

## ***The Boston Red Sox Thursday, July 4, 2019***

### **\* *The Boston Globe***

**Chris Sale was brutal in his first-half assessment: ‘What am I, 3-8? That’s absolutely embarrassing.’**

Alex Speier

It ended as it began, a reverberating thud inside a stadium with a retractable roof against an unimpressive lineup expected to present little resistance.

Chris Sale’s final outing of the first half of the 2019 season — if not the worst half-season of his career, then close enough — offered symmetry to the season opener in Seattle. In both outings, Sale allowed three homers and walked off the mound shaking his head while trying to make sense of the many questions raised by his performance.

Sale’s five-run, three-homer, nine-hit yield over 5 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings in a 6-3 Red Sox loss to the Blue Jays on Wednesday concluded the pitcher’s pre-All-Star break performance. After starting the last three Midsummer Classics for the American League, Sale has an impending vacation over the break after going 3-8 with a 4.04 ERA. The Red Sox are 6-12 in his 18 starts — a worse record than that produced in front of the revolving cast of fifth starters.

Characteristically, Sale pulled no punches in a withering postgame assessment.

“I’m supposed to be a big part of this team and a big part of this pitching staff,” said Sale. “I know who I am and who I’m supposed to be for this team, and I haven’t even been anything close. What am I, 3-8? That’s absolutely embarrassing. That’s not what I need to be and that’s not who I need to be for this team. On a team like this, they need me to be better and I haven’t been there for them. I’m standing before you as frustrated as I’ve ever been, just to be honest.”

There were specifics related to Sale’s struggles on Wednesday. One start after the White Sox tagged Sale for five runs over six innings by attacking the pitcher’s slider, the Blue Jays did the opposite, hunting fastballs and mashing them. All three of Toronto’s homers and six of their nine hits came on fastballs, yet the Red Sox kept throwing them — particularly to Sale’s glove side, rather than the fastball to the pitcher’s arm side that not only explodes up and away but also establishes his changeup as a weapon.

Yet it hasn’t just been one missing piece to Sale’s first half. It’s been a succession of issues — games in which his slider doesn’t show up, or when his fastball velocity is down, or when he limits himself to attacking one side of the plate, or when he’s lacked extension and finish to his pitches, or when he’s thrown well and weak contact has been bunched in a way to produce just enough runs to hang another loss on the pitcher and the Sox thanks to the pitiful run support the team has given him.

“I’m not locating fastballs, my changeup is terrible, breaking ball is hit or miss. I just haven’t been myself for a while,” said Sale. “I just haven’t been good.”

Certainly, while Sale judges his performance through the lens of how his team has fared when he’s on the mound (not well, as evidenced by that 6-12 record), there’s been plenty to suggest that he has the ability to dominate. He has struck out 12.9 batters per nine innings, and at times, each of his pitches has been unhittable.

Yet those times have been inconsistent, creating the big, hovering, \$145 million question: Is Chris Sale healthy?

It's hard not to wonder given that his shoulder was an issue over the final months of 2018, his average fastball velocity entering Wednesday was 92.9 mph in 2019 – down from 94.8 mph in 2018 – and he hasn't shown consistent command.

Moreover, the Sox' efforts to give him extra rest both in his final start before the break (six days) and his first after it – David Price will make the start on the Sunday before the break, allowing Sale to get at least eight days off before his first start after the break – offers further cause for a raised eyebrow.

So: healthy?

“Yeah,” said Sale. “That's kind of the worst part about it. There's nothing to look back on other than being bad.”

Data supports the assertion of health. The spin rate on his four-seamer (a potential injury indicator) has been higher this year than in the past two seasons with the Sox, his slider break has been normal, his extension has been normal, and the fact that he's been topping out at 97 mph in his last two outings suggests gas in the tank.

“If Chris Sale wasn't healthy then I would be really concerned about this,” said pitching coach Dana LeVangie. “But he's healthy and zero complaints.”

Zero complaints, that is, about his health. But for the Red Sox, the inability to win with their best pitcher on the mound has become a devastating issue. The team is now 2 ½ games behind Cleveland for the second wild card spot – a deficit that would not exist if the team had gone, say, 9-9 with Sale on the mound.

To this point, his starts have been a shockingly unexpected part of a disappointing team. For the Red Sox to emerge after the break from their malaise, they will need to start winning with their most dominant pitcher on the mound.

“He's our ace. He's our No. 1 and when he pitched well, we didn't hit, when we hit, he didn't pitch well. It was a combination of both. We're a team, we're not going to point fingers at him or the offense or whatever, I just think collectively whenever he pitched in the first part of the season we weren't good,” said Cora. “Right now we're not getting the results but I know this guy is a horse, he's one of the best pitchers in the big leagues. ... Hopefully the break is going to help him out, he'll come back over the weekend against LA and hopefully we get the Chris Sale we're accustomed to.”

### **Chris Sale struggles again as Red Sox tumble to Blue Jays**

Julian Benbow

Chris Sale stood on the mound practically motionless in the sixth inning, knowing the long walk back to the dugout was ahead of him.

The bitter part was realizing he was no closer to finding any of the answers he has been looking for all season.

The last time Sale was on the mound he gave up five runs in six innings in a loss to the Chicago White Sox, but felt like he found some solutions the longer the outing stretched. The remedy was his fastball, so he decided to go to it often Wednesday night against the Blue Jays at Rogers Centre.

What he didn't know was that the Jays were hunting his fastball before he even took the mound. Before the game, the Jays set up a high-velocity pitching machine, aimed it from the extreme left side — the same side Sale delivers from — and zeroed in.

Sale leaned on his fastball more heavily than he had in any other start this season — 62 of his 104 total pitches. The velocity was there, ticking at an average of 94 miles per hour. But the effectiveness wasn't.

Six of the nine hits Sale surrendered came on his heater and it ended up being costly on the way to a 6-3 loss to the rebuilding Blue Jays (33-54).

“They showed the ability to look for it and hit it if you leave it in the zone,” said Red Sox pitching coach Dana LeVangie. “I thought he got some good swing-and-misses with it, punchouts with it. But the one thing is he probably stayed one-sided too much.”

Sale lasted just 5½ innings, giving up five runs on a season-high nine hits with two walks and five strikeouts.

“That’s kind of the worst part about it,” Sale said. “There’s nothing to look back on other than being bad. I don’t know if it’s this or that. Everything feels good. Just haven’t been getting it done. It’s just been a tough go.”

To Red Sox manager Alex Cora, the adjustments made perfect sense; the results didn’t.

“We’ve been talking about making adjustments,” Cora said. “We come from a start that they hit all offspeed pitches. You see what [the Jays] did against him throughout the season, most of the hits are on offspeed pitches, so you have to make adjustments. I don’t know if they changed their game plan, but it wasn’t good. I know he’s disappointed. We’re going to keep working obviously. He has a long break and hopefully when he comes back we’ll get him back on track.”

Sale gave up a solo home run to Lourdes Gurriel Jr. in the third and a two-run shot to Danny Jansen in the fourth. Both came on his fastball. His heater to Gurriel brushed the edge of the plate, but Gurriel sent it flying out to center field anyway. Against Jansen, Sale just made a mistake and paid for it. He unleashed a 95.3-m.p.h. fastball but left it up over the middle of the plate and Jansen took it for a ride to left field.

The final blow came in the sixth when the lefthander left a 90.5-m.p.h. fastball dangling over the middle of the plate to Brandon Drury. Drury sent it screaming over the center-field fence for a two-run homer that gave the Jays a 5-3 lead.

Sale, now 3-8 with a 4.04 ERA, hadn’t given up multiple homers in an outing since his first start of the season, when he gave up three to the Mariners. It was the ninth time in his career he has given up three homers in a start.

“They put good swings on fastballs,” Cora said. “He misfired those three. They put together some good at-bats, fouling off pitches. It’s been a theme against them all season since the first game in Fenway and the last start and this one. They keep spoiling pitches and putting good swings on pitches in the zone.”

The Sox were still in arm’s reach because the Jays haven’t found an extinguisher for Rafael Devers. He came in 17 for 34 with five homers and 16 RBIs in nine games against the Jays this season.

Devers kept the offense humming with a two-run single in the third that gave the Red Sox a 2-0 lead.

The Jays got a run back on Gurriel’s homer, but Christian Vazquez answered in the fourth with his 13th homer of the season to make it 3-1.

But Sale couldn’t hold up his end of the bargain. In three starts against the Jays this season, he has a 7.98 ERA.

“I’m not locating fastballs, my changeup is terrible, breaking ball is hit or miss,” said Sale, who has given up 13 earned runs in his last three starts. “I just haven’t been myself for a while. That’s obviously frustrating. I hate being short with you guys, but it’s the same thing over and over. I’ve got nothing new for you.”

With the All-Star break next week, Sale isn't scheduled to pitch again until the Red Sox face the Dodgers at Fenway Park on July 13. In the meantime, he'll regroup.

"What we can say is we're going to stick with the process," Cora said. "If we do that, I know the results are going to be there. He's one of the best pitchers in the big leagues. He'll come back over the weekend against LA and hopefully we get the Chris Sale that we're accustomed to."

### **All of a sudden, Christian Vazquez's power at the plate has become indispensable**

Alex Speier

Yes, Alex Cora knew the performance skew experienced by Chris Sale with different catchers.

The Red Sox ace has a 2.53 ERA with Sandy Leon behind the plate, his best with any catcher who's worked with him for at least 10 innings. He had a 4.37 mark with Christian Vazquez, his worst with any catcher.

So why was Vazquez in the lineup on Wednesday with Sale on the mound?

"He's swinging the bat too good right now for us to sit him," Cora said. "He's one of the best catchers in the league."

Vazquez is quietly having an amazing year. He entered Wednesday with a .296/.331/.502 line and an astonishing 12 homers, marks that – in concert with his defense – had him leading American League catchers (according to Fangraphs) with 2.5 Wins Above Replacement.

The performance has been revelatory and shocking. Both Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts have delivered incredible performances in the first half that marked steps forward in their careers, but are in many ways fulfilling potential that long seemed apparent. Vazquez, on the other hand, seems to be exceeding vastly any projections that existed for him.

His 12 homers through 69 games represented two more than he'd hit in his first 291 big league games. In the past, Cora had often spoken of the potential Vazquez offered to utilize hit-and-run plays thanks to his ability to shoot the ball to all fields. He never spoke of the idea that he might have a catcher who represented a power threat from the bottom of the order.

Did anyone imagine Vazquez ever hitting like this?

A few people who have seen the catcher evolve over several years offered a resounding . . . "kind of."

Chad Epperson, the Red Sox catching coordinator since 2010, has seen almost all of Vazquez's development — including the startling 2011 season in which he hit 18 homers in Single-A Greenville, a performance that shocked player development officials who'd seen virtually no power from the defensive standout to that point.

"He did show us the ability to drive the baseball," said Epperson. "I personally know there's pop in the bat, but he's stuck with a good approach and worked."

Hitting coach Tim Hyers was the Sox minor league hitting coordinator in 2013 and 2014, when Vazquez moved through the upper levels of the farm system and reached the big leagues. He saw "sneaky power" from Vazquez in batting practice, but the catcher "just couldn't get to it in the game."

