

## ***The Boston Red Sox Tuesday, September 10, 2019***

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

#### **Healthy sign: David Ortiz delivers first pitch**

Julian McWilliams

In a wild 24 hours for the Red Sox that centered around the firing of president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski late Sunday night, for a moment, the dark clouds that hovered this year over Fenway Park cleared.

David Ortiz made his first public appearance Monday evening to throw out the ceremonial first pitch prior to the Red Sox' series finale against the Yankees. Former Red Sox catcher Jason Varitek caught the throw.

Three months to the day since he was shot in the Dominican Republic, Ortiz jogged onto the field after he was described by the park announcer as "the symbol of resilience, strength, triumph and love . . . our one and only, Big Papi."

Afterward, Ortiz addressed the crowd in front of the pitcher's mound.

"Good evening," said Ortiz, who was met with cheers. "First of all, I want to thank God, for giving me a second opportunity of my life and being able to be here with all of you. I want to thank the Red Sox — my real family — they always have been there for me, supporting me no matter where I'm at. They were the first ones to support me. Thank you very much.

"I want to thank all of you for all the prayers. I want to thank my former teammates for being there for me also. All of them came over to check up on your boy.

"Also, I want to thank the Yankees, allowing my boys to come over and check up on Big Papi. CC [Sabathia], you showed a lot of love. Thank you very much. God bless you all. Go Sox."

Related: These photos show David Ortiz throwing out the first pitch at Fenway Park

Ortiz then made his way off the mound and embraced those that were standing in front of the home dugout. He then sat down in the first row of the stands, alongside his wife Tiffany, and watched the game.

"I think any time you see a brother or teammate in good spirits, it's a positive thing," Jackie Bradley Jr. said after the game. "We're excited to see him. He's special to all of us."

Said Eduardo Rodriguez: "It was amazing. I was walking out from the bullpen to the dugout and I turned to the big screen and saw he was out there. It was a really good moment for all of us."

Red Sox manager Alex Cora shared the same sentiments.

"I always said that David is kind of like a rock star baseball player, that vibe, it's amazing," he said. "I'm glad that he was able to come here and hang out with us."

Ortiz was shot June 9 at a bar in the Dominican Republic. He spent weeks undergoing rehab at Massachusetts General Hospital, but was seen recently in France earlier this month with Red Sox owner John Henry.

Christopher Price of the Globe staff contributed to this report.

## **Eduardo Rodriguez's work lost in shuffle as Sox officially eliminated from AL East race**

Julian McWilliams

It was at the London Series in late June that manager Alex Cora noticed the difference between his Red Sox team and the New York Yankees.

The Sox were swept in a two-game set as the Yankees posted a combined 29 runs.

The Red Sox racked up 21 runs, but it was the Yankees who controlled the tempo and pace of the series.

“That’s a good offensive team,” Cora said then. “Their attention to detail is phenomenal. It was eye-opening the last two days from top to bottom. It’s just stuff that the game will dictate and will scream at people and it’s right there. Right now they’re a lot better than us. So, we need to get better.”

Yet Tuesday, not even 24 hours after president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski was fired, the Yankees’ 5-0 win eliminated the Sox from American League East contention.

The Sox were 5-14 against the Yankees this season. New York’s 14 wins over the Red Sox matched their most victories in one season against them since 1961.

After the game, Cora’s message was similar to the one he had in London: Nearly three months later, the Yankees were still better.

“They’re doing a lot of things better last year,” Cora said. “And we’re not playing at the same level as them. I do believe DJ [LeMahieu] changed the complexion of their lineup. With two strikes, they put the ball in play.”

Eduardo Rodriguez, however, helped to keep that dominant lineup in check.

Rodriguez remained effective, just as he’s been all season.

He gave up just five hits and one run — an Austin Romine homer in the fifth — but fell to 17-6 on the season.

Rodriguez struck out nine and walked but one in his six innings, as his ERA fell to 3.73.

“I was doing well throwing every pitch,” Rodriguez said. “Especially the life on my cutter. I was able to throw it where I want it.”

Rodriguez commanded the zone from the start, striking out Aaron Judge for the second out of the first inning, and, later, fanned Edwin Encarnacion to end the frame.

He racked up two more strikeouts to begin the second inning on Luke Voit and Brett Gardner. Throughout the outing, he challenged the inner-thirds of the strike zone to lefties, something Judge mentioned recently as an area of improvement for the lefthander.

“That’s a great outing right there,” Cora said. “His stuff was good. This guy has been very consistent for us. You see him growing each outing.”

The Yankees made him work, though, as he threw 117 pitches. The Yankees finally broke through in the fifth when Romine, the No. 9 hitter, belted a solo shot to right field.

Darwinson Hernandez took the ball from Rodriguez in the seventh and the Yankees didn’t waste any time piling on runs against the rookie.

Gio Urshela led off by homering over the Green Monster.

After a strikeout, Romine doubled and moved to third on a wild pitch and scored on LeMahieu single's between shortstop and third.

Cora went deeper into his bullpen, summoning Trevor Kelley. A Judge double and Gleyber Torres sacrifice fly made the score, 4-0.

The Yankees tacked on an insurance run in the ninth against Mike Shawaryn.

Meanwhile, the Sox offense couldn't get anything going against James Paxton (13-6).

The lefthander allowed four hits and three walks, with seven strikeouts in 6 $\frac{2}{3}$  innings.

Zack Britton, Cory Gearrin, and Tyler Lyons finished the seven-hit shutout.

The Red Sox' underwhelming play this season wasn't in the plans. They are eight games out of a wild-card spot and it will take a miracle for them to make the postseason. Meanwhile, the Yankees will take the division, which will be their first since 2012.

How the tables have turned.

It was in 2018 that the Sox clinched the division at Yankee Stadium and spilled champagne on the rug in visitors' clubhouse. They did it again when they beat the Yankees in the ALDS in New York. They dominated them when it mattered. In some ways this season, the Yankees have done the same.

"They didn't let us [get back into it]," Cora said of the Yankees. "Last year we didn't let them. This year they didn't let us."

### **Throwing plans for David Price hit detour**

Julian McWilliams

Red Sox lefthander David Price was supposed to play catch Monday, but Red Sox manager Alex Cora said the plan isn't for him to pitch this week. The Sox haven't said they are shutting down Price just yet, but don't expect them to rush the lefthander out there considering where they are in the standings.

"We'll see how it goes," Cora said. "He's feeling better. Obviously, with the calendar, we're running out of time. You always want guys to finish healthy for the season, and if we find ways that he can go out there and perform we will. At the same time, we have to be smart about it. David is a huge part of what we're trying to accomplish in the upcoming years."

Betts hitting stride

Mookie Betts, the 2018 MVP, has caught fire.

Betts hit his 27th home run Sunday night and is on pace for 30. He could become the sixth player with at least 30 homers, 40 doubles, and 5 triples in as many as three seasons. The other five players are in the Hall of Fame: Lou Gehrig, Stan Musial, Hank Greenberg, Chuck Klein, and Rogers Hornsby.

Betts went 1 for 5 in Monday's 5-0 loss and has reached base via hit or walk in his last 23 games.

Betts leads the league with 128 runs and is on pace for 145. The only Red Sox player to score 140 or more runs in a season was Ted Williams, who accomplished the feat three times (franchise-record 150 in 1949).

North of the border

For the upcoming series in Toronto, the Sox will go with Nate Eovaldi and Jhoulys Chacin for the first two games, with the finale still to be determined.

Eovaldi is coming off his best outing as a starter this season, in which he allowed just a run in five innings.

“He was good the last one,” Cora said. “He should be fine. He should probably be up to 95 pitches. Hopefully he can go six innings.

Lowell ties series

The Lowell Spinners beat Brooklyn, 3-1, in Game 2 of the New York Penn League championship series. The winner-take-all Game 3 will be Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in Brooklyn.

### **Who is in charge of the Red Sox? Here is the list and what they have accomplished**

Alex Speier

With Dave Dombrowski out, who’s in charge of the team fielded by the Red Sox?

