurado (4-2) allowed three runs in six innings for the Rangers, who improved to a season-high six games above .500 at 36-30. The Red Sox, the reigning world champions, fell to .500 at 34-34.

The Pence homer came in a three-run sixth. He hit a slicing flyball down the right-field line, and right fielder Brock Holt leaped to catch hit.

The ball hit the wall just over Holt and caromed further into right field as Nomar Mazara and Pence sprinted around the bases.

*** *Associated Press***

Emotions run high at Fenway as 3 ejected

Both managers and Red Sox outfielder Andrew Benintendi were ejected from Texas' 9-5 win over Boston on Tuesday.

Benintendi and Red Sox manager Alex Cora were tossed in the fifth inning by first-base umpire Vic Carapazza, and Texas manager Chris Woodward was booted by plate umpire Angel Hernandez in the sixth.

Although he was banned by Carapazza, Benintendi was upset initially with Hernandez. He turned and shouted toward home plate after grounding out, and that's when Carapazza tossed him.

"I know that Angel didn't hear me," Benintendi said. "It stinks. We're out there trying to win a game. I want to be a part of it, but can't do that when I'm in here."

Cora came out to argue and got into it with Carapazza and Hernandez near first base before being given his third career ejection. While Cora yelled at both umpires, Benintendi continued to bark from the top step of the dugout.

Hernandez spoke to a pool reporter following the game but said little to explain the ejection.

"He violated the rules of the game," Hernandez said. "I'm not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow."

A half-inning later, Woodward stormed from the dugout after an overturned call at second base. Asdrubal Cabrera was initially called safe trying to stretch a single into a double, but second-base umpire Jordan Baker changed his ruling. Woodward went straight for Hernandez, complaining that he wasn't given enough time to challenge the call. Hernandez let him rant for a moment before giving the first-year manager his first ejection.

"I just want consistency -- that's all -- from the umpires," Woodward said. "They have a hard job to do. But most umpires give you the ultimatum when it comes down to the 30 seconds. I don't have a 30-second clock in my head. I'm not that gifted."

Hernandez said Woodward apparently didn't hear when he was told time was running out to challenge the call.

"We were not going to review the play once time expired," Hernandez said. "These are rules. It's my job to enforce them."

Pence hits inside-the-park HR, Rangers beat Red Sox 9-5

Hunter Pence sprinted through his 14th homer of the season, although there was probably no need to hurry.

Pence hit a stand-up, inside-the-park home run and the Texas Rangers beat Boston 9-5 Tuesday night, capitalizing when the Red Sox unraveled after their manager and right fielder were ejected.

"Kind of just a weird incident to be a part of," said Pence, whose fly ball to right in the sixth turned into a surprise two-run homer. "I've never done it, so now I have. It's a good feeling."

Texas has won four of five, including Monday night's extra-innings victory at Fenway Park.

The Red Sox lost their third straight loss and fifth in six games.

"Guys are frustrated. We try not to be, but games like tonight, it's embarrassing," said Brock Holt, who misplayed Pence's homer. "We're not playing well. We're not playing up to our capabilities and that's the frustrating part."

Ariel Jurado (4-2) struck out six while pitching six innings of three-run ball, and Pence, Asdrubal Cabrera and Ronald Guzman each had two RBI for the Rangers.

Xander Bogaerts and Mookie Betts homered for the Red Sox, who dropped to 34-34 on a night filled with frustrations. Andrew Benintendi was ejected in the fifth, and manager Alex Cora was also tossed defending his outfielder.

With Benintendi banished to the clubhouse, Pence took advantage of a realigned outfield.

Holt moved from left field to right in the sixth and couldn't track down Pence's fly at the short right field wall. Holt fell onto the top of the wall and remained draped there while the ball rolled slowly toward right-center. Betts, who moved from right to center, couldn't get to the ball before Pence finished his dash around the bases. That put Texas up 9-3.

"I was watching it probably a little too long because I was like awkwardly around first base, so then I just took off running because I saw the ball," Pence said. "I heard someone saying 'slow down, slow down' and I'm like 'I'm not slowing down until I see an umpire say something.'"

Cabrera followed Pence with a line drive to left and tried to stretch it to a double, sliding in and initially being called safe before second base umpire Jordan Baker quickly reversed his own call. That brought Texas manager Chris Woodward storming out of the dugout. He went straight for plate umpire Angel Hernandez and shouted in his face until he got tossed -- the first ejection of his managing career.

Woodward said he was upset because he was considering challenging the call and wasn't told when he had run out of time.

"I just want consistency -- that's all -- from the umpires," Woodward said. "They have a hard job to do. But most umpires give you the ultimatum when it comes down to the 30 seconds. I don't have a 30-second clock in my head -- I'm not that gifted."

Darwinzon Hernandez (0-1) made his first major league start and struck out seven, but he struggled with his control and allowed four runs -- three earned -- on three hits and five walks. He faced two batters in the fourth, when Texas pulled ahead 4-3.

BEEF NIGHT

Although he was ejected by first base umpire Vic Carapazza, Benintendi appeared to be upset with Hernandez. He turned and shouted toward home plate after grounding out, prompting the ejection.

Cora came out to argue and got into it with Carapazza and Hernandez near first base before being given his third career ejection. While Cora yelled at both umpires, Benintendi continued to bark from the top step of the dugout.

Benintendi said it was odd because his complaint was directed at Hernandez.

"I know that Angel didn't hear me," Benintendi said in the clubhouse. "It stinks. We're out there trying to win a game. I want to be a part of it, but can't do that when I'm in here."

Hernandez issued a statement through a pool reporter following the game, saying little to explain the ejections.

"He violated the rules of the game," Hernandez said. "I'm not at liberty to discuss anything until I submit the report tomorrow."

Hernandez said Woodward apparently didn't hear when he was told time was running out to challenge the call.

"We were not going to review the play once time expired," Hernandez said. "These are rules. It's my job to enforce them."

GET WELL, PAPI

Fans cheered between the second and third innings when the Red Sox showed a video from 13 years before, when David Ortiz hit a three-run walk-off homer on June 11, 2006 for the Red Sox in a 5-4 win over Texas.

Ortiz was a few miles away at Massachusetts General Hospital, where he is recovering in intensive care after being flown to Boston for a second surgery following a shooting in the Dominican Republic on Sunday night.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Rangers: OF Joey Gallo (strained oblique) hit from a tee Tuesday. Gallo has been on the injured list since June 2.

Red Sox: Placed RHP Ryan Brasier on the bereavement/family medical emergency list. Hernandez was recalled from Double-A Portland. ... 1B/DH Steve Pearce (lower back strain) did some running Tuesday and will take swings Wednesday.

UP NEXT

Rangers RHP Lance Lynn (7-4, 4.39 ERA) faces RHP Rick Porcello (4-6, 4.86) in the third game of the series, which was moved up to a 4 p.m. start because of Game 7 of the Stanley Cup Finals between the Blues and the Bruins.