This year, however, Hyers recognized in the spring that Vazquez had committed in the offseason to building on a strong playoff run by cleaning up some of his offensive mechanics. Whereas he had an exaggerated leg lift last year that often made it a struggle to gain balance in his swing, this year, Hyers saw

a “cleaner path” to the ball that allowed Vazquez not merely to spray singles and doubles from line to line but to turn on balls and do damage.

“He wanted to be more of a force. He worked really hard in the offseason. The sequence of his swing is really powerful into the ground,” said Hyers. “I think it’s a combination of a lot of things. He’s smarter now. He’s seen the pitchers. He’s able to get into predictable counts, read the pitcher, and hunt a pitch he’s looking for. He’s looking to go pull side and utilize that power. He’s been a smart hitter this year, when to use the opposite field and when to take some chances.”

Coaching staff member Ramon Vazquez managed Christian Vazquez in Puerto Rican winter ball. There, Ramon Vazquez occasionally saw the catcher crush pitches — but those were treated almost like accidents. This year, however, Ramon Vazquez believes that Christian Vazquez recognized that he could turn occasional flashes of power into something other than random events, with an approach that has maximized his impact.

“His stance changed, he’s a little taller now, which makes him a little stronger in the legs, and he’s driving the ball everywhere. I’ve seen him drive the ball before. Now, the swing to right-center is more aggressive than just punching the ball over the second baseman’s head,” said Ramon Vazquez. “Mentally changing the approach has helped him, and figuring out he can hit the ball out the other way, drive the ball to left field instead of inside-out, babying it the other way. He made adjustments and it’s working out.”

That description comes across as an understatement, at a time when Vazquez — who hammered a first-pitch fastball for a homer to center in his second at-bat on Wednesday, his 13th of the year — has been crushing pitches. He’s regularly hammering balls 400-plus feet, even while he’s maintained enough discipline to hit for average while maintaining an all-fields approach.

The result has been unexpected. A catcher who arrived in the big leagues on the strength of a sterling defensive reputation is expanding his role as he emerges as one of the foremost offensive threats in the game at his position. Even for a team with people who had long believed in his ability, the performance has been unexpected — but certainly unobjectionable.

“We were all hoping what we saw in October was going to carry over in spring training and then, obviously, the season,” said Epperson. “That’s exactly what happened. He brought that energy, everything coming into spring training, and he hasn’t let up, and he’s put together by far his best season so far.”

### **Nathan Eovaldi eager to help overworked Red Sox pitching staff**

Julia Benbow

The longer it took for Red Sox righthander Nathan Eovaldi to rehabilitate his arm after undergoing elbow surgery in mid-April, the more he began to consider simply finding the fastest way to rejoin the pitching staff.

If it were as a reliever, then so be it. When he had conversations with Red Sox manager Alex Cora and president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, the idea made sense.

“I told [Cora] I want to come back and help out as soon as possible,” Eovaldi said Wednesday. “If I were to come back in the starting rotation, it would take at least another month to build up that way. And any way I can help out, I want to go out and do so.”

It has been three months since Eovaldi had surgery to remove loose bodies in his right elbow, and one month since his recovery was halted by bicep tendinitis, but the Sox are hopeful he could return after next week’s All-Star break.

Eovaldi threw a 20-pitch (all fastballs) bullpen session Wednesday at Rogers Centre . He will throw again on Saturday. From there, the team will decide if he'll need a minor league rehab assignment. The priority is managing his workload, keeping his arm healthy, and putting him in spots to be effective.

“It just depends on how fast they want to try and move it,” Eovaldi said. “We don’t really want to jump far ahead because we don’t want to have any setbacks or anything like that. But right now I feel really good and I don’t think it’s going to take too long.”

Eovaldi’s injury created a void in the starting rotation’s fifth spot, and the ramifications have been far-reaching. Production out of that spot has been disappointing. In 15 games, No. 5 starters are 2-7 with a 6.57 ERA, giving the Sox just 49⅓ innings pitched (less than 3⅓ per start). As a whole, Sox starters are 19th in baseball in innings pitched, and relievers have felt the burden, throwing the seventh-most innings in the majors.

“I told them any way I can help out. I don’t have to come back into the starting rotation,” Eovaldi said. “If I need to come out of the bullpen and eat some innings out of there, I’m more than happy to do so. The bullpen’s been doing an amazing job for us this year, they had to fill in a hole and I feel like a lot of it was on me.”

Eovaldi, who signed a four-year, \$68 million deal in the offseason, acknowledged it has been a difficult season.

“It’s been real frustrating just having to have the surgery, then working my way back and then having to rebuild again,” Eovaldi said.

#### Bogaerts an All-Star

In the Sox clubhouse and around baseball, Xander Bogaerts was an All-Star even if the balloting said differently. But Major League Baseball made it official Wednesday when the shortstop was named an American League injury replacement.

With Hunter Pence out, Bogaerts was tapped to take his spot. It will be the second All-Star appearance of Bogaerts’s career.

Bogaerts was one of the biggest snubs of the selection process. He’s fourth among shortstops in batting average (.301), first in on-base percentage (.392), fourth in slugging (.541), first in RBIs (58), sixth in homers (16), and leads all shortstops in wins above replacement.

“It’s good, man,” Cora said. “Very proud of him. He’s done an amazing job throughout the season. He’s been one of the best players in all of baseball. So very happy he’s going to be with us there in Cleveland.”

Meanwhile, J.D. Martinez was named the AL starter at DH.

#### Help on the way

Heath Hembree joined the team in Toronto on Wednesday after his rehab outing with Triple A Pawtucket on Tuesday.

Hembree, who has been on the injured list since June 14 (retroactive to June 11), struck out two batters in two innings against Scranton Wilkes-Barre, throwing 12 of his 16 pitches for strikes.

“My arm felt healthy, so that’s the main key,” Hembree said. “Been a few weeks, so I felt a little bit of rustiness out there on the mound, but I felt good. So that’s all that mattered.”

Hembree was 1-0 with a 2.51 ERA in 31 appearances before going on the IL. Nine of those appearances came in high-leverage situations. He was called on in a number of different spots, from the sixth to the ninth inning, but most commonly pitched in the seventh.

“I like to feel I can help the bullpen,” he said. “Whatever situation it is, I know the situations I come in can be random at times, but I’m just looking forward to getting back with the guys.”

Cora said he would make a decision about plans for Hembree after Wednesday’s game.

“He feels good,” Cora said. “So either tomorrow or Friday.”

Velazquez to start

Hector Velazquez (1-3, 5.31 ERA) will start Thursday for the Red Sox . . . Mitch Moreland, on the IL since June 8 because of a right quad strain, may be nearing a rehab assignment. The Sox are trying to work around events at Fenway to give Moreland an opportunity to get treatment. Moreland ran the bases Wednesday and continues to take batting practice. “Bouncing back well the next day,” Cora said of the first baseman’s progress. “So I don’t know when, but it seems like he’s getting closer.”

### **Xander Bogaerts named to All-Star Game as injury replacement**

Nick Kelly

Red Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts is headed to Cleveland for the All-Star Game after all.

Major League Baseball named him as an injury replacement Wednesday. The 2019 All-Star Game, which will be played on Tuesday, July 9 at 7:30 p.m., will mark Bogaerts’s second appearance. He appeared in the game in 2016.

Bogaerts joins Brandon Lowe and Jose Berrios as American League All-Star replacements in place of Tommy La Stella, Jake Odorizzi, and Hunter Pence.

When Bogaerts was not selected, the surprise was not that Jorge Polanco earned the AL starter spot at shortstop. Instead, the surprise stemmed from the fact that Cleveland’s Francisco Lindor was the No. 2 player at shortstop, not Bogaerts.

Especially when considering their statistics. When the teams were announced, Bogaerts possessed a better batting average, on-base plus slugging percentage, slugging percentage, more home runs, runs and RBIs than Lindor. Bogaerts was even better than Polanco in each of these categories except for batting average.

Bogaerts’s batting average of .301, as of Wednesday afternoon, would finish as the second-best of his career. His current OPS (.933) and slugging (.541) would be career-highs.

## **\* *The Boston Herald***

### **Chris Sale allows 5 runs, 3 HRs in Red Sox’ 6-3 loss to Blue Jays**

Michael Silverman

There hasn’t been much talk about Chris Sale missing his first All-Star Game since 2011 or that his streak of three consecutive starts for the American Leaguers is over.

His start in Wednesday night’s 6-3 loss to the Blue Jays was another unnecessary reminder why, as he delivered another game that represented his departure from stupendous to pedestrian in 2019.

Granted a 2-0 and then a 3-1 lead, Sale wound up surrendering five runs and nine hits in his 5- $\frac{2}{3}$  innings in which he struck out just five batters while walking two. He also gave up three home runs, after not giving up more than one in any of his 16 previous starts. It was the first three-homer game off Sale since he also allowed three long balls in his first start of the season.

That start — a three-inning, seven-run debacle against the Mariners in the season opener — was a tone-setter that Sale did not begin to alter until May and June, when he showed more than a few flashes of his All-Star self.

Sale, always accountable after every start, good or bad, could not have been much more distraught after this really bad one.

“I’m supposed to be a big part of this team and a big part of this pitching staff — I’ve probably been the biggest crush,” said Sale, who now has a 4.04 ERA. “That’s another pretty crappy part is, I know who I am and who I’m supposed to be for this team, and I haven’t even been anything close. What am I, 3-8? That’s absolutely embarrassing. That’s not what I need to be and that’s not who I need to be for this team. On a team like this, they need me to be better and I haven’t been there for them. I’m standing before you as frustrated as I’ve ever been, just to be honest.”

Red Sox manager Alex Cora was not about to give up on Sale, not after Wednesday night, not after a mostly disappointing first half.

“He’s our ace, he’s our No. 1 and when he pitched well, we didn’t hit, when we hit, he didn’t pitch well, it was a combination of both,” Cora said. “We’re a team, we’re not going to point fingers at him or the offense or whatever, I just think collectively whenever he pitched in the first part of the season we weren’t good.”

Even before this visit to Rogers Centre, where traditionally he has been lights-out (5-1, 1.60 ERA), Sale had begun to show signs of regression to his mean April. Two starts ago on June 21, he allowed three runs against the Blue Jays at Fenway Park, and then five against the White Sox on June 26.

Sale was pitching on two extra days of rest Wednesday night.

The Red Sox scored first when Rafael Devers, fresh off his six-RBI night Tuesday, singled in two more in the third inning for the 2-0 lead.

Sale gave back half the lead in the bottom of the third when, with two outs and nobody on, he gave up his first home run of the game to Lourdes Gurriel Jr. to make the score 2-1.

Christian Vazquez, serving in stead of Sale’s usual catcher Sandy Leon in order to provide more offense, did just that with a two-out home run in the top of the fourth to make it a 3-1 lead. The home run was Vazquez’ 13th on the season. He has homered in each of his last three games.

Again, Sale did nothing to stop the Blue Jays from chipping into and, this time, erasing the lead. After Sale walked Justin Smoak with one out, Danny Jansen pulled a two-run home run over the left field wall to even the game at 3.

The fifth inning featured no runs, but the sixth was a different story for Sale.