The answer has a familiar ring. For now, the Red Sox are being led by a committee of front-office members, much as was the case when four members of the front office stewarded the team after Theo Epstein’s Halloween 2005 departure. In its press release announcing Dombrowski’s firing, the Sox announced that the team’s three assistant GMs – Brian O’Halloran, Eddie Romero, and Zack Scott — would lead the department, with senior VP of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira taking on an expanded role during the search for Dombrowski’s replacement.

O’Halloran, Romero, Scott, and Ferreira are well known to those inside the Red Sox organization, even if they enjoy relatively low profiles outside of it. So who are they?

- Eddie Romero, executive vice president and assistant general manager. Romero, the son of former Red Sox infielder Ed Romero Sr., worked as a Florida state prosecutor after graduating from law school before commencing his front-office career in 2006. He spent most of his career working first in international operations and international scouting (he directed the Sox’ international amateur scouting efforts from 2011-16) before getting elevated to assistant GM after the 2016 campaign.

Romero has been part of an international scouting group that has enjoyed numerous successes under his leadership, whether on bigger-dollar signings (Rafael Devers, Yoan Moncada) or lower-profile players such as Darwinzon Hernandez and Bryan Mata who emerged as top prospects despite being low-dollar signees. As assistant GM over the last three years, he worked across departments, and had Dombrowski ever promoted a member of the Red Sox front office staff to the role of GM (vacant since the departure of Mike Hazen in 2016), many thought Romero would be the choice.

- Brian O’Halloran, executive vice president and assistant general manager. O’Halloran joined the Red Sox as a baseball operations assistant in 2002. His prior career working in business operations for an international logistics company in Moscow likely prepared him for the Kafkaesque labyrinth both of a baseball operation and MLB rules and regulations. Over 18 seasons with the Red Sox, O’Halloran has put those skills to use in overseeing Red Sox compliance with MLB rules while also playing a key role in long-term contract negotiations.

- Zack Scott, senior vice president and assistant general manager. Scott has been part of the Red Sox front office since joining the group as an intern in 2004 — a post he accepted after serving as a consultant to the team while at Diamond Mind, Inc., a developer of baseball simulation software with whom the Red Sox worked in preparation for the 2003 postseason.

Scott used to be involved heavily in the team's contracts, but in recent seasons, he's overseen the team's significant expansion of its baseball analytics and baseball systems departments. From the time that manager Alex Cora was hired, he'd leaned heavily on Scott and his department to provide information and recommendations to inform all aspects of the game-planning process.

■ Raquel Ferreira, senior VP of major and minor league operations: Over more than two decades in the Red Sox front office, Ferreira has ascended from an entry-level assistant position to become one of the highest ranking officials in the organization. Her responsibilities are diverse, including oversight of the daily operations of the major league clubhouse as well as daily operations for the organization's minor league affiliates — the latter responsibility including issues such as transactions, contract tenders, payroll, insurance, and immigration. Former Red Sox GM Ben Cherington once described her as the only person with whom he'd ever worked who never made a mistake in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Beyond those formal responsibilities, Ferreira also plays an advisory role for minor leaguers while ensuring that they have the on- and off-field support to provide them with the best chance of succeeding in their careers. Players place enormous trust in her as a surrogate family member of sorts within the organization. Many describe her as having been essential to the successful negotiations of the contract extension for Xander Bogaerts.

### **The inside story of how Dave Dombrowski's firing took place**

Peter Abraham

The first pitch of Sunday night's game against the Yankees was 15 minutes away when Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski walked onto the field at Fenway Park.

He joined team president Sam Kennedy, chief operating officer Jon Gilula, and human resources director Amy Waryas for a ceremony honoring a group of longtime employees.

Dombrowski, as always nattily attired, smiled and waved when shown on the scoreboard.

A short time later, as the Yankees were scoring two runs in the second inning, principal owner John Henry and team chairman Tom Werner informed Dombrowski he had been fired less than 11 months after a team he helped build won the World Series.

Dombrowski left the park a short time later. He was almost as relieved as he was disappointed.

"I don't know if there is an expected timing. However, with all the speculation taking place about my position, I think it was better sooner than later," he told the Globe.

The Yankees went on to beat the Red Sox, 10-5. When the game ended at 11:56 p.m., manager Alex Cora returned to his office and was met there by the grim faces of Henry, Werner, and Kennedy.

They told him Dombrowski had been fired and that assistant general managers Brian O'Halloran and Eddie Romero, who were also present, would temporarily run baseball operations along with assistant GM Zack Scott and senior vice president of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira.

Cora's immediate thought was to tell the team before word leaked out. He walked across the hallway to the clubhouse and quickly called his players together.

"They decided to make a change in direction with Dave," Cora said to the group. "We'll talk to you more about it tomorrow."

Cora appeared stunned, according to several people in the room.

"No way he knew this was coming," one player said. "He was shocked. I think we all were."

The Sox are laden with veteran players who have seen managers and executives come and go over the course of their careers. But the timing of this move surprised them.

“I never expected this,” J.D. Martinez said.

As Cora informed the players, vice president of media relations Kevin Gregg walked into the interview above the clubhouse and told a small group of reporters at 12:06 a.m. that the team had “parted ways” with Dombrowski.

His wording was taken from the draft of a press release being prepared.

As the players quickly dressed and left the park, Cora stayed behind deep into the night discussing the now uncertain state of the team with a friend.

Cora spoke to Dombrowski on Monday morning.

“Just to thank him for trusting me and giving me a chance to become a big league manager,” he said. “This guy with 40 years of experience decided, ‘Go ahead, kid. I think you can do this.’ Now here I am because of him.”

The Red Sox finally sent out their press release at 10:29 a.m. on Monday. The 292-word statement included comments from Henry, Werner, and Kennedy lauding Dombrowski and his accomplishments.

Henry, who also owns the Globe, referred to Dombrowski having a “Hall of Fame career.”

Conspicuously missing was why the organization had fired him after three consecutive American League East championships.

Sources said the ownership felt that Dombrowski had done what was asked, and that now they needed a leader with a different set of skills to reshape the roster. Once the decision was made, Dombrowski was told rather than let media speculation continue through the end of the season.

“It was out of respect for Dave,” insisted one team official.

Henry, Werner, and Kennedy addressed the players at 4 p.m., the Sox canceling batting practice to have that meeting. But the trio did not take questions from the media.

The Henry/Werner ownership group has fired a series of managers and executives since taking over in 2001. Each time they gave a public accounting of the decision, as is customary and considered responsible following major changes.

But this time they left it to Cora to answer questions alone for 22 minutes. None of the baseball operations leaders were present, either.

Cora dutifully defended the executives for not taking questions.

“I think the organization decided to move in a different direction,” Cora said. “I don’t think they have to go into details. The organization just decided it was time to move on.”

Beyond the vague notion of changing direction, sources said, the Sox were troubled by a lack of cohesion within baseball operations. Dombrowski retained much of the staff he inherited but often operated independently or dependent on advice from the two vice presidents he hired, Tony La Russa and Frank Wren.

Last Oct. 28, when the Sox won the World Series, Henry paused during the postgame celebration on the field at Dodger Stadium and said that one of his priorities would be to extend Dombrowski's contract.

He repeated that again in spring training. But as the season wore on and the Sox fell out of contention, the decision flipped to replacing Dombrowski.

When Dombrowski pressed ownership for an answer, he got one.

"Appreciative of my time here. Boston is a great baseball city," Dombrowski said. "Had an exciting few years, however, this season did not go as we all planned. However, respect ownership's decision to make any changes they choose."

As the Sox played the Yankees on Monday night, La Russa was seated in the front row of the suite Dombrowski once used. But Ferreira was there, too. The transition had started.

### **Who are likely candidates to be the Red Sox next general manager?**

Alex Speier

What now? Who are the likely candidates to head the Red Sox baseball operations department?

With Red Sox team owners quiet on the topic aside from their acknowledgement that they'll begin a search immediately, it's challenging to narrow the potential pool. Indeed, there's little more than guesswork regarding the search criteria.

That said, it's worth noting that the last time the Red Sox contemplated a restructure of their baseball operations department, they aimed high. During the 2015 season, principal owner John Henry and then-GM Ben Cherington talked frequently about the possibility of adding a president of baseball operations to whom Cherington would report.