Entering the inning having thrown 94 pitches, Sale began by hitting Smoak with a pitch on an 0-2 count. A quick double play appeared to have set Sale on the right track, but then came Red Sox-killer Rowdy Tellez’ second hit of the night, a bloop single to right field. That brought up No. 9 hitter Brandon Drury, who hit a line-drive two-run home run just over the center field fence to put the Blue Jays on top, 5-3, and send Sale to the showers.

“Just too many hittable pitches, just not good,” Sale said. “I’m not locating fastballs, my changeup is terrible, breaking ball is hit or miss. I just haven’t been myself for a while. That’s obviously frustrating. I hate being short with you guys, but it’s the same thing over and over. I’ve got nothing new for you. I just haven’t been good. gotta find a way to be better. I’m about as frustrated as I’ve ever been playing baseball.”

Steven Wright allowed a sacrifice fly to Freddy Galvis in the eighth for the Blue Jays' sixth run.

### **Hot bat means Christian Vazquez stays in lineup to catch Chris Sale**

Michael Silverman

Chris Sale has been paired far more often than not this season with catcher Sandy Leon, but the hot bat of catcher Christian Vazquez meant Cora did not have to debate the choice for too long.

"I know the guy on the mound, he's good and he can do it but sometimes we don't score a lot of runs for Chris so hopefully we prevent them and we can score here," said Cora before Vazquez went 2-for-4 to lift his batting average to .300 on the season in the Red Sox' 6-3 loss. "He's one of the best catchers in the league. I think I saw today he's No. 1 in (f)WAR so that was amazing. Good game planning. He's pitched to Christian before. He's been good with him, too. He's swinging the bat too good right now for us to sit him."

Vazquez homered here Tuesday and again Wednesday night and has homered in six of his last 13 games, and has hit safely in each of his last 13 starts. With 13 homers and 37 RBI, Vazquez already has shattered his career highs and is on track for one very successful season.

Cora credited Vazquez' offseason dedication to revamping his swing to a more uppercut stroke.

"He's been very consistent with it, he understands what he wants to do," said Cora. "He understands pitchers, what to do, and it's not like he's going out there just to swing for the fences just to swing. So I'm very proud of him. His approach is great, with two strikes he can go the other way. There's a few things he needs to get better and he knows it, too. But he's not stopping."

Vazquez has caught Sale in six of his 18 starts this season. Leon has caught him the other dozen times.

Eovaldi throws

Nathan Eovaldi threw a 20-pitch bullpen session Wednesday. His next bullpen will be on Saturday in Detroit.

He's excited about returning to action as Red Sox closer sometime soon after the All-Star break, although he views his latest assignment as a temporary one.

"I still view myself as a starter and I want to keep doing that but right now, I feel like the fastest way for me to come back and help the team out is coming out of the bullpen," Eovaldi said.

When asked if he initiated the idea or the Red Sox asked him to consider it, Eovaldi said, "I told (Cora), I said, 'Any way I can help out, I don't have to come back to the starting rotation, if I need to come into the bullpen and eat some innings there I'm more than happy to do so.' The bullpen's been doing an amazing job for us this year. They've had to fill in a lot of the holes, I felt like a lot of it was on me, being that fifth man down, they had to step up and they've been doing a great job."

Eovaldi voiced optimism about a return sooner than later but there is no precision to a timetable when it comes to the oft-injured right-hander.

"I felt really good during the bullpen, I just threw my fastballs," Eovaldi said. "Just depends how fast they want to move it. We don't really want to jump too far ahead because we don't want to have any setbacks or anything like that but right now I feel really good and I don't think it's going to take too long."

Bogaerts an All-Star

Xander Bogaerts only has the highest fWAR of any shortstop in the league, and he is on the short list of Red Sox MVPs this season. So it came as somewhat of an "of course he is" moment Wednesday when Major League Baseball announced Bogaerts would be going to the All-Star Game after all. Because three

spots opened on the squad, Bogaerts — as well as Tampa Bay infielder Brandon Lowe and Minnesota starter Jose Berrios — were named to the AL squad.

“It’s good, very proud of him, he’s done an amazing job throughout the season,” Cora said. “He’s been one of the best players in all of baseball so very happy he’s going to be with us during Cleveland.”

Hunter Pence of Texas had to pull out because of a hamstring injury, so J.D. Martinez will be the starting DH.

Outfielder Mookie Betts is the third and final Red Sox member of the AL All-Star squad. It will be managed by Cora, who will be joined by his coaches as well as Indians manager Terry Francona.

Hembree back

Reliever Heath Hembree returned to the ballclub after a rehab assignment with the PawSox. He said he feels much better — he was sidelined June 11 by a right elbow extensor strain — and is looking forward to getting back in action.

That could come as soon as Thursday’s game or by Friday’s series opener in Detroit.

Hector Velazquez remains the likely starter for Thursday’s game. ...

First baseman Mitch Moreland is approaching a full month out of action, after being placed on the IL on June 8 with a right quad strain. One complicating factor in his rehab is that preparation for the two nights of Phish concerts at Fenway Park.

“He’s feeling better,” Cora said. “Just one of those — there’s a few things going on at Fenway that we have to make adjustments as far as where we do the treatment and all that stuff. That’s part of the equation. But he’s feeling better. I talked to him today. He ran the bases actually today. He’s been swinging the bat. Bouncing back well the next day. I don’t know when but it seems like he’s getting closer.”

Wednesday’s loss to Toronto dropped the Red Sox’ record against AL foes to 18-19. ...

Rafael Devers drove in two more runs Wednesday, and now has 10 RBI over his last seven games. ... Michael Chavis collected two doubles. Over his last 23 games, he is hitting .298 (28-for-94) with six doubles, four homers and 16 RBI. ...

Hector Velazquez will start Thursday’s series finale. Toronto’s Marcus Stroman is iffy for his start — he is bothered by a pectoral issue.

## **\* *MassLive.com***

### **How Boston Red Sox have adopted a new app to revolutionize communication this year & some All-Star thoughts | (MLB Notebook)**

Chris Cotillo

In the year and a half since Alex Cora took over the Red Sox, the manager has stressed the importance of communication within the organization. It’s no surprise, then, that the Sox have made major strides in that department this year.

Answering a question about how the Sox were preparing physically and mentally for their three-country trip that started with two games in London last week, Cora mentioned how the team had begun using a mobile app called “Teamworks” this season. Instead of using group texting or WhatsApp to spread messages between different departments, Cora said, the team began using Teamworks in spring training.

“We have this app called Teamworks,” Cora said. “We’ve been getting reminders throughout the week on what to eat, what to drink, where to go to sleep, when to go to sleep and all that. I know two things: on the way (to London), sleep, and on the way back, don’t sleep. It’s very simple.”

Back in February, the Red Sox announced a partnership with Teamworks, a Durham, North Carolina based tech company, that streamlines all facets of communication for organizations in a simple app. Suddenly, the Red Sox had a centralized place for its players, coaches, front office, medical staff and other departments to easily access one another.

“We connect all the silos into one common hub,” said Zach Maurides, Teamworks’ founder and CEO. “For the athletes, instead of having to go 15 different places to get the information, they have one app and one place to go to receive information from everyone within the organization.”

Maurides, a former offensive lineman at Duke in the mid-2000s, had trouble keeping track of all of his responsibilities as a student-athlete. As athletic programs grew, he said, their communication systems failed to keep up with the sheer amount of voices-- from coaches to nutritionists to tutors-- that had an influence.

“My experience was that the size and complexity of that ecosystem had grown much faster than the systems of work that helped all those people work together cohesively and to effectively and efficiently communicate with the athlete,” Maurides said.

In the 15 years since Maurides founded Teamworks in 2004, the company has grown to partner with virtually every competitive college football team and over 40 professional teams across the four major sports. The company’s clients include nine MLB teams, two English Premier League teams and both the U.S. men’s and women’s national soccer teams.

Athletes on all those teams, including the Red Sox, simply log into the app and are able to get instructions on everything from gameplans and scouting reports to travel itineraries and sleep regimens. For a trip as complex as the 12-day, three-city trip Boston is on right now, effective communication is vital.

“It’ll tell them their seat on the plane, what hotel room number is, the itinerary,” Maurides said. “And it immediately communicates changes.”

Though the exact features of the app change from organization to organization, the company aims to mirror the exact access and responsibility within an organization in the virtual space. If Cora or, say, president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski wanted to get a message across, they’d have the ability to do so based on their login credentials.

Even before the Sox lost both games to the Yankees in London, Cora thought the hard part of the trip would be the two road series in Toronto and London. To stay physically and mentally sharp for the final six games before the All-Star break, the Red Sox will surely consult their new app.

“We’ve got to come back and play Toronto and Detroit, and those are big series,” Cora said. “We’re doing everything possible to stay sharp and talk to the guys about what they have to do.”

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10 observations from the last week in baseball

1. Rest in peace, Tyler Skaggs. Incredible strength and raw emotion shown by the Angels in their postgame team press conference Tuesday night.
2. Justice prevailed in making Xander Bogaerts an All-Star after a couple weeks of chatter about him being a snub. It’s a little crazy there hasn’t been that much outrage about Rafael Devers in comparison.

3. The Home Run Derby field is a good one, with plenty of young exciting players. That \$1 million prize was always going to be more attractive to pre-arb and arbitration guys and the field includes five players making less than \$600k this year (though Alex Bregman and Ronald Acuna Jr. each are waiting on \$100 million extensions to kick in.)
4. Why is Mike Minor being discussed as a trade candidate? Texas is going to buy in a wide-open A.L. Wild Card race.
5. The N.L. Central is shaping up to be a great race, with all five teams within 4 1/2 games. Things are getting tense in Wrigleyville.
6. All that chatter about no August trade deadline meaning a bunch of early trades hasn't proven true so far. Probably because so many teams still feel like they're in it.
7. Eight teams (even the Giants and Mets!) are within six games of a Wild Card spot in the N.L. That'll suppress the market, at least early on.
8. John Means is having a fine year in Baltimore, but he might be the biggest no-name All-Star ever. Taking suggestions for others.
9. Two of the feel-good stories of the year-- Tommy La Stella and Hunter Pence-- will miss the All-Star Game with injuries. Tough twist for them, though Pence showed incredible perspective talking about it.
10. Looking forward to seeing how Cleveland does hosting the All-Star Game. My rankings so far for the ones I've covered: 1. San Diego, 2. Minnesota, 3. Miami 4. DC, 5. Cincinnati. (I also don't like the last three parks on that list.)

### **Christian Vazquez on pace for 24 homers for Red Sox in 2019; 'He understands what he wants to do'**

Christopher Smith

Christian Vazquez blasted his 13th homer of the season in the Red Sox's 6-3 loss to the Blue Jays on Wednesday at Rogers Centre.

Vazquez hit just three homers in 2018. His previous career high was five in 2017.

He's on pace for 24 home runs this season. The power is astonishing. Red Sox manager Alex Cora is "very surprised" by it.

"But he worked," Cora said. "He worked in the offseason with his swing. And he's been very consistent with it. He understands what he wants to do."

Vazquez always has been known more as a contact hitter who the Red Sox felt comfortable using for hit-and-run situations.

"He still can make contact," Cora said. "He understands pitchers, what to do. It's not like he's going out there just to swing for the fences just to swing it. So I'm very proud of him. His approach is great. With two strikes he can go the other way. There's a few things that he needs to get better. He knows it, too. But he's not stopping."

The catcher put Boston ahead 3-1 in the fourth with a 104.9 mph, 408-foot home run to center field against Blue Jays' Jacob Waguespack.

Vazquez has a better OPS (.848) than Mookie Betts (.845), Michael Chavis (.806), Andrew Benintendi (.768) and Jackie Bradley Jr. (.740). Keep in mind though, he has fewer plate appearances than all four hitters.

Vazquez also entered Wednesday ranked first among AL catchers in WAR (2.5). He's third in the majors behind Brewers' Yasmani Grandal (2.9) and Phillies' J.T. Realmuto (2.6).

"He's been one of the best catchers in the big leagues," Cora said.

### **Is Chris Sale healthy? Red Sox ace says, 'There's nothing to look back on other than just being bad'**

Christopher Smith

Chris Sale dropped to 3-8 with a 4.04 ERA in 18 starts as he allowed three home runs to the Blue Jays here Wednesday. The Red Sox lost 6-3 at Rogers Centre.

The ace will head into the All-Star break with a 7.02 ERA (16 2/3 innings, 13 earned runs) in his final three starts of the first half. But he and manager Alex Cora insist he's healthy.

"Yeah, that's kind of the worst part about it," Sale said. "There's nothing to look back on other than just being bad. I don't know if it's this or that. Everything feels good. Just haven't been getting it done. It's just been a tough go."

Cora added, "He's fine, yeah."

Sale has a 2.52 ERA (228.1 IP, 64 earned runs) in 36 career starts on six or more days of rest. But he's 0-5 with a 8.48 ERA (28.2 innings, 27 earned runs) in six starts on six or more days rest in 2019.

That's an alarming stat. Extended rest is not helping him at all this season.

He pitched only 29 innings during the second half last year because of shoulder inflammation. But the Red Sox gave him an extensive physical before inking him to a five-year, \$145-million extension in spring training. It's difficult to believe they would have extended him had his test results shown any physical issues.

"Velocity was good. I think location was off. Just a bad one," Cora said.

Chris Sale's streak of seven straight All-Star Game selections ended here in 2019. He'll head into the All-Star break with a 7.02 ERA (16 2/3 innings, 13 earned runs) in his final three starts of the first half.

Sale won't make another start until after the All-Star break. He's expected to pitch in the first series of the second half vs. the Dodgers at home.

"I know he's disappointed," Cora said. "We're going to keep working. Obviously. Now he has the long break. Hopefully when he comes back, we'll get him back on track."

The Red Sox went 6-12 in Sale's 18 starts during the first half.

"He's our ace. He's our No. 1," Cora said. "When he pitched well, we didn't hit. When we hit, he didn't pitch well. So it was a combination of both. We're a team. We're not going to point fingers and say it's on him or the offense, whatever. I just think collectively whenever he pitched in the first part of the season, we weren't good."

### **Chris Sale has 7.02 ERA in past 3 starts, fails to hold lead as Boston Red Sox lose to Blue Jays; Christian Vazquez homers again**

Christopher Smith

It's July 3 and Red Sox ace Chris Sale has a 4.04 ERA.

Who expected this to happen after Sale signed a five-year, \$145-million contract during spring training?

Sale struggled for a third straight start Wednesday. He allowed five runs, all earned, nine hits and two walks while striking out only five (three in the first inning). He gave up three home runs, all on fastballs.

Boston lost 6-3 to the Blue Jays here at Rogers Centre to drop to 45-41.

Sale failed to hold a 3-1 lead. Danny Jansen crushed a 105.3-mph, 421-foot two-run home run off Sale to tie the game 3-3 in the fourth. Jansen connected on a 95.3 mph four-seam fastball.

Brandon Drury then hit a two-run homer with two outs in the sixth inning to give the Blue Jays a 5-3 lead. Drury crushed a 90.5 four-seam fastball from Sale 408 feet to center field.

Sale has a 7.02 ERA (16 2/3 innings, 13 earned runs) in his past three starts. He has allowed 13 earned runs in 14 2/3 innings (7.98 ERA) in three starts against the Blue Jays this year.

Lourdes Gurriel Jr. hit the Blue Jays' other homer. He belted a 104.7-mph, 406-foot homer against Sale to cut the Blue Jays' deficit to 2-1 in the third. He connected on a 93.3 mph four-seam fastball.

The Red Sox had a chance to tie the game in the top of seventh. Christian Vazquez singled with no outs and Michael Chavis doubled with one out to put two runners in scoring position. But Eduardo Nunez, who was pinch hitting for Brock Holt, flied out to shallow left field. Mookie Betts then struck out swinging.

Boston went 2-for-7 with runners in scoring position and left five men on base.

Red Sox offense

Rafael Devers stroked a two-run single with two outs in the top of the third inning to put Boston ahead 2-0.

Christian Vazquez put Boston ahead 3-1 in the fourth with a 104.9 mph, 408-foot home run to center field against Blue Jays' Jacob Waguespack. Vazquez has belted 13 home runs this season.

### **Boston Red Sox trade rumors: Team scouted starters Matthew Boyd, Mike Minor in recent matchup**

Chris Cotillo

The Red Sox were one of two teams to send a scout to the recent matchup between Rangers starter Mike Minor and Tigers starter Matthew Boyd, according to Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic. The Padres also had an eye on the June 26 game, in which Minor threw a complete game and Boyd allowed four runs in seven innings.

While simply sending a scout doesn't always mean there's legitimate interest, both Boyd and Minor are considered candidates to be traded before the deadline. With the Tigers far out of contention already, Boyd is the more likely lefty to be dealt before July 31.

Boyd, 28, has a 3.72 ERA in 17 starts this season, striking out 129 batters in 101 2/3 innings. He's controllable through the 2022 season and could be of interest to the Sox due to his familiarity with president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, who acquired him in the 2015 trade that sent David Price to Toronto.

Minor, 31, has had a career year, being named an All-Star for the first time thanks to an 8-4 record and 2.54 ERA through 18 starts with Texas. Minor is the more expensive option, as he's owed about \$14.75 million until his contract expires after next season. He could very well remain in Texas, as the Rangers are just a half-game back for a wild card spot and could become deadline buyers.

The Red Sox weren't thought to be in the market for a starter, but their decision to shift righty Nathan Eovaldi to the bullpen earlier this week may change their deadline philosophy. Dombrowski kept the door open to a rotation addition while speaking to reporters Monday and could look to add a cost-effective arm while sticking with Eovaldi in a late-inning role for the rest of the season.

San Francisco's Madison Bumgarner and Toronto's Marcus Stroman are the top two rotation candidates available on the trade market.

### **Red Sox's Cora explains using Vazquez (6.39 ERA with Sale instead of Leon (2.96 ERA)**

Christopher Smith

Red Sox ace Chris Sale has a 6.39 ERA in five starts with Christian Vazquez catching him this year. The lefty has a 2.96 ERA in 12 starts with Sandy Leon at catcher.

So why does manager Alex Cora have Vazquez catching Sale here Wednesday at Rogers Centre?

"What he's doing (offensively)," Cora said. "I know the guy on the mound. He's good. And he can do it. Sometimes we don't score a lot of runs for Chris. Hopefully we prevent them and we score. He's been one of the best catchers in the big leagues. I think I saw today, he's No. 1 in WAR (among catchers). So that was the reason. Good game-planning, go for it. He's pitched to Christian before. He's been good with him, too. He's swinging the bat too good right now for us to sit him."

Vazquez is 6-for-14 with two homers and one double in his past three games.

He's batting .296 with a .331 on-base percentage, .502 slugging percentage, .833 OPS, 12 homers, 10 doubles, one triple and 36 RBIs in 69 games.

Vazquez ranks first among AL catchers in WAR (2.5). He's third in the majors behind Brewers' Yasmani Grandal (2.9) and Phillies' J.T. Realmuto (2.6).

### **Mitch Moreland injury: Boston Red Sox first baseman ran bases Wednesday, 'seems like he's getting closer' to rehab assignment**

Christopher Smith

Red Sox Mitch Moreland is making progress toward a rehab assignment. The Red Sox first baseman has been sidelined since June 8 with a right squad strain.

He suffered the strain June 7 in his first game back after spending the previous 11 games on the injured list with low back strain.

"He's feeling better," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "It's just one of those that there's a few things going on at Fenway. So we have to make adjustments as far as where we do the treatment and all that. It's part of the equation. But he's feeling better. I talked to him today. He ran the bases actually today. He's been swinging the bat. So bouncing back well the next day. So I don't know when, but it seems like he's getting closer (to a rehab assignment)."

Moreland is batting .225 with a .316 on-base percentage, .543 slugging percentage, .859 OPS, 13 homers, nine doubles and 34 RBIs in 47 games this season.

### **Nathan Eovaldi injury: Boston Red Sox righty 'felt really good' during bullpen Wednesday; 'I don't think it's going to take too long'**

Christopher Smith

Nathan Eovaldi threw a 20-pitch bullpen session consisting of all fastballs here Wednesday at Rogers Centre. He's scheduled to throw another bullpen Saturday.

He also threw a bullpen at Fenway Park on Sunday. It marked his first since the beginning of June.

Eovaldi still is rehabbing from an arthroscopic procedure to remove loose bodies from his right elbow April 23. Biceps soreness shut him down for nine days but he's back throwing again.

"I felt really good during the bullpen," Eovaldi said.

The Red Sox have decided to bring Eovaldi back as a closer.

"It's still not out of the question that I'll come back and start this year," Eovaldi said. "We're still trying to do that. It's just right now they feel like I'm more beneficial out of the bullpen."

President of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said Tuesday Eovaldi could return immediately after the All-Star break, or soon after, if his rehab continues without any additional setbacks.

"It just depends on how fast they want to try to move it," Eovaldi said. "We don't really want to jump too far ahead because we don't want to have any setbacks or anything like that. Right now I feel really good. I don't think it's going to take too long."

Eovaldi and the Red Sox aren't ready to say whether he'll serve as a traditional closer or the highest-leverage reliever.

"I told AC (Alex Cora), I want to come back and help out as soon as possible," Eovaldi said. "If I were to come back in the starting rotation, it would take at least another month to build up that way. Any way I can help out. I want to do something."

### **Bogaerts, All-Star: Red Sox shortstop named to American League team as injury replacement**

Chris Cotillo

Red Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts was finally named an All-Star on Wednesday, being added to the American League roster as an injury replacement.

Bogaerts was originally one of the most egregious All-Star snubs, finishing fifth in the fan voting for the A.L.'s starting shortstop and being left off the list of reserves. He expressed his disappointment with the entire process, most recently saying Monday that being left off the roster "wasn't right."

The 26-year-old earned his spot, hitting .301/.392/.541 with 16 homers and 58 RBIs through 82 games. He leads A.L. shortstops in OPS (.933), doubles (28) and RBIs (58).