Potential candidates whom they imagined for such a role included decision-makers and organization leaders with established track records such as Cleveland executives Mark Shapiro and Chris Antonetti, Billy Beane of the A's, and Pirates GM Neal Huntington. Then, when Dave Dombrowski became a free agent following his firing by the Tigers, Henry and team chairman Tom Werner moved quickly to hire him, comfortable in the knowledge of what they'd be getting.

That precedent harbors some relevance as the Red Sox look for the next leader of their baseball operations department. They won't necessarily tiptoe around the availability of individuals who already are leading other organizations if they can find someone who checks all the boxes of the upcoming roster challenge of (a) reshaping the core while (b) reining in big league payroll to duck under the luxury tax threshold sometime in the coming years, (c) maintaining short-term competitiveness, and (d) strengthening the team's long-term outlook.

"No big deal," joked one former general manager.

On top of that, the organization faces some questions in selecting Dombrowski's successor. Do they want to give autonomy to an executive such as what they conferred upon Dombrowski, or do they want someone who will collaborate with team owners and president/CEO Sam Kennedy? Do they want someone who offers continuity for the team's front-office culture, or will they consider an external hire who might shake up the organization from the top down? Is experience a prerequisite, a preference, or would the team trust a GM/president of baseball operations newcomer in hopes of finding the next Theo Epstein?

These are questions that will inform the interview process. But with that backdrop in mind, here are some potential candidates:

In-house

Eddie Romero and Zack Scott: Both have been in charge of the modernizations of critical Red Sox departments, and both have strong relationships throughout the organization. For now, neither is viewed by industry members as a frontrunner, but until Billy Beane turned down the Red Sox GM job after the 2002 season, few considered Theo Epstein likely to move up the ladder, either. Romero, in particular, has spent the last three years working alongside Dombrowski across departments.

#### Outside established candidates

Here's where it gets tricky. Would executives already in charge of baseball operations departments — particularly those with young families — consider uprooting to an organization that pushed aside Cherington less than two years after he won the World Series, and that moved on from Dombrowski less than a year after a historic season? That remains to be seen, but the Red Sox almost surely will ask to talk to a pool of executives who have shown an ability to balance short-term and long-term challenges. A number of people in other organizations might get some nice title improvements and pay raises to stay around rather than considering the Sox.

Mike Hazen (Diamondbacks GM): The former Red Sox GM has overseen an impressive three-year run in the desert, and his ability to build a contender while shedding stars Paul Goldschmidt and Zack Greinke has been remarkable — precisely the sort of moves that the Red Sox will need to make moving forward. He would also be able to work well with the Red Sox front-office infrastructure, both to preserve its strengths and modernize it where necessary. Some in the industry believe he's the ideal target for the Red Sox. But even though he's from New England, Hazen — someone who is tremendously loyal to the places where he works — might be loath to leave the Diamondbacks at a relatively early stage of his tenure.

Erik Neander and Chaim Bloom (Rays GM and VP of baseball operations): Neander and Bloom have done a remarkable job of running the little engine that could, an organization that competes with the best teams in the game on a budget that is a fraction of their competitors. Their trades in 2018 — particularly Chris Archer for Austin Meadows and Tyler Glasnow — positioned the organization for short- and long-term success. They've also built a spectacular pitching infrastructure, noteworthy for a Sox team that flopped this year because of its mound shortcomings.

Jed Hoyer (Cubs GM): Hoyer was briefly a co-GM of the Red Sox along with Cherington in 2005-06, during the Gorilla Suit Interregnum of Theo Epstein's tenure. He's been part of championships in Boston and Chicago, knows the Red Sox organizational culture, and is widely considered a terrifically creative mind.

Derek Falvey (Twins chief baseball officer): Falvey, a native of Lynn, and a Trinity College alum, has helped to build modern, analytics-driven organizations in both Cleveland and Minnesota.

Jeff Luhnow (Astros GM) and Andrew Friedman (Dodgers president of baseball operations): It's hard to imagine either Luhnow or Friedman leaving the organizational cultures they've built. But on the theory that it never hurts to ask, it wouldn't come as a total shock if the Red Sox at least inquired about the possibility of interviewing one or both leaders of the teams that have been the most consistently dominant in the game.

#### Outside first-time GM candidates

Jared Porter and Amiel Sawdaye (Diamondbacks assistant GMs): Like Hazen, Porter and Sawdaye spent years in the Red Sox organization before joining Hazen in Arizona (Porter had an interim stint as part of the Cubs championship front office). Both remain close with many members of the Red Sox organization, and both have done work since departing that has elevated their profiles and broadened their range of experiences.

### **Red Sox issue press release saying they 'parted ways' with Dave Dombrowski**

Peter Abraham

The Red Sox wrapped up their relationship with president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski in a breezy press release Monday, saying they had “parted ways” with him after four years.

No press conference will be held beyond the usual pregame routine at Fenway Park before their game against the Yankees.

The release said Dombrowski was notified of the decision by ownership and team president Sam Kennedy.

Assistant general managers Brian O’Halloran, Eddie Romero, and Zack Scott will lead baseball operations while a replacement is sought. The Sox described senior vice president of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira as taking on an expanded role in the transition.

“Four years ago, we were faced with a critical decision about the direction of the franchise,” principal owner John Henry was quoted as saying. “We were extraordinarily fortunate to be able to bring Dave in to lead baseball operations. With a World Series championship and three consecutive American League East titles, he has cemented what was already a Hall of Fame career.”

Team chairman Tom Werner credited Dombrowski with making “bold moves” that led to last season’s title. Kennedy was quoted saying he had a “tremendous partnership” with Dombrowski.

Left unsaid with all the praise was why the Red Sox fired Dombrowski, who had a year remaining on his contract.

The Sox, at 76-67, are not yet eliminated from the postseason but have little chance at advancing into October. The team won three consecutive AL East titles under Dombrowski and now enters what is likely to be a period of change as the roster is reshaped and a bloated payroll likely reduced.

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

### **Red Sox owners can GM Dave Dombrowski in gutless fashion**

Tom Keegan

Here in the land of the free (press) and the home of the brave, take a minute to consider how Red Sox owners handled the firing of their general manager, Dave Dombrowski, architect of the 2018 World Series champions.

They insulted themselves from their fan base by issuing a press release that in no way sated the curiosity of the fans, many of whom are dumbfounded and in need of answers. The owners made themselves unavailable for questions from the media, stomping on the concept of transparency.

They couldn’t have handled it in a more gutless fashion if they tried.

Their press release bragged about winning the World Series four times this century and attributed the fourth to Dombrowski’s willingness to make “bold moves.” The press release would have been more appropriate four years ago because it boasted about hiring him. None of the three men (owners John Henry and Tom Werner and club president Sam Kennedy) quoted in the utterly worthless release even hinted at why Dombrowski was canned less than a year after winning the World Series.

Not only that, they left manager Alex Cora to fill the role Sarah Huckabee Sanders handled for as long as she could take it. Cora was the only club official answering questions about the firing. That’s nice. Let the help do your dirty work. Cora handled it well because he handles everything well, but he deserves better than to be the only one explaining a move he had no hand in.

Are Red Sox owners so removed from their fan base that they think fans couldn't figure out the firing took place when the Patriots were hogging the spotlight? It's bad enough to use the popularity of the powerful Pats as cover, but to follow that up by having David Ortiz make his return to Fenway Park to throw out the first pitch on the three-month anniversary of being shot in the back? Maybe that was a coincidence, but why give the owners the benefit of the doubt?

If the Sox owners are this embarrassed to fire Dombrowski, maybe they should have waited until the end of the season. Or maybe they should have done it a month ago when the Globe's Dan Shaughnessy wrote with conviction it was coming.

Regardless of when the owners did it, Red Sox fans deserved an explanation why the GM of the defending world champions was canned. To make the move without answering questions about it leaves the door ajar for all sorts of outrageous speculation, which of course will make the story linger.

It's not as if it would have been so difficult to explain. Dombrowski guaranteed \$68 million and four years to Nathan Eovaldi, a free agent after his World Series heroics. Before signing Chris Sale to a long-term deal, the Red Sox had the luxury of test-driving his arm for a year. Instead, Dombrowski assumed he would be fine and signed him to a five-year, \$145 million extension that kicks in next season.