Bogaerts will join teammates J.D. Martinez and Mookie Betts on the American League roster along with manager Alex Cora and his entire coaching staff. Martinez will now start at designated hitter with Hunter Pence (Rangers) out with injury.

Third baseman Rafael Devers and catcher Christian Vazquez are candidates to be added as injury replacements if someone else on the roster gets injured. Bogaerts, Tampa Bay's Brandon Lowe and Minnesota's Jose Berrios replaced Pence, Tommy La Stella (Angels) and Jake Odorizzi (Twins) on the roster.

## **\* *The Lowell Sun***

**Northcut learning on the fly**

Carmine Frongillo

For prospects like Nick Northcut, baseball in the Boston Red Sox farm system is a game of constant adjustments.

The learning curve that Northcut is navigating during his journey through the minor leagues allows him to refine his skills while maturing on the job.

After getting drafted by the Boston Red Sox in the 11th round of the 2018 Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft, Northcut, a highly-regarded right-handed pitcher, who topped out at 94 miles-per-hour on the radar gun and played as a third baseman in high school, passed up a chance to play college baseball at Vanderbilt University, opting to begin his professional career.

While Vanderbilt was in Omaha winning the College World Series last month, Northcut, 20, a former Rawlings first-team All-American at Mason (OH) High School, was continuing his hardball education in the New York-Penn League, manning the hot corner and hitting in the heart of the order while helping the Lowell Spinners get off to a sizzling start to the 2019 season.

"It was awesome watching Vanderbilt win," said Northcut, who has always played third base in the Red Sox system. "I was super happy for them. I know a bunch of the guys on the team and I was rooting for them. I let them know I was thinking about them. It was great to watch them go out and compete. It was good to support them, but I have no regrets with my decision. I'm getting my baseball education here."

Northcut has been a steady run-producer on a Spinners' club that has produced lots of timely hits. He headed into Wednesday's game against the Vermont Lake Monsters with a team-leading 10 RBI. Northcut has cooled somewhat after beginning the season on an absolute tear in the batter's box. Yet he was still second on the club in doubles (5) and tied for third in total bases (19) while posting a .235 average as of Wednesday.

He broke into professional baseball last summer. Northcut had a home run, nine doubles and 20 RBI while hitting .232 in 41 games in the Gulf Coast League. He played in six games in Lowell last season, and gave a glimpse of his power, hitting a home run and double.

"I've definitely grown up a lot, just getting my first year out of the way," said Northcut. "Stepping back and analyzing the good and the bad. I kind of just put my head down and have a purpose and a plan for what I'm going to do this season. And what I'd like to do."

"I try and get better every single day. My goal is to come out here and learn something new every day that will make me better, whether that's on the field or off the field."

Northcut has proven to be a good situational hitter. He can hit the ball into the alley, or move the runner along with a productive out.

"He just continues to progress and mature as a ballplayer," said Spinners' hitting coach Nate Spears. "Knowing his zone and things that he can do when he gets his pitches. When he gets his pitches, he's putting good swings on them. Not trying to do too much and good things have happened for him."

"I think he'll be a doubles guy. He'll run into a couple balls here and there. He's hit a lot of doubles for us. He's got some good bat to ball skills. He'll get his flares here and there, but he's been driving some balls to the gaps. He's eager to learn and he learns from the bad swings. This is a game of failure and a game of adjustments and a grind, when you can stay positive in all that, like he has, good things happen."

Northcut, who stands 6-foot-1 and weighs 200-pounds, works hard on his fielding. He has been flashing some leather at third base. When needed Northcut can still uncork a throw to first base that's reminiscent of the 90-plus mile-per-hour fastballs he hurled toward the plate as a pitcher.

"He's done a good job for us (at third base)," said Spears. "He has a real good arm. He has to tame that arm a little bit. He's had some plays in the hole where he has had to let it go a couple times and they've been right on the money."

Right now, Northcut is trying to establish a steady rhythm at the plate while helping the Spinners continue their winning ways.

"It's been an unbelievable start (for the team)," said Northcut. "You'd never know it's coach (Luke) Montz first-year. He's an unbelievable manager. He takes care of us. He knows how to be a father, a coach and your best friend at the same time. It's very humbling to be part of something like that.

"We have a very loose group and a very close group. We're here for each other and we root for each other. We just want to come out here and win every day."

## **\* *The Lawrence Eagle Tribune***

### **Justice finally arrives for Xander Bogaerts**

Chris Mason

This week's installment hits on All-Star snubs, areas the Red Sox could add before the July 31 trade deadline, and Chris Sale losing his personal catcher.

#### 1. Justice for Bogey

The flight may be a little more expensive because the All-Star Game is less than a week away now, but Xander Bogaerts can finally book his ticket to Cleveland.

Boston's most consistent player in the first half, Bogaerts was snubbed first in the fan voting, then by the players, but yesterday he was added as an injury replacement for Hunter Pence.

It's overdue and well-deserved.

Bogaerts came into last night's game leading AL shortstops in extra-base hits (44), RBIs (58), and OPS (.933). Steady in the field, Bogaerts has also grown into a leadership role this season. He's become a go-to guy for young players in the Red Sox clubhouse.

#### 2. Raffy responds the right way

While on the topic of snubs, it's always curious to see how a ballplayer will react to a slight, real or perceived. While some wallow, others use it as fuel to prove doubters wrong. J.D. Martinez has made a career out of the latter.

Not named an All-Star despite a strong first half, Rafael Devers certainly isn't wallowing. In the first game after it was announced he wouldn't be joining Alex Cora in Cleveland, the 22-year-old third baseman took his frustration out on the Blue Jays.

Devers went 4 for 5 with two homers, six RBIs, and all four hits were absolutely scalded in Tuesday night's win.

#### 3. He says the right things, too

A young player with a legitimate gripe, it would have been easy for Devers to whine about the snub. Instead he said all the right things, even if he doesn't believe them.

“I wasn’t expecting (to be an All-Star),” Devers told reporters in Toronto. “I just go out there and play my game and if I was selected, I was selected but the fact that I wasn’t doesn’t change the way I play my game.

“Even though I didn’t make it this year doesn’t mean I won’t be able to make it next year, so I’ve just got to continue to work hard and improve every single day.”

#### 4. AC takes Sandy from Sale

In an understandable yet still surprising move, Cora took Chris Sale’s personal catcher away against the Blue Jays.

Sale entered last night with a 2.96 ERA throwing to Sandy Leon, but Cora gave the nod to Christian Vazquez, who sat at 6.39 with the ace. The reasoning is simple: Vazquez’s bat has been so hot that the manager didn’t want to remove him from the lineup.

#### 5. No right-handed bench help?

One area the Red Sox have been middling this season is hitting left-handed pitching. They entered last night batting .248 against southpaws, 16th in the majors, and they’re not doing much damage either, as their .754 OPS was 15th.

Still, Dave Dombrowski told reporters it isn’t an area he feels needs addressing before the deadline. “No, not really. I think part of that has to deal with (Michael) Chavis,” Dombrowski said. “I do think that we’re also in a position... we’re probably in a spot where we need to stay with 13 pitchers most of the time due to our fifth starter spot right now. We don’t have a fifth starter that’s going to go out and get seven innings on a consistent basis.”

#### 6. Internal options for the ‘pen?

They haven’t contributed out of the bullpen this season, but Dombrowski may be hitching his wagon to the idea that the Red Sox have internal candidates.

They’re moving Nathan Eovaldi to closer, took Darwinson Hernandez out of the Triple-A rotation to get relief reps, and named Tanner Houck as another arm that could be in the big club’s bullpen at some point this season.

Wouldn’t it be easier to trade for a proven arm?

#### 7. Another setback for Pearce

It’s seeming less and less likely that the Red Sox will get any sort of meaningful contribution from the reigning World Series MVP. On his most recent rehab assignment, Steve Pearce suffered another setback, this time a knee injury that could keep him out for a month.

He’s given them next to nothing in 2019.

#### 8. Money could have been better spent

Hindsight is always 20/20, but it’s hard not to connect the last two points. If Dombrowski had paid a proven reliever the \$6.5 million it took to bring Pearce back, how much better off would the Red Sox be right now?

#### 9. RIP Tyler Skaggs

The baseball community suffered a tragic loss earlier this week, as Angels pitcher Tyler Skaggs passed away on Monday morning. He was only 27 years old.

“I’ve been saying it all along, it puts everything in perspective,” Cora said. “This is just a game. I know people take it very seriously but in the end we’re human beings and we suffer. It was a tough day (Monday) for everybody here. It was a tough one (Tuesday). Thoughts and prayers to his family, his wife, the Angels organization. We’re here for them.”

## **\* *The Pawtucket Times***

### **Lin back in the swing of it, but PawSox drop another to Scranton**

Brendan McGair

First, there was the knee injury that was the result of a slide into second base in Chicago. Then came the right shoulder impingement that halted his rehab assignment.

Is there any wonder why Tzu-Wei Lin is so eager to make up for lost time?

Tuesday night marked Lin’s 31st game of the season with 18 coming for a PawSox club that once again fell to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, 5-3. Lin went 1-for-4 and played third base. On Monday, his rehab time with Pawtucket officially came to an end as Boston activated the utilityman off the injured list and optioned him to Triple-A.

“Just to be able to play again ... I missed it,” said Lin. “My shoulder feels a lot better.”

To understand Lin’s plight, one must go back to a Friday night in early May when the 25-year-old attempted to steal second base. Lin didn’t need any help as he walked off the field under his own power.

“On the slide, my knee just stopped. The first thing I thought is that I broke it,” said Lin. “I was holding it. Once I got to the clubhouse, I was like (shoot). The next day, it was very bad.”

Lin ended up going just over a month between games. His first rehab appearance with the PawSox came on June 8. After batting 5-for-16 with three doubles, three RBIs and two walks in five games with Pawtucket, Lin was pulled off his rehab. Despite being on the major league’s injured list, Lin continued to spend time with the PawSox.

The extent of Lin’s shoulder injury limited him to fielding grounders but not throwing. He joked that he was put on a program that’s normally prescribed for a pitcher.

“Lots of stretching,” said Lin.

The injuries that Lin suffered helped to open the door for Marco Hernandez to move past him on Boston’s infield depth chart. The Sox are certainly familiar with Lin, as he’s appeared in 75 career MLB games over the past 2½ seasons.

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EXTRA BASES: Before a crowd of 10,053, the RailRiders completed a three-game sweep of the PawSox behind three home runs and six innings of two-run ball from reliever Adonis Rosa. ... Pawtucket has now dropped 13 of its last 14 home games at McCoy Stadium. ... PawSox starter Teddy Stankiewicz allowed four runs in seven innings while Mike Shawaryn, in his first outing since getting optioned by Boston, allowed one run in two innings. ... Pawtucket’s three runs were the result of solo home runs off the bats of Cole Sturgeon, Chris Owings and Gorkys Hernandez. ... Pawtucket placed reliever Jenrry Mejia and his 6.75 ERA on the injured list with a lower back strain. ... The PawSox now head to Lehigh Valley for the final four games before the All-Star break. The series with the IronPigs gets underway Thursday night with Ryan Weber (1-2, 6.02) on the mound for the locals.

## **\* *RedSox.com***

### **Sale calls his record 'absolutely embarrassing'**

Keegan Matheson

Something about the Blue Jays' lineup has given Chris Sale trouble this season, which continued on Tuesday night at Rogers Centre as the lefty battled through 5 2/3 innings without his best strikeout pitch.

Sale allowed nine hits in the Red Sox's 6-3 loss, the most he's given up since May 30, 2017, but it still looked like he'd be able to work around them early on. He stranded a baserunner in the first and two in the second, but then the loud contact started to pile up.

Lourdes Gurriel Jr. got things started with a solo shot to right, which continued his streak as one of the hottest hitters in the Majors through June and into July. Danny Jansen followed suit in the next inning with a two-run shot before Brandon Drury, who entered play hitting just .202, put an end to Sale's night with another two-run homer in the sixth. The three home runs were the most that Sale has allowed since his first start of the season, which are the only times this year that he's allowed more than one.

"I'm throwing the ball over the middle of the plate," Sale said after the loss. "If you look at the pitches they're doing major damage on, they're up out over. I've just got to find a way to execute better when I need to."

Over his three starts against the Blue Jays this season, Sale has allowed 14 runs (13 earned) on 23 hits and nine walks with 16 strikeouts in 14 2/3 innings. Sale didn't hold back in his self criticism, calling this the most frustrated that he's been in his career.

"I'm supposed to be a big part of this team and a big part of this pitching staff," Sale said, "And I've probably been the biggest crutch. That's another pretty crappy part. I know who I am and who I'm supposed to be for this team, and I haven't been anything close."

"I'm 3-8. That's absolutely embarrassing. That's not what I need to be and that's not who I need to be for this team. On a team like this, they need me to be better than that. I haven't been there for them."

Even with the highs in hits and home runs against, though, a groundout by Randal Grichuk was one of the night's more telling at bats.

With two out in the fifth inning, Sale quickly got Grichuk into an 0-2 count with a called strike and swinging strike. From there, Grichuk fouled off eight pitches and took two balls before finally grounding out on the 13th pitch to end the inning. It was the right result for Sale, but it pushed his pitch count up on a night when he struck out just five batters, his lowest total since May 24.

Sale has been adjusting his pitch mix in an attempt to reverse his recent struggles, but the Blue Jays still managed to remain one step ahead and waste the right pitches.

"They had some good at-bats, fouling off pitches," said manager Alex Cora. "It's been a theme against them the whole season since the first game in Fenway, then the last start and this one. They keep spoiling pitches and putting good swings on pitches in the zone."

Christian Vázquez continued his 2019 power surge with another home run in the fourth inning, a 408-foot shot, according to Statcast. That gives Vazquez 13 homers on the season as he continues to increase his new career high.

Betts, J.D., Bogaerts rewarded with ASG nod

Ian Browne

Mookie Betts, last year's American League MVP Award winner, has earned a fourth consecutive trip to the All-Star Game. He will be joined by teammate J.D. Martinez, the star slugger who will make his third All-Star appearance. Xander Bogaerts will also be representing the Red Sox in Cleveland, getting the late nod after starting designated hitter Hunter Pence was ruled unavailable.

Betts and Martinez were both selected as reserves on Sunday, three days after they came up short in the Starters' Election at their respective positions. Martinez was then shifted to be the starting DH on Wednesday.

Bogaerts was added to the AL roster on Wednesday after Pence reaggravated a groin injury that sent him to the injured list on June 17.

They are the only three All-Star players for the defending World Series champion Red Sox, who will also be represented in Cleveland by manager Alex Cora and the entire coaching staff.

"It's an honor," said Martinez. "It's something to look forward to. Anytime you get together and you're with the best in the game, it's pretty cool."

The 2019 All-Star Game will be played on Tuesday at Progressive Field in Cleveland. It will be televised nationally by FOX Sports; in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS; and worldwide by partners in more than 180 countries. FOX Deportes will provide Spanish-language coverage in the United States, while ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide exclusive national radio coverage. MLB Network, MLB.com and SiriusXM also will provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage.

While Betts and Martinez are excited to again be part of MLB's midsummer spectacle, they were disappointed that Bogaerts (initially), third baseman Rafael Devers and catcher Christian Vazquez didn't get selected.

In fact, Betts was candid in saying he feels those three players have been the most important pieces of Boston's lineup this season.

"There's a lot of guys on our team that are very deserving with Devers, Bogey and Vazqy," Betts said. "Those guys have kind of been the people that have carried us all season, so in my opinion, they should definitely get more recognition. Those guys in particular that have made us go. Me and J.D. have been guys kind of in the rear to those guys."

In his second full season in the Major Leagues, the 22-year-old Devers has been a machine, slashing .322/.372/.525 with 12 homers and 50 RBIs.

Bogaerts, who also made the All-Star team in 2016, is off to the best start of his career from a production standpoint. The shortstop clocked a two-run homer in the first inning in London against the Yankees on Sunday, his 16th of the season. He has a line of .299/.392/.540.

And Vazquez is giving the Red Sox production (11 homers, 34 RBIs) at catcher, where offense is at a premium.

"We were talking about it in [the clubhouse]," said Martinez. "Look at Bogey, Christian, Xander, three guys that have been carrying our team pretty much. They are doing a great job. Obviously wish guys like that would get more recognition. I hope that everyone knows they deserve it and deserve the recognition of being there as well."

As for Martinez and Betts, they've made the All-Star team despite both, in their own words, "grinding it out" during the first half of the season.

Betts is hitting just .261, but he leads the AL in runs (66) and is second in walks (62).

“I mean, it is what it is,” said Betts. “I’m trying to do the things I can do and I’m working hard in the cage to try to get back to somewhat normal. I’m trying to do what I can as far as play defense, draw some walks, score some runs and help the team win in some way.”

Martinez went deep on Sunday for the 18th time this season. He has a sturdy line of .298/.374/.549.

“It’s been kind of a grind. I’ve been able to have success and hold my own,” Martinez said. “I feel like the numbers statistically a lot of people would be happy with. Me personally, though, I know what I can do so it’s a bit frustrating. I’ve fallen into some habits I can’t quite get rid of. I’m going to continue to grind. I’m proud of myself that every night I find a way to get it done, really.”

Betts and Martinez have pushed each other the last two seasons and are constantly in the batting cage together. Martinez is pleased to see Betts earn his way back to All-Star status, even if he had to scratch and claw his way there.

“Everyone thinks he’s having an awful year, but you look at that OPS number and you think, ‘OK, he’s still very productive -- an All-Star level of productive,’” said Martinez. “[I just] try to make sure he understands as well. I get it. It’s frustrating.”

Frustrating or not, three of Boston’s big hitters have once again found their way to the All-Star Game.

### **Eovaldi, Hembree aim to bolster 'pen in return**

Keegan Matheson

Help is on the way for the Red Sox's bullpen, which could come as early as Thursday in the form of Heath Hembree and, soon after the All-Star break, Nathan Eovaldi.

Eovaldi threw another bullpen session on Wednesday afternoon in Toronto and was encouraged by how he felt afterwards. He is scheduled to throw again on Saturday, after which the Red Sox should have a clearer understanding of how quickly he can return to help the bullpen, a new idea born out of the urgency of Boston's season.

After signing as a starter this past offseason, Eovaldi’s priorities changed recently as he worked his way back from injury. He underwent arthroscopic surgery for loose bodies in his right elbow on April 23, and right biceps tendinitis prolonged his recovery. Time is a factor with the season’s midway point in the rearview mirror, and Eovaldi is focused on his team first.

“I told AC [Red Sox manager Alex Cora] I want to come back and help out as soon as possible,” Eovaldi said. “If I were to come back into the starting rotation, it would take at least another month to build up that way. Any way can help out, I want to be able to do so.”

This echoes what both Cora and general manager Dave Dombrowski said prior to Tuesday’s game. The 29-year-old Eovaldi last pitched on April 17. He’ll be pushing three months between game action by the time the All-Star break wraps up, which has been a challenging process for him after the high of his 2018 World Series performance.

“It’s been really frustrating. Having the surgery, working my way back from that and then the biceps tendinitis,” Eovaldi said. “Just having to kind of wait until it all goes away. Now I feel really good and hopefully it won’t be too long.”

Hembree is also feeling healthy after making one rehab outing with Triple-A Pawtucket on Tuesday, where he pitched a clean inning with two strikeouts on 16 pitches. Over his last 20 appearances before hitting the injured list with a right elbow strain, Hembree posted a 0.52 ERA with 25 strikeouts over 17 1/3 innings.

His return should provide a welcome boost to Boston's bullpen, whether that comes in Toronto on Thursday or Detroit on Friday.

"I'd like to think so. We're still going to figure out today where we're at and see what the next step is," Hembree said.

With no starter announced yet for Thursday's finale in Toronto, it's possible that the Red Sox could give Hector Velazquez the nod and rely on multiple bullpen arms behind him.

## **\* *NBC Sports Boston***

### **Boxberger could interest Red Sox as low-cost, low-risk relief option after being released by Royals**

John Tomase

A combination of desperation and budgetary constraints has left the Red Sox facing some unpalatable choices in their bullpen, which means they'll be linked to every flawed, low-cost veteran who hits the market.

First up: Brad Boxberger.

The Royals just requested release waivers on the veteran righthander and assuming no one claims him, will be on the hook for the remainder of his \$2.2 million salary.

The 31-year-old was a 2015 All-Star with Tampa, when he saved 41 games. That came one year after his breakout 2014, when he struck out 104 in just 64.2 innings as a setup man.

Since then, he has experienced mixed results, particularly from a command standpoint. He's 1-3 with a 5.40 ERA in 29 appearances this year, with 27 strikeouts and an unsightly 17 walks in 26.2 innings. His strikeout rate of 9.1 is the second-lowest of his eight-year career, while his 5.7 walks per nine are his third-highest.

That said, Boxberger averaged more than 12 strikeouts per nine in 2017 and 2018, and he saved 32 games for the Diamondbacks last year before being replaced as closer down the stretch. He has never thrown particularly hard, averaging 92-93 mph on his fastball for most of his career, but he has excelled on the strength of a deceptive delivery and outstanding changeup.

The Red Sox have specialized in re-working pitch mixes to turn marginal veterans into effective performers, whether it was encouraging Rich Hill to vary the shape of his curveball, nudging Nathan Eovaldi to feature his cutter, or convincing Heath Hembree to abandon his slider.

Boxberger's fastball velocity has fallen to a career-low 90.69 mph, per Brooks Baseball, and he's throwing it a career-low 47 percent of the time. Whereas once he went almost exclusively fastball-changeup, he is now throwing a slider nearly 20 percent of the time, and opponents are hitting .357 against it, compared to .236 vs. his fastball and .206 vs. his changeup.

Assuming no one claims him -- and it's unlikely anyone would pick up his money, given his struggles -- he'll likely sign a minor league deal and then earn a prorated portion of the veteran minimum (\$555,000) if he reaches the majors.

Given the state of the Red Sox bullpen and the inability to patch holes internally, Boxberger may be worth a flyer as they scramble to find bargain solutions.