Eovaldi and Sale are a combined 7-11 with fewer than 200 innings between them. Sale is shut down for the remainder of the season because of elbow troubles, and his status for next season has a cloudy feel to it.

You enter a high-stakes game like that, your hunches had better be right. Dombrowski lost a huge pot of the owners' gold. If Sale were entering free agency coming off this season, he wouldn't be guaranteed a fraction of that \$145 million.

Now the Red Sox are in a tough spot with the luxury tax for years to come, and if I'm the owner, that's what I would think of every time I looked at the man responsible for that. The mere sight of him would put me in a foul mood. That alone is reason enough to fire him. He had a hot hand that led to a World Series title and wrote his own one-way ticket out of town with his costly run of misses. That's life when you're one deciding how baseball's biggest payroll will be spent.

Now if Dombrowski's aloofness played a part in the firing, that would be laughable. What's more aloof than firing your GM and issuing a worthless press release?

### **Take me out to the ballgame ... for \$14 at Fenway**

Joe Dwinell

A ticket to a Red Sox game at Fenway Park is now cheaper than a haircut. Or a hearty breakfast at your favorite diner.

A seat in the right field grandstand was listed for \$14 for Monday night's Yankees game. (Base price \$44.) That's a bargain, and Big Papi threw out the first pitch.

Ticket sellers and fans looking to sell seats say the going is tough as the hometown team limps to the end. Statistically, the Sox could still make the playoffs, but the doomsday clock is ticking.

"Usually it'd be an easy sell, but this year was a struggle," said one ticket seller from Maine, who refused to take a loss for her seats to Monday night's game. "I gave my tickets to my mom, and she's bringing a family friend." That was for right field box seats selling for \$160.

A Facebook site for Sox fans looking to sell seats was filled with worried resellers fearing a bath was in the cards.

“I bought a 20-game pack and sold 12 games,” one of the resellers told the Herald. “I am going if no one buys. Seats are amazing if you want to get close to the field.”

Tickets at Fenway Park are now a bargain, unfortunately.

A set of Pavilion Box seats — base price of \$195 — were selling for \$50 each. You qualify for waiter service.

Other bargains included seats in the bleachers and grandstand for \$22-\$30 Monday night.

Tickets for the final home game Sept. 29 against the Orioles are also going for cheap, with a bleacher seat going for \$16 on Ace Tickets.

“You’re going to get some great deals,” said April Martin, spokeswoman for Ace Tickets. “Many people just want to see Fenway Park, and it’s also a good opportunity for college kids to see a game.”

Martin said she’s still holding out hope for a miracle and the Sox will suddenly secure a wild-card spot. The team needs to win every series in order to pull off what appears to be the impossible.

The Tampa Bay Rays have a 77.1% chance of making the postseason while the Cleveland Indians have 72.0% chance, according to Fansided.com. The Oakland Athletics are next at 44.5%, with the Red Sox slipping fast.

But there’s a bright side. One young couple raved on social media about a night at the ballpark. “He pulled off Red Sox v. Yankees tickets and gave me the absolute best date night I could hope for! Even though the Sox lost, it was amazing!!!” said the Reddit Red Sox fan.

“That is LOVE!,” one Reddit comment read.

“I hope that you have beautiful babies,” said another.

Even if the Sox miss the post-season, there’s just something magical about the night out at Fenway. And now it’s cheaper than dinner and drinks.

### **David Ortiz throws out ceremonial first pitch at Red Sox game**

Jason Mastrodonato

David Ortiz returned to Fenway Park for the first time since being shot in his home country of the Dominican Republic.

It was announced shortly before the Sox’ 7:05 p.m. game Monday against the Yankees, and just after Alex Cora addressed reporters to discuss the Sox’ firing of Dave Dombrowski, that Ortiz would throw out the first pitch.

Wearing a white Red Sox jersey and sunglasses, Ortiz appeared to be in good shape as he ran up the dugout steps and jogged onto the field to a roaring applause.

After being introduced, Ortiz threw out the first pitch to former Sox catcher Jason Varitek, then grabbed the microphone and said a few words. He thanked the Red Sox for helping him after he was shot, thanked his former teammates and fans for being there for him, and even thanked the Yankees for their support.

Ortiz then joined his wife, Tiffany, and sat in two front row seats directly adjacent to the dugout and Cora for the start of the game.

“It’s always good to see the big man,” Cora said after the Sox’ 5-0 loss. “I visited him a few weeks ago and he was eating Mangu and seafood and all that stuff. He was in a great place. Spent like 3-½ hours with him.

It's great. For the fans to see him is awesome. The players, I always say David is kind of like a rockstar baseball player. That vibe. It's amazing. I'm glad he was able to come here and hang out with us and see that he's doing a lot better."

### **Yankees finish season of dominance against Red Sox, eliminate them in AL East**

Jason Mastrodonato

The future is now for the Red Sox, who can finally turn the page on their embarrassing rivalry with the Yankees in 2019.

The Yanks knocked off the Sox, 5-0, on Monday night. They came into town Friday and took three of four from the Sox to stuff them further into third place in the American League East, 18-½ games back of the first-place Bombers.

The loss officially knocked the Red Sox out of contention for the division, ending their three-year reign at the top.

It was the 19th and final game between the two teams this year. The Yankees won 14 of them, stomping all over their rivals after they battled it out on a more competitive level last year.

"They're doing a lot of things better than last year," manager Alex Cora said. "A lot. We're not playing at the same level. It's a good overall ballclub. Since the first series, they just dominated us."

Though the Sox won 108 games and the division in 2018, they were just 10-9 against the Yankees in a closely contested rivalry that continued into the postseason, when the Sox went to New York tied 1-1 and then won two straight to end the Yankees' season in the Bronx.

Monday, James Paxton continued his dominance over the Red Sox with six shutout innings in a game that began with David Ortiz throwing the first pitch. Ortiz sat in the first row next to Alex Cora until he left in the late innings. He didn't have much to celebrate. Paxton is now 3-1 with a 3.38 ERA against the Sox this year, his first in pinstripes.

"He's always been a good pitcher it's just a matter of him being healthy and throwing the ball," Cora said. "For them, they're good at the right time."

Eduardo Rodriguez sparkled again, striking out nine over six innings of one-run ball, but a home run to Austin Romine on a high fastball in the fifth inning was enough for the Yanks to hand him the loss.

Though Rodriguez has a 1.11 ERA in his last five starts and a 2.50 ERA in his last 14 starts, his record fell to 17-6. He's likely to have three more starts and a longshot chance at his first 20-win season.

Darwinzon Hernandez was knocked around for three runs in the seventh inning.

With the rough series, the Sox fell to 8-½ games back in the wild card standings with 18 games to play, all but cementing the end of their postseason hopes.

### **Alex Cora expects to continue as Red Sox manager, but owners haven't told him yet**

Jason Mastrodonato

It wouldn't have been too difficult for somebody in the Red Sox ownership group to let Alex Cora know his job was safe.

And now it's difficult to ignore that they didn't.

Lost in the circus the Red Sox put on Monday, when they announced the firing of Dave Dombrowski and sent Cora to answer the questions, was the moment Cora told reporters he never got assurance from ownership he would be the manager going forward.

“I mean, as of now yeah,” Cora said when asked if he felt confident he’d be safe in his position. “That’s how I feel. I woke up this morning and I feel like, yeah.”

But nobody said anything to him. Principal owner John Henry, chairman Tom Werner and president Sam Kennedy were among those who asked him to tell the players Dombrowski was fired early Monday morning. They returned later Monday and gave Cora more direction on the message they wanted him to send to the media as he answered questions for the entire franchise following Dombrowski’s dismissal.

Never did they give him the assurance he deserved.

“We haven’t talked about that,” Cora said. “I think we’re, like, in the first stages of whatever is going to happen in the upcoming months.”

Always the company man. Never one to complain. Not even when the company hangs him out to dry.

General managers often like to hire their own guys. Dombrowski stuck with John Farrell, but that’s not always the case.

What if the Red Sox hire a new GM who wants to bring his own skipper? No, it wouldn’t be difficult for the owners to tell him (or her) Cora isn’t going anywhere.

It wouldn’t have been difficult to tell Cora as much Monday, either.