## **\* *Bostonsportsjournal.com***

### **Red Sox need improvement from Chris Sale to go anywhere in second half**

Sean McAdam

They can move the pieces around — Nathan Eovaldi from the rotation to the bullpen; a revolving door of candidates for the fifth spot in the rotation — and make all the deadline acquisitions they want, but as the All-Star break draws closer, one thing is abundantly clear for the Red Sox: unless and until Chris Sale snaps out of it, the rest of it won't matter.

No reliever obtained from outside will mean more. No role change will be as significant.

They need Sale to be Sale, or any dreams of a second-half revival and redemption in October will be made moot.

The rest, by comparison, is mere window dressing.

This Red Sox team was built around the starting rotation, remember? The Sox seemed intent on bucking the industry trend by going decidedly old school and relying on their core of veteran starters to routinely A) chew up innings and B) give them a chance to win on a nightly basis.

That was the plan, anyway.

The reality has been far different. Of the Big Five, only David Price has come close to fulfilling expectations. Eovaldi made just four starts before being sidelined with an elbow injury. Rick Porcello has been inconsistent and Eduardo Rodriguez has been his enigmatic self at times.

And Sale? He's been mostly disappointing. True, his 3-8 won-loss record isn't entirely representative of how he's pitched. He's pitched well enough at times to win another four or five decisions. As an example: he had back-to-back outings in which he threw a combined 15 innings, struck out 31, walked no one, gave up just six hits and three earned runs — and got no-decisions both times.

"When he pitched well, we didn't hit," noted Alex Cora.

Fair enough.

But it's hard to absolve Sale fully, not when he's finishing his first half with an ERA of 4.04.

Sale did indeed have a stretch of 11 starts — about a third of a starting pitcher's season — in which he pitched to a 2.24 ERA. That was vintage Chris Sale.

But before that run of dominance and after, Sale has been highly ineffective, with an 8.80 ERA in his other seven starts.

The cause, everyone agrees, is fastball command. Sale is throwing his heater with sufficient velocity, but he's not able to locate it consistently. That explains his team-high 16 homers allowed, including three Wednesday night in a 6-3 loss to Toronto.

However, while the cause is plainly evident, the solution isn't so obvious. If it were, it would have been fixed by now.

“I’ve got to throw more strikes, better quality pitches ... I don’t know,” said a disconsolate Sale. “I haven’t been good recently. I’m throwing the ball over the middle of the plate. You look at the pitches that they’re hitting and doing major damage on, they’re up out over (the plate). I haven’t been myself and that’s obviously frustrating.”

Sale is the anchor of the rotation, around which the other starters revolve. He’s paid to continue winning streaks and end losing streaks, and for now, at least, he’s doing neither.

He’s not providing enough length to save the bullpen when he starts — the way a true front-of-the-rotation starter is expected. He’s not shutting down elite lineups; heck, of late, he’s not even defeating mediocre lineups like the White Sox (last Wednesday) or the Jays.

If there’s any consolation, Sale is fully healthy with no restriction. You can see that with radar gun registering 95-96 mph at times with his four-seamer, and you can see in the reaction of hitters who swing and miss with regularity.

But that clean bill of health, while reassuring, is also a double-edged sword.

“That’s kind of the worst part about it,” mused Sale. “There’s nothing to look back on other than just being bad. Everything feels good. I just haven’t been getting it done.”

Sale also fully understands his importance to the franchise. He knows that as he goes, so go the Red Sox.

“I’m supposed to be a big part of this team and a big part of this pitching staff,” he said, “and I’ve probably been the biggest crutch. That’s another pretty crappy part: I know who I am and who I was supposed to be for this team and I haven’t been anything close. What am I, 3-8? That’s absolutely embarrassing.

“On a team like this, they need me to be better and I haven’t been there for him.”

This isn’t about building arm strength anymore, or the natural hangover from last October. But as Sale alluded, this is something worse: a healthy Sale who isn’t pitching well.

Cora noted that Sale will get a good long break now, with his next start scheduled for either the second or third game after the All-Star break. That’s time to rest up and get a mental reset from an underwhelming first half

“He’s our ace, he’s our No. 1,” insisted Cora. “We’re going to stick with the process and pray to God that the results are going to be there. Right now, we’re not getting results, but I know this guy is a horse, he’s one of the best pitchers in the big leagues. Hopefully, the break is going to help him out and we get the Chris Sale that we’re accustomed to.”

Or else.

Because, comparatively speaking, nothing else matters.

### **BSJ Game Report: Blue Jays 6, Red Sox 3 – Jays ride homers to win over Sale**

Sean McAdam

Sale beaten by the long ball: It seemed strange to note, but halfway through the season, Chris Sale, of all people, leads Red Sox pitchers with 16 gopher balls. That was a problem Wednesday night, too, as all five runs off him were the result of homers. He was tagged for a solo shot by Lourdes Gurriel Jr. in the third inning, a two-run belt by Danny Jansen in the fourth and, finally, another two-run blast by Brandon Drury in the fifth.

By contrast, Sale allowed just 11 homers all of last season. Most of these homers are coming off fastballs, which makes sense since fastball location — or lack thereof — has been Sale's biggest problem this season. On at least two occasions Wednesday, Sale didn't get the ball where he wanted to with fastballs and paid the price when the pitches were hit out of the ballpark.

His most dominant stretch earlier this year came when he kept the ball in the ballpark, allowing just four homers in the span of nine starts. In that same stretch, his ERA was 2.09. In the last three games, as he has struggled each time out, he's allowed a total of six homers — or, two more than he did over the course of his previous nine starts combined.

Red Sox 3-4-5 quieted: The Red Sox had a 3-1 lead in the fourth inning that Sale ultimately couldn't protect. But they got next to nothing from their 3-4-5 hitters in the lineup — Xander Bogaerts, J.D. Martinez and Andrew Benintendi — who combined to go 1-for-12. The lone hit came in the eighth inning when Martinez reached on an infield single that clanged off third baseman Vladimir Guerrero Jr.'s glove. Bogaerts, named as a deserved replacement to the A.L. All-Star team earlier in the day, had possibly his worst game of the season, fanning all four times, and could be seen trying to work out some mechanical issues with his swing with hitting coach Tim Hyers in the Red Sox dugout. Benintendi, who was hitless in the first game, too, went 0-for-4 Wednesday and is now hitless in his last 12 at-bats. While elevating Rafael Devers to the second spot in the order has worked like a charm, dropping Benintendi to fifth in the lineup hasn't produced the desired results. He looked frustrated in virtually every plate appearance, with two routine flyouts to right and a couple of comebackers to the mound. Benintendi is at his best when he's going the other way, but seemed to be focused on pulling the ball.

Vazquez continues to shine: Alex Cora surprised most everyone with the decision to go with Christian Vazquez behind the plate Wednesday night since, typically, Sale throws to Sandy Leon as his battery-mate. But Vazquez has been wielding such a hot bat of late (five homers in his previous 12 games and two straight) that Cora wanted the extra thump that Vazquez can provide at the plate. The move seemed to pay off in the fourth inning when Vazquez cranked yet another homer — this one to straightaway center — to give the Red Sox a 3-1 lead. Vazquez later added a leadoff single in the seventh and took third on a double by Michael Chavis, but was ultimately stranded when the Sox could deliver either baserunner. He's now hit safely in each of his last 14 starts and has reached base safely in his last 18. And this is no small sample size, either — Vazquez is now hitting .340 over his last 45 games dating back exactly two months to May 4.

#### TURNING POINT

Not much doubt about this one: a first-pitch fastball to Brandon Drury in the sixth, which he clubbed to deep center for a tiebreaking two-run homer. Sale was an out away from getting out of the inning tied, but instead, was beaten by the Jays' No. 9 hitter.

#### ONE UP

Marcus Walden: Walden has been spotty for the past few weeks, but turned in an impressive 1.1 innings, allowing the Red Sox to get into the eighth inning with a chance.

#### TWO DOWN

Steven Wright: Still working his way back, Wright had a rocky eighth inning, with two walks, a hard-hit double and a sacrifice fly which produced an insurance run.

Jackie Bradley Jr.: Bradley has been among the hottest hitters in the game the last few weeks, but went 0-for-4 on this night.

#### QUOTE OF NOTE

"It wasn't good, it wasn't good ... a lot of pitches in the zone." Alex Cora on Chris Sale's outing.

## STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

Xander Bogaerts had a four-strikeout game for the first time in his career.  
The loss was just the second for the Red Sox in their last 11 road games.  
Devers had a two-run single, giving him eight RBI in the first two games of the series.  
For the Red Sox, this was just their second loss in six tries in Toronto this season.

UP NEXT:

The Red Sox and Blue Jays close out their series Thursday at 7:07, with RHP Hector Velazquez (1-3, 5.31) vs. TBA.

## \* *The Athletic*

**‘That’s absolutely embarrassing’: Chris Sale bluntly sums up his erratic first half after another rough outing**

Jen McCaffrey

And with that, a confounding first half has come to a close for Chris Sale.

The Red Sox lefty exited the game Wednesday after allowing his third homer over 5 2/3 innings. The two-run shot from No. 9 hitter Brandon Drury gave the Blue Jays the lead and the eventual win.

The three homers Sale allowed to the Blue Jays offered an odd symmetry to Opening Day, the last time Sale allowed multiple homers in a start this year.

Among the many first-half disappointments for the Red Sox, Sale’s performance tops the list.

“I just haven’t been myself for a while. That’s obviously frustrating,” he said dejectedly after the start. “I hate being short with you guys, but it’s the same thing over and over. I’ve got nothing new for you. I just haven’t been good. Gotta find a way to be better. I’m about as frustrated as I’ve ever been playing baseball.”

Sale’s 3-8 record and 4.04 ERA are his fewest wins and highest ERA since he transitioned to a full-time starter in 2012. He’d never posted a first-half ERA worse than 3.38 or logged fewer than six wins until this season.

It appeared as if Sale had started to turn a corner with a five-start stretch from late May to mid-June when he posted a 2.12 ERA, but over his past three starts, two against the struggling Blue Jays and one against the equally beleaguered White Sox, he’s allowed 13 earned runs in 16 2/3 innings.

Christian Vázquez was behind the plate for Sale on Wednesday rather than Sandy León, who had caught the previous two starts in which Sale faltered. Alex Cora had hoped Vazquez’s hot bat would give the club an extra boost.

Vázquez homered to give the Red Sox the lead in the fourth, but Sale gave it up in the bottom of the inning.

“I’m supposed to be a big part of this team and a big part of this pitching staff,” Sale said. “I’ve probably been the biggest crush. That’s another pretty crappy part is — I know who I am and who I’m supposed to be for this team, and I haven’t even been anything close. What am I, 3-8? That’s absolutely embarrassing.”

In hindsight, the slow spring buildup was too conservative and left Sale (and the rest of the rotation, for that matter) seemingly unprepared for the regular season. But more than halfway through the schedule, with over 100 innings logged for Sale, not much has evened out.

Like the rest of the team, the overriding characteristic of Sale's first half has been inconsistency. He began the year with an awful stretch, then seemed to return to brilliance with a 17-strikeout performance against the Colorado Rockies on May 14. The early-June stretch provided more promise until the disappointment of the past two weeks.

While the strikeouts remain (he ranks second in the American League with 153 strikeouts and a 12.87 K/9), Sale has failed to pitch six full innings in one-third of his 18 starts.

Sale, Cora and pitching coach Dana LeVangie all assured that Sale is healthy, but the struggles lie in mechanical adjustments.

"If Chris Sale wasn't healthy, then I would be really concerned about this, but he's healthy and zero complaints," LeVangie said.

With a handful of off-days before and after the London trip, the Red Sox rearranged the rotation so that Sale would have the longest stretch off ahead of the All-Star break. David Price told Cora and LeVangie that he would pitch the final game before the All-Star break on Sunday so that Sale could have a few extra days.

"It allows Chris to have a little extra breather going into the break, decompress and be ready to be Chris Sale when he gets back," LeVangie said.

Like Xander Bogaerts, Sale signed a multiyear deal at the start of the season to avoid free agency. But while Bogaerts has flourished this year, pointing to relief in avoiding contract uncertainty, the same can't be said for Sale.

All there's been is uncertainty.

## **\* *The Toronto Sun***

### **Jays rookie Waguespack records first career win with solid outing against Red Sox**

Dave Pollard

The Blue Jays threw a curveball even before their game with the Boston Red Sox began.

But this one turned out to be a strike, not a ball in the dirt.

After announcing that rookie Jacob Waguespack would make his first career MLB start Wednesday upon being activated off the 10-day IL, the Jays instead went with an opener as reliever David Phelps toed the rubber to begin the game.

Pitching coach Pete Walker dropped the idea on manager Charlie Montoyo a couple of hours before the game started and he agreed to give it a whirl.

"I said: 'Why not? Let's do it,'" Montoyo said. "It's always good for a young guy like Waguespack to face Mookie Betts and the top of the lineup just two times instead of three times. That was the whole idea."

Phelps pitched a scoreless first inning, then turned it over to Waguespack and the big right-hander didn't disappoint.

Montoyo's mound moves paid off as Waguespack, a 25-year-old from Louisiana who isn't ranked among the Jays' top 30 prospects by MLB, got his first big-league win as the Jays dumped the Red Sox 6-3 at the Rogers Centre.

Waguespack, who went four innings in relief in his MLB debut against the Rays on May 27 before going on the IL with a shoulder strain, probably did enough to deserve an actual start later this season. He gave up three runs on six hits over five innings and, although he was touched for a Christian Vazquez solo homer, he didn't walk a batter and appeared in control most of the night.

"The consensus was I was going to start. Then they just decided (on an opener) before the game," Waguespack said. "It didn't affect me at all. I was just trying to stay aggressive and Jano (catcher Danny Jansen) and Pete had a great game plan. I'm not familiar with those hitters and obviously they are one of the best (teams) in the game."

Boston lefty Chris Sale struggled for the second start in a row, giving up five runs on nine hits (three homers) and two walks while striking out five in 5.2 innings. He gave up five runs in his last start, too, after limiting the opposition to five runs in his previous four starts combined.

"For some reason we have good at-bats against him," Jays Montoyo said of his team's success this season against Sale, who is 0-2 in three starts against Toronto. "Our guys see the ball good against him. He's still one of the best pitchers in baseball."

With one out in the third, Rafael Devers drove in a pair of runs with a single to left. to give the Red Sox a 2-0 lead

Lourdes Gurriel Jr., halved the deficit by launching a Sale offering over the fence in centre field for his 15th home run of the season. Then formerly light-hitting catcher Vazquez, who hit just five bombs last year, made it 3-1 for the Bosox with a solo blast in the fourth, his 13th homer of the season, to set the stage for the Jays comeback.

Jansen, who has gone from ice cold to red hot at the plate, hit a no-doubt two-run shot off Sale with one out in the fourth after Justin Smoak walked. Jansen has hit now four of his six home runs in his last seven games after going 0-for-17 in his previous six.

Sale got rocked again in the sixth when Brandon Drury hit a two-out, two-run bomb to give Jays a 5-3 lead, which they wouldn't give up. Relievers Tim Mayza, Daniel Hudson and Ken Giles, who picked up his 13th save, finished it off.

NO-GO FOR STRO?

Starter Marcus Stroman, listed as day-to-day with a left shoulder pectoral issue, could miss his start Thursday, his last before the all-star game on July 9 in Cleveland.

Montoyo said a trip to the IL isn't being considered right now, but a decision to give the ball to Stroman for the series finale with the Red Sox likely won't be made until after he gets treatment for the injury.

"We'll see how (Stroman) feels, that's why I'm saying day-to-day," Montoyo said. "If he doesn't feel 100%, we're not going to rush him. We'll make another move (if necessary), whatever we have to do."

If Stroman can't go, Thomas Pannone could be recalled from triple-A Buffalo to make the start or the rotation could be shuffled. Pannone, the International League pitcher of the week, is already scheduled to start Thursday for the Bisons.

Montoyo said Aaron Sanchez (3-11), who lasted just three innings Sunday against the Kansas City Royals, won't be moved up a day. Sanchez is scheduled to start Friday against Baltimore.

## REID-FOLEY DEMOTED

With Waguespack activated off the IL to pitch Wednesday, the Jays optioned Sean Reid-Foley to Buffalo a couple of hours before game time.

Reid-Foley didn't look happy about the demotion but it was made necessary when he threw 3.1 hitless innings Tuesday against the Red Sox.

"He already pitched yesterday," Montoyo said. "We need everybody else. He did a good job."

On a positive note, Montoyo said Reid-Foley is an option to join the rotation after the all-star break. The righty is 0-1 with a 3.55 ERA and 12 Ks in 12.2 innings with the Jays in 2019.

## SHORT HOPS

Rookie Rowdy Tellez has 14 homers this season, one off the team lead, and has worked his way into the conversation as the Jays first baseman of the future. But he still needs work, Montoyo said. "He's got a chance to be a good big-league power guy. His approach at the plate needs to get better. For a first basemen, he's got to get more production." Tellez was 2-for-3 against Sale ... The Jays lead MLB in several rookie offensive categories — hits, home runs, RBIs and extra-base hits. Anyone looking for a nugget of good news in a rebuilding season, that's it ... Dunedin Blue Jays OF Demi Orimoloye was named Florida State League player of the month for June. A fourth-rounder in 2015 from Orleans, Ont., led the FSL in average (.342) with five HRs and 21 RBIs in 20 games.

## **\* Associated Press**

### **Struggling Sale 'as frustrated as I've ever been'**

After his latest rough start, struggling Boston Red Sox ace Chris Sale said he has never felt more "frustrated" by his performance.

Danny Jansen and Brandon Drury each hit two-run homers, Lourdes Gurriel Jr. added a solo shot, and the Toronto Blue Jays beat Sale and the Red Sox 6-3 on Wednesday night.

All three homers came off Sale (3-8), who lost for the first time in six starts. It's the second time this season Sale has allowed three homers; he also did it in his Opening Day outing against the Seattle Mariners on March 28.

"I'm supposed to be a big part of this team, a big part of this pitching staff, and I've probably been the biggest crutch," Sale said. "I know who I am and who I'm supposed to be for this team, and I haven't been anything close. I'm 3-8; that's absolutely embarrassing. On a team like this, they need me to be better, and I haven't been there for them.

"I'm standing before you as frustrated as I've ever been."

Sale gave up five runs and a season-high nine hits in 5 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings. He also allowed five runs in his previous start, June 26 against the Chicago White Sox.

"It wasn't good," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. "Just a lot of pitches in the zone. I know he's disappointed."

Sale came in 5-1 with a 1.60 ERA in nine career games in Toronto, but he couldn't extend that streak of dominance. Instead, he allowed at least four earned runs for the third time in three meetings with the Blue Jays. He is 0-2 with a 7.98 ERA against Toronto this season and has allowed 23 hits to Blue Jays batters over 14 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings.

"I'm not locating fastballs, my changeup is terrible, breaking ball is hit or miss," Sale said. "I just haven't been myself for a while and that's obviously frustrating. It's the same thing over and over."

Sale isn't expected to pitch again until after the All-Star break, meaning he'll get at least nine days off before facing the Los Angeles Dodgers at Fenway Park.

"Hopefully, when he comes back, we'll get him back on track," Cora said.

Drury went 3-for-4 and came within a triple of the cycle. He singled in the third and doubled in the eighth.

Blue Jays right-hander Jacob Waguespack (1-0) allowed three runs and five hits in five-plus innings for his first career win.

"That's the second time I've seen him pitch in the big leagues, and he's been really good," Toronto manager Charlie Montoyo said.

Waguespack was pressed into action after Wednesday's original scheduled starter, right-hander Sean Reid-Foley, pitched 3½ innings of no-hit relief in Tuesday's 10-6 loss. Instead, Toronto used right-hander David Phelps to open for Waguespack, who was recalled from Triple-A Buffalo to make his second career appearance.

Rafael Devers hit a two-run single off Waguespack in the third, but Gurriel halved the deficit with a two-out homer, his 15th, in the bottom half.

Christian Vazquez restored the two-run lead with a solo homer in the fourth, his 13th and third in the past three games.

Jansen tied it with a second-deck drive in the bottom half, his sixth of the year and fourth in six games.

Drury ended Sale's night with a two-out homer in the sixth, his seventh and first since June 5.

Waguespack left after Vazquez singled to begin the seventh. Left-hander Tim Mayza followed and struck out Jackie Bradley Jr. before Chavis doubled. Right-hander Daniel Hudson came on to face pinch hitter Eduardo Nunez, who flied out. Hudson ended the threat by striking out Mookie Betts.

Hudson worked the eighth, and Ken Giles pitched a 1-2-3 ninth for his 13th save in 14 opportunities.

Blue Jays shortstop Freddy Galvis went 3-for-3 with a walk, including a double on Sale's first pitch of the game. Galvis padded Toronto's lead with a sacrifice fly off Steven Wright in the eighth.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Blue Jays: RHP Marcus Stroman (pectoral cramp) might need an extra day of rest before his next start or possibly a stint on the injured list. Stroman left Saturday's start against the Kansas City Royals in the fifth inning. He is listed as Toronto's starter for Thursday's series finale. ... OF Teoscar Hernandez (right shoulder) sat for the second straight day.

#### SCORING STREAK

Toronto has scored five or more in five straight games and in 13 of the past 14.

#### YOU'RE A STAR

Red Sox SS Xander Bogaerts was one of three injury replacements named to the American League All-Star team on Wednesday. Bogaerts went 0-for-4 with four strikeouts.

## NOT CROWDED

Attendance was 16,883, just 542 more than Toronto's Triple-A affiliate, the Buffalo Bisons, drew for their 5-4 home win over Lehigh Valley.

## ROSTER REPORT

Blue Jays: Reid-Foley was optioned to Buffalo to make room for Waguespack.

Red Sox: C Oscar Hernandez was assigned to Triple-A Pawtucket.

## UP NEXT

Red Sox: RHP Hector Velazquez (1-3, 5.31) will make his eighth start of the season in Thursday's series finale. Velazquez also has made 13 relief appearances.

Blue Jays: If Stroman can't go Thursday, Toronto could promote LHP Thomas Pannone from Triple-A. Pannone has made 23 appearances for the Blue Jays this season, including two starts. He is 2-3 with a 5.91 ERA.