Despite a down year, the Sox’ second-year manager still is considered one of the best new-age (players-first) managers in the game.

He took an underachieving group and led them to an 108-win season and a breezy World Series title in his first year. Then they ripped up his old contract, which paid him just \$800,000 as one of the worst-paid managers in baseball according to USA Today, and gave him a raise and an extension through 2021 with an option for 2022.

“Alex did a tremendous job for our club all year long and we wanted to reward him for his efforts after an amazing season,” Dombrowski said in a press release last November. “We are extremely happy that he will be with us and leading our club.”

There’s only one problem: Dombrowski isn’t here anymore.

Still, Cora had no complaints Monday.

“You look at his track record, and you’re like, ‘Wow,’ but ownership decided that’s where we’re going,” Cora said. “And you’ve got to respect that. This organization has done amazing things for a while. They have made changes throughout. And obviously people outside the walls of Fenway maybe don’t like it. Some of them, they do. But us, as people that work here, we’ve got to respect it.

“We’ll see what happens, we’ll see where we go, but I do believe we’re going to be fine.”

When Dombrowski made no trade deadline moves to help Cora’s roster just one day after Cora said he’d bet \$1 that every team in contention would make at least one move, Cora didn’t complain.

When the owners sent him out to answer questions on their behalf, Cora nodded his head.

Clearly he wants to be here. And he’ll do whatever’s asked of him to make it work.

“My plan is, like I told you guys last year, for my two twins to go to high school and go to college here in Boston,” Cora said. “I better take care of the future of the organization. ... One thing for sure, I’ll be me. I’m not going to change. This is what people respect or like about me.

“It’s not as black and white as Joey, my brother, but I’m pretty honest, have conviction, and I think I can help baseball teams to accomplish their goals. We’ll see where it takes us.”

He’s the ultimate company man. And he deserved better than what happened Monday.

At the very least, he deserved assurance he was the Red Sox manager, now and in the future.

## **\* *The Providence Journal***

### **Add these 24 hours to the list of great Red Sox dramas**

Bill Koch

For a franchise that has captured four World Series championships this century, the Red Sox certainly haven’t gone light on the drama.

This organization at times hasn’t exactly resembled a well-oiled machine. Manny being Manny, a certain gorilla suit and an unofficial clubhouse menu featuring chicken and beer serve as reminders.

Add the last 24 hours to that rather dubious list. It started with president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski being fired and ended with Boston being dethroned as American League East champions. The Yankees are on their way toward reclaiming that title after a 5-0 shutout of the Red Sox at Fenway Park, as James Paxton and three relievers spun a gem.

“They’re that good and we’re that far behind – bottom line,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “They’ve been very good the whole season, and very consistent.”

A familiar song blared inside the walls of the visiting clubhouse – the old Frank Sinatra classic “New York, New York” was turned up to full volume. There will be no backfiring on New York this time like when right fielder Aaron Judge perched a boombox on his right shoulder and strolled out of the same venue during last year’s A.L. Division Series. The Yankees didn’t win again after that Game 2 in the Back Bay, as Boston had the fortitude to enter the Bronx and capture two straight.

Those two teams have traded places this season, and that should be the primary takeaway from this moment in time between the two ancient rivals. Brian Cashman endures in New York, but he’s watched three different executives – Theo Epstein, Ben Cherington and Dombrowski – build winners with the Red Sox. The next hire made by principal owner John Henry and chairman Tom Werner will have every opportunity to do the same.

Those truths tend to be buried at times, however, by what takes place on the surface. Dismissing Dombrowski when they did – midnight after Game 143 of the season, the final whistle barely blown on the Patriots opener just down the road in Foxboro – seemed far too convenient in terms of avoiding the headlines. Sending Cora out to speak for upper management – with Henry, Werner and president and CEO Sam Kennedy all at the ballpark at some point on Monday – felt like hiding.

Cora is perfectly capable of facing the media. He does so quite ably before and after every game, going in depth on topics involving his baseball team and just about anything else you’d like to ask. But this shouldn’t have been his place to field questions about why his boss had just been fired and what direction Henry, Werner and Kennedy hoped to take into the 2020 season.

“The team already sent a statement,” Cora said, referring to a morning email distributed by the team that quoted Henry, Werner and Kennedy. “They actually wanted to make sure we appreciated what Dave did as an organization. I know for some people it’s probably not enough – for others, maybe it is.

“I’m just here like every day to talk to you people for whatever you guys want to talk about.”

The postgame discussion was a different one, and it had just as much to do with nine innings as it did with who threw out the first pitch. David Ortiz made his first public appearance three months to the day after being shot in the back at a Dominican Republic nightclub. The man who ambled up the stairs of the Red Sox dugout and took the field looked anything like a victim – Ortiz was Big Papi in full, down to the sunglasses and the gold chain and that rolling, deep voice when he took the microphone for some brief remarks.

It was a moment that put goose bumps on your arms and a smile on your face watching Ortiz deliver to Jason Varitek, his friend and old teammate. The crowd roared as it did throughout last October when the focus was on the games and Boston was a wrecking machine, leaving the Yankees and everyone else in its wake. It’s hard to believe that was less than a year ago, and that the events of this day-long sideshow were all that remained.

### **Yankees 5, Red Sox 0: Boston surrenders American League East crown**

Bill Koch

The Red Sox have officially surrendered their American League East crown.

And after dropping each of their last three games against the Yankees, the defending World Series champions have slipped ever closer to missing out on October entirely.

James Paxton outdueled Eduardo Rodriguez and Darwinzon Hernandez faltered in the top of the seventh inning as New York coasted to a 5-0 victory on Monday night.

Boston’s run of three straight division titles has come to an end. The Red Sox trail the Yankees by 18 games in the loss column, and New York has just 17 to play. It was Boston spraying champagne twice at Yankee Stadium last season, including when it clinched its latest A.L. East crown on Sept. 20.

“They’re doing a lot of things better than last year – a lot,” Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. “And we’re not playing at the same level.”

The Red Sox also celebrated an A.L. Division Series win over the Yankees the following month, and reaching that point in 2019 now seems like a bedtime story. Boston continues to fall away from the Rays, Athletics and Indians in the wild card race, setting a course for what could be elimination by this time next week. The Red Sox entered the night 8 games behind Oakland for the second wild card berth and suffered their fifth shutout defeat of the season.

Not even the return of David Ortiz on a perfect night at Fenway Park could inspire his former club to victory. Boston didn’t advance a runner to third base in 6 2/3 innings against Paxton, who won his eighth straight start. He’s been spotless since absorbing a 10-5 thumping against the Red Sox on July 26, a night where Mookie Betts hit three home runs and Boston clung to what felt like were realistic hopes.

“Maybe the best thing that happened to him was that,” Cora said. “It kind of changed the script.”

Paxton has allowed just four earned runs in his last four outings and has held his opponents scoreless in each of his last two times taking the ball. New York finished the season with a commanding 14-5 advantage against the Red Sox, the first team since the Tigers in 1973 to win as many as 14 games against Boston in a single year. The Yankees are on binges of 17-3 and 40-13 against A.L. East foes.

“They’re that good and we’re that far behind – bottom line,” Cora said. “They’ve been very good the whole season, and very consistent.”

Rodriguez was bidding for his 18th victory and threw a season-high 117 pitches through six innings. His lone mistake was a 2-and-0 fastball that Austin Romine drove to the boxes in right for a one-out solo homer in the top of the fifth. Rodriguez scattered five hits and struck out nine while suffering just his second defeat since June 9.

“My cutter was working really good today,” Rodriguez said. “Good life on my fastball, so I was able to throw it when I wanted.”

Hernandez was riding a string of eight straight scoreless appearances before immediately hitting trouble in the seventh. Gio Urshela smacked a leadoff homer to the Monster Seats, the first round-tripper allowed by the rookie left-hander in 26 big league outings. DJ LeMahieu’s RBI single through the left side and a sacrifice fly to left by Gleyber Torres tagged Hernandez with the remainder of the three earned runs he allowed.

Luke Voit lined an RBI single to left against Mike Shawaryn in the ninth to round out the New York attack. Jackie Bradley Jr. collected three of the seven Red Sox hits.

### **Red Sox front office leaves Alex Cora to answer for Dave Dombrowski firing**

Bill Koch

With the Red Sox front office referring to a formal statement issued earlier in the day, Alex Cora was left to answer for his organization’s firing of Dave Dombrowski.

Boston’s manager took more than 20 minutes of questions late Monday afternoon about the status of his former president of baseball operations. Cora thanked Dombrowski for the opportunity to return to the Red Sox in November 2017 and building roster that racked up a franchise record 108 wins in his debut season on the bench. Cora made it back-to-back World Series rings with a victory over the Dodgers, adding to the hardware he captured in 2017 as the bench coach with the Astros.

“I think the organization decided to move in a different direction, just like it says in the statement,” Cora said. “I don’t think they have to go into details. I think the organization just decided that it was time to move on.”

Cora was notified of the decision following Sunday’s 10-5 loss to New York. The meeting in his office just off the home clubhouse included principal owner John Henry, chairman Tom Werner, president and CEO Sam Kennedy and assistant general managers Eddie Romero and Brian O’Halloran. Cora was dispatched to inform the players in a quick meeting before conducting his typical postgame media briefing.

“I think all of us were extremely surprised with everything – the timing of it all,” pitcher Nathan Eovaldi said. “I enjoyed having Dave here and everything he did for us.”

Dombrowski presided over three straight American League East winners from 2016-18 and a championship club that made history last season. Boston has failed to fire throughout most of the 2019 season, entering Monday at just 76-67 despite boasting the highest payroll in the game. The Red Sox were 8 games out of an A.L. wild card spot and 17½ games behind the Yankees in the division race with just 19 to play.

“Somebody lost a job because we didn’t do the job on the field,” Cora said. “I’m the one running the show. I’m the manager. I’m the one who tries to put these guys in a position to be successful, and we haven’t been successful.”

Cora denied any disconnect between Dombrowski and other members of the Red Sox staff, and he’s currently working for an interim group that includes Romero, O’Halloran, assistant general manager Zack

Scott and senior vice president of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira. He's been given no specific assurances by ownership that his job is safe regardless of who is hired to run the club's baseball operations, but Cora almost certainly will remain the team's manager. His contract runs through the 2021 season and includes a club option for 2022.

"One thing's for sure – I'll be me," Cora said. "I'm not going to change. This is what people respect or like about me.

"It's not as black and white as Joey, my brother. But I'm pretty honest. Conviction. I think I can help baseball teams to accomplish their goals. We'll see where it takes us."

### **David Ortiz returns to Fenway Park, throws out first pitch for Red Sox-Yankees**

Bill Koch

Exactly three months to the day after being shot in his native Dominican Republic, David Ortiz made his return to Fenway Park on Monday night.

The former Red Sox slugger bounded up the steps of the first base dugout and onto the field to throw out a ceremonial first pitch prior to Boston's matchup with the Yankees. Ortiz looked fit and strong while wearing his white No. 34 jersey snapped over a dark shirt and designer jeans. Gold-rimmed sunglasses shielded any emotion as Ortiz addressed a roaring crowd for about a minute.

"I want to thank all of you for all your prayers," Ortiz said. "All of them came home. I really appreciate it – thank you very much."

Ortiz suffered a single gunshot wound to the lower back on June 9 at a Santo Domingo nightclub. He was rushed to a private hospital suffering from injuries to his liver, intestines and bowel. Ortiz underwent multiple surgeries both in the Dominican Republic and at Massachusetts General Hospital, with the Red Sox arranging for private air transport back to his adopted home in suburban Boston.

"I think any time you see a brother, a teammate, someone who means so much to you in good spirits – it's a positive thing," Jackie Bradley Jr. said. "We're just glad to know he's back to being who he is."

Players from both the Red Sox and Yankees stood in front of their respective dugouts as Ortiz threw high and wide to former teammate Jason Varitek. The two men shared a warm embrace at the center of the diamond, as both played a significant part in helping Boston collect its four championships this century. Varitek remains on the Red Sox staff as a special assistant and was visibly shaken when addressing the media the day after Ortiz's shooting.

"I didn't sleep very well last night," Varitek said at the time. "I don't think anybody did that knew. We spent a lot of time trying to figure out what was going on."

Ortiz's appearance was a surprise to several Boston players. Starting pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez has just finished his warmup tosses in the bullpen and was heading for the dugout when he saw Ortiz pop up on the video board above the bleachers in center field. The early arrivals among the crowd of 35,884 fans were immediately on their feet.

"Like he said, thank God for giving him a second opportunity," Rodriguez said. "He's back to almost normal. Seeing him out there was a really special moment for everybody."

Ortiz took in the first few innings from the owner's box adjacent to the first base dugout. He was joined by his wife, Tiffany, and was sharing a bag of sunflower seeds with Boston manager Alex Cora. Ortiz has welcomed a steady stream of visitors at his area home in recent weeks, including Cora and New York's Edwin Encarnacion and Gary Sanchez.

“I think for the fans to see him is awesome,” Cora said. “The players – I always said David is kind of like a rock star baseball player. It’s that vibe. It’s amazing.”

“I want to thank my former teammates for being there for me,” Ortiz said. “All of them came to check up on their boy. Also, I want to thank the Yankees. A lot of my boys over there came to check up on Big Papi.”

## \* **MassLive.com**

### **Dave Dombrowski fired: Boston Red Sox ownership shows shocking lack of transparency in wake of dismissal as bad optics force even more questions**

Chris Cotillo

On the day the Red Sox fired president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, three men stood at Fenway Park and answered questions about the team’s weighty decision. They were asked what led to the move, how they reacted to it and how the team would move forward in the wake of Dombrowski’s departure after four years at the helm.

Somehow, somehow, those three men were Heath Hembree, Ryan Brasier and Nathan Eovaldi. All three pitchers just so happened to be at their lockers when the hoards of reporters entered the Red Sox clubhouse, far away from wherever the ownership group of John Henry, Tom Werner and Sam Kennedy was hiding out.

In an inexplicable show of bad optics, the only explanations from ownership came in the form of canned quotes issued in a press release nearly 7 ½ hours after Dombrowski’s dismissal was announced by team spokesman Kevin Gregg in an impromptu midnight press conference. Though Henry, Werner and Kennedy were at Fenway Park on Monday, they were not available to reporters and seemingly had no interest in answering any questions about Dombrowski.

The questions-- on what led to the decision, the timing of the move and what the team was looking for in its next head of baseball operations-- were aplenty. The answers-- which came mostly from manager Alex Cora, thrown to the wolves to somehow explain why his boss was fired both at 12:15 a.m. and 5:20 p.m. Monday-- were scarce.

“We talked about what they wanted to let everybody know,” Cora said of his meeting with the owners. “They sent out the statement and they feel like that was what they wanted to communicate, not only to you guys, but to the fan base. They left it at that.”

Cora, who received the news minutes after a 10-5 loss to the Yankees on Sunday night, immediately assembled his players and told them. Shell-shocked, he then went to the press conference room and said he needed more time to process Dombrowski’s dismissal before giving his full reaction.

Minutes later in the clubhouse, pitcher Rick Porcello, outfielder Mookie Betts and designated hitter J.D. Martinez echoed that sentiment. While the owners either hid or slept, players were left to process the staggering news in front of cameras and tape recorders.

With all of New England focused on the Patriots signing controversial wide receiver Antonio Brown and thrashing the Steelers in their series opener, the Dombrowski news felt like a classic news dump. It wasn’t the classiest move but wouldn’t be the worst as long as Henry, Werner and Kennedy would speak at a better hour before Monday’s game.

That moment never came. Instead, Cora faced a crowded room of reporters for over 20 minutes less than two hours before first pitch.

“Unfair or fair, I don’t know,” he said of ownership’s decision not to speak. “The team already sent a statement. They actually wanted to make sure... we appreciate what Dave did, as an organization. I know for some people, it’s probably not enough. For others, maybe it is. I’m just here like every day to talk to you people for whatever you guys want to talk about.”

Dombrowski wasn’t some low-rent, temporary executive who came in and left with no legacy. One of the most respected decision-makers in all of baseball, the 63-year-old won three division titles and a World Series title in his three full seasons with the club.

No matter what tension existed inside the walls of Fenway, Dombrowski earned more respect than he was given on his way out. The fans deserve a better explanation than they were given in the seven combined sentences issued in the statement and Cora and his players deserve much more than being thrust into explaining a decision they had no say in.

But there they were, standing at lockers and on a dais answering for their bosses who refused to take the heat. Making matters even worse were the optics of the decision to have David Ortiz throw out the first pitch in his dramatic first time back at Fenway Park since being shot three months ago.

Though it appears Ortiz’s appearance was scheduled before Dombrowski was fired, it was still a bad look on a day full of them for the Sox. Even if his appearance was more about a scheduling conflict than a smokescreen, it sure looked like one, taking something away from a feel-good moment that thousands have been waiting months for.

As the Red Sox embark on a franchise-changing search for Dombrowski’s replacement, it’s still unclear what exactly led to the change or what exactly the team is looking for in its new top executive. Radio silence suggests there’s something to hide, even if there isn’t.

They tried their best, but Cora and the six players who spoke really didn’t know how to explain a move they didn’t make. Cora, a former media member himself, was diplomatic and complimentary of both Dombrowski and the ownership group but seemed to have some questions of his own.

“I understand where you guys are coming from, but at the same time I do understand where they’re coming from and what they said in the release,” Cora said.

Maybe the owners are hoping that the passing of time will make the media forget about the burning questions at the forefront of the discourse right now. But at some point-- whether during the press conference to introduce Dombrowski’s replacement or elsewhere-- those questions will come and will need to be answered.

Cora constantly preaches transparency, accountability and honesty as pillars of how he runs the Red Sox. It’s a shame those above him have failed to grasp those lessons.

### **Red Sox eliminated from A.L. East race; finish with 5-14 record (worst since 1996) against Yankees**

Chris Cotillo

Considering how the season series has gone, it was all too fitting that the Yankees eliminated the Red Sox from the American League East race with a 5-0 win in the final game of the season series between the clubs Monday night.

New York’s win gave them an 18 ½ game lead over the third-place Sox, mathematically eliminating Boston from a chance at its fourth consecutive division title. Boston, which started 3-8, did not spend a single day in first place all season.

Further proving the gulf between the two teams was the final tally of their head-to-head matchups, in which the Yankees won 14 of 19. One year after the Sox took 10 of the 19 regular season games and knocked the

Yankees out of the postseason in four games in the ALDS, Boston posted its worst result (.263 winning percentage) in the season series since going 3-10 (.231) in 1996.

“They’re that good and we’re that far behind. Bottom line,” Sox manager Alex Cora said. “They’ve been very good the whole season and very consistent.”

New York took five of the six series against the Sox, sweeping them three times (at Yankee Stadium from April 17-18 and Aug. 2-5 and in London on June 29-30). The death blow to the Red Sox came over the weekend, when the Yankees took the final three games of a four-game set to improve to 45 games over .500.

“It’s a good all-around ballclub and since the first series they’ve just dominated us,” Cora said.

Cora has been impressed with how the Yankees bounced back from a tough playoff exit last year to be one of the best teams in baseball all season. Entering Tuesday, the Yankees are tied with the Astros for the best record in baseball at 95-50.

“They’re doing a lot of things better than last year. A lot that we’re not doing,” Cora said. “We’re not playing at the same level. I do believe that D.J. (LeMahieu) changed the equation of their lineup. With two strikes, they put the ball in play. They always control the strike zone. There were a lot of swings and misses last year and in 2017. I saw it first-hand two years in a row. It was a lineup we were able to expand with certain pitches and in certain situations. Now, it’s hard to do. There were some players there that they picked up toward the end of last year and even this year.”

The Red Sox, who are now eight games back in the wild-card race with 18 to play, will almost certainly be sitting at home while the Yankees look to win their first World Series in 10 years. Cora praised New York’s relentless consistency this season, saying it made it impossible for the Sox to pick up ground in the divisional race.

“They didn’t let us,” Cora said. “Bottom line. Last year, we didn’t let them and this year they didn’t let us.”

### **Yankees eliminate Red Sox from AL East contention, take season series 14-5 and outscore Boston 125-104**

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox had virtually zero chance to win the AL East title for more than a month. But it became official Monday here at Fenway Park.

The Yankees beat Boston 5-0 to eliminate Alex Cora’s team from AL East contention.

The Red Sox had won the previous three AL East titles. But they dropped to 76-68 and remain eight games behind the Athletics for the second Wild Card with 18 games remaining.

The Yankees took the season series from the Red Sox 14-5 and outscored Boston 125-104.

Eduardo Rodriguez pitched the first 6 innings for Boston. He allowed just one run, five hits and one walk while striking out nine. Austin Romine’s fifth inning homer against the lefty made it 1-0.

Left-handed reliever Darwinson Hernandez allowed three runs on three hits in the seventh. Gio Urshela bashed a solo homer, DJ Lemahieu hit an RBI single and Gleyber Torres connected on a sacrifice fly.

### **Boston Red Sox’s Alex Cora prepares for future without Dave Dombrowski: ‘I do believe we’re going to be fine’**

Chris Cutillo

Though he still hadn't fully processed the news of Dave Dombrowski's firing Monday afternoon, Red Sox manager Alex Cora was beginning to prepare for life without the man who hired him to run the team nearly two years ago.

After the Sox lost to the Yankees on Sunday night, Cora was greeted by owners John Henry and Tom Werner, team president/CEO Sam Kennedy and assistant GMs Brian O'Halloran and Eddie Romero in his office. The group informed him Dombrowski had been fired and that the news would be made public in short order.

Cora addressed his players in the clubhouse, working through his own shock to share the news.

"It was an audible because of the way it works," Cora said. "I've got to come up (talk to the media) and (the media goes to the clubhouse). I didn't want them to get caught off guard. I gathered the whole group and let them know what happened."

Cora stayed at Fenway Park late into the night, meeting with front-office members and trying to process the change. For the first time as a big-league manager, he was not to report to Dombrowski.

"There's the game, what happens on the field and then feelings and all that," Cora said. "It was a tough night for everybody. You talk to the people who are close to you, listen to them and put your mind in the right frame of mind and move forward."

Cora called Dombrowski on Monday to thank him for the opportunity to manage the team and wish him well. He said he had no inkling a move could be on the horizon and was completely blindsided by ownership's decision.

"This is a business that sometimes you have to make tough decisions," he said. "It was a tough decision. Ownership decided they're now going to look forward for someone else to run baseball operations. They explained it very simply. The guy's amazing. He's probably a Hall of Famer. What he did for the organization in the last four or five years, it was great. I think everybody's appreciative of what Dave has done."

Cora denied the notion that Dombrowski had become disconnected from others in the organization, including the analytical department. The manager also said he was under the assumption that his job was safe and vowed to stay true to himself despite the transition.

Cora is looking forward to working with Dombrowski's interim replacements-- assistant GMs O'Halloran, Romero and Zack Scott and senior VP of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira.

"Very respected people that are not new for me because between Dave and the four of them, they were always around," Cora said. "They're people we really trust and really like. It's going to be interesting, obviously, because it's a new dynamic. It's actually not that new. The last two years, it's all about teamwork here. Eddie, Raquel, Zack and 'BOH,' that's what they're going to try to do. Put this organization at it's best every day."

After Dombrowski was fired, starter Rick Porcello said he felt some guilt because of his struggles this season. It was a sentiment shared by his manager.

"From my end, it's hard because somebody lost their job because we didn't do the job on the field," Cora said. "I'm the one running the show. I'm the manager. I'm the one who tries to put these guys in a position to be successful. We haven't been successful."

Cora's guilt and sadness over the Dombrowski situation were paired with tempered excitement for the future. Cora has connections throughout the league and is looking forward to seeing who is tabbed to lead the baseball operations department this fall.

"I do believe we're going to be fine. You see the track record of our ownership group," Cora said. "They've been very successful. Although it's a tough day, you trust the decision they made and whoever comes here is going to do the job."

Henry, Werner and Kennedy addressed the team before Tuesday's game, preparing them for what's next. A search for a full-time Dombrowski replacement will begin as the Sox play out the remaining games of a lost season.

For his part, Cora is putting trust in ownership.

"I wasn't expecting something like this, but like I said, you have to respect their decision," Cora said. "We know we're going to be fine. They'll make the right decision, they'll get the right person running the organization for the plan we have moving forward. We'll be alright."

"It's a different dynamic from last night on," he added. "We'll see where it takes us."

### **After Dave Dombrowski's firing, Alex Cora says Boston Red Sox expectations are to win a championship every year: 'Is it realistic? No. But as a fan, yeah'**

Chris Cotillo

Less than a year after winning a World Series with Dave Dombrowski at the helm, the Red Sox fired their president of baseball operations early Monday morning. After leading the Sox to three division titles and a world championship in his first three full seasons in Boston, Dombrowski lost his job because of one bad year in 2019.

Dombrowski became the second straight Sox baseball operations head to be fired within two years of winning a World Series title, joining former general manager Ben Cherington. The Sox replaced Cherington with Dombrowski in Aug. 2015, less than two years removed from their 2013 World Series championship.

The series of recent moves at the top of Boston's front office beg an important question: Is the standard for success too high in Boston?

Sox manager Alex Cora weighed in.

"Last year when I came here, I knew what I was getting into, obviously," Cora said. "And the expectations here are to win a championship every year. Is it realistic? No. But as a fan, yeah. That's who we are. I'm a fan of different sports. Other teams. And that's what I want from my teams. I don't think it's unfair."

Boston teams have won 12 championships since the Patriots won their first Super Bowl in Feb. 2002, with the Sox taking home four World Series trophies since 2004. The standard of excellence surrounding the Sox, Patriots, Celtics and Bruins has cost more than a couple coaches and executives their jobs.

"It is what it is," Cora said. "We live in a city that I think the standards are set very, very high since 2002. ... So this is what makes it enjoyable. That on a daily basis, you've got to show up, go out there and do your best. Because if not, they're going to let you know that you didn't. And I think that's what pushes me on a daily basis regardless of the results. And that's why I always stay positive and keep pushing. Because you never know. You never know what can happen."

Cora, who played in Boston from 2005 to 2008 and won a ring in 2007, enjoys the high-pressure stage.

"I really enjoy it," Cora said. "I love getting in that car to come to Fenway Park because I know there's pressure, quote-unquote, although you know for me, pressure is another thing."

Under the lead of Cora and Dombrowski, the Red Sox had their most successful year in franchise history in 2018. Looking back, the manager could have never seen Dombrowski's firing coming a year ago.

"It's crazy," Cora said. "It's the same thing as thinking that we won 108 games and right now, we're kind of on the verge of getting eliminated. We never thought we were going to be in this spot and obviously we never thought this was going to happen a year ago."

### **Alex Cora's job security: Boston Red Sox ownership has yet to assure manager he'll remain when new GM is hired**

Christopher Smith

Alex Cora expects to remain manager of the Red Sox after ownership hires a new GM or president of baseball operations. Principal owner John Henry and chairman Tom Werner fired Dave Dombrowski on Sunday.

"As of now, yeah. That's how I feel," Cora said here Monday. "I wake up this morning and I feel like, yeah."

But ownership hasn't given him any assurances he will manage beyond 2019. Henry, Werner and president Sam Kennedy did not make themselves available to the media.

"We haven't talked about that," Cora said. "I think we're in the first stages of whatever is going to happen in the upcoming months."

Cora and the Red Sox agreed to a contract extension after the 2018 World Series. It runs through 2021 with a club option for 2022.

"We're all-in for a long period of time. Not only for 2018 and 2019," Cora said. "Like I told you guys last year, I want those twins to go to high school and college here in Boston."

The head of a baseball operations department often is allowed to hire his own manager. So there's always a chance the new boss might want someone different when he or she is hired.

"One thing for sure, I'll be me," Cora said. "I'm not going to change. This is what people respect or like about me. ... I'm pretty honest with conviction. I think I can help baseball teams to accomplish their goals. We'll see where it takes us. Right now we have four people that are going to be running the baseball operations. Very respected people that are not new for me because between Dave and the four of them, they were always around. They're people we really trust and really like. It's going to be interesting, obviously, because it's a new dynamic. It's actually not that new. The last two years, it's all about teamwork here. Eddie, Raquel, Zack and BOH, that's what they're going to try to do. Put this organization at it's best every day."

Assistant GMs Brian O'Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott will serve as interim GMs. Senior Vice President of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira "will take on an expanded role within the transition team," per a release.

### **David Ortiz first pitch: Boston Red Sox legend thanks God for 'second opportunity in life to be here' with fans at Fenway Park**

Chris Cotillo

In his first appearance at Fenway Park since being shot in the abdomen three months ago, Red Sox legend David Ortiz threw out the first pitch before Monday's Red Sox-Yankees game and addressed the crowd.

Ortiz thanked God for the opportunity to return to the ballpark he called home for 14 seasons.

“First of all, I want to thank God for giving me a second opportunity in my life to be here with all of you,” he told the crowd. “I want to thank the Red Sox, my real family. They always have been there for me, supporting me. They were aware of what happened to me and they were the first ones there, supporting me. Thanks very much, Red Sox family.”

Ortiz had not appeared publicly since being released from the hospital on July 26. He has been recovering at his home in Massachusetts after undergoing three surgeries to fix damage to his liver, intestines and gall bladder.

He appreciated the well-wishes he received from Red Sox fans.

“I want to thank all of you for all the prayers,” he said. “All of them came home. I really appreciate it. Thank you very much.”

Ortiz threw his first pitch to former teammate Jason Varitek, who greeted him on the mound with a hug. Ortiz showed his appreciation to members of both teams who had visited him in recent weeks.

“I want to thank my former teammates for being there for me also. All of them came home to check up on their boy,” Ortiz said. “Also, I want to thank the Yankees. A lot of my boys over there came and checked up on Big Papi. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. CC (Sabathia), (Edwin) Encarnacion, all y’all. Thank you very much.”

Ortiz plans on returning to his role as a baseball analyst for FOX before the postseason begins.

“God bless you all,” Ortiz said before leaving the field. “Go Sox.”

### **Ex-Boston Red Sox boss Dave Dombrowski speaks for first time since firing: ‘I respect ownership’s decision to make any changes they choose’**

Chris Cotillo

Former Red Sox president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski spoke for the first time since being fired early Monday morning, sending a brief statement to a few reporters (including Boston Sports Journal’s Sean McAdam).

“Appreciative of my time here,” Dombrowski said. “Boston is a great baseball city. Had an exciting few years, however, this season did not go as we all planned. Enjoyed working with the personnel in our organization. However, respect ownership’s decision to make any changes they choose.”

The Red Sox fired Dombrowski early Monday morning after their 10-5 loss to the Yankees. Owners John Henry and Tom Werner and team president/CEO Sam Kennedy praised Dombrowski in a statement but said they would make no further comments on the decision.

Dombrowski was Boston’s baseball operations head for more than four years after being hired in Aug. 2015. He led the Sox to three division titles and the 2018 World Series championship but took the fall for the team’s disappointing 2019 season.

Boston’s three assistant GMs-- Brian O’Halloran, Eddie Romero and Zack Scott-- will run the team’s baseball operations department until a permanent replacement is hired.

## **\* *The Portland Press Herald***

**Red Sox face tough decisions in the wake of Dombrowski**

Tom Caron

For the Boston Red Sox, the future is now.

That became evident in the wee hours of Monday morning when news broke that the team was parting ways with President of Baseball Operations Dave Dombrowski.

The news itself was not shocking. Boston had the game's highest payroll and is on the way to missing the postseason for the first time in four years. What was surprising was the timing. Why do it in the middle of the night, in the middle of a four-game series with the New York Yankees?

We eventually may find out what brought this all to a head. What we do know is the move is the beginning of the construction of the team for 2020 – and beyond. The organization is about to embark on an extraordinarily difficult journey, trying to retool a roster that was so disappointing this season in hopes of fielding a competitive team in years to come.

Dombrowski cast his lot with the group of players who won 108 games and a World Series last year. His loyalty to that group ultimately cost him his job. Re-signing players such as Eduardo Nunez, Steve Pearce, Nathan Eovaldi and even Chris Sale kept Boston's payroll at the top of the charts even as the Red Sox sank in the standings.

While a significant amount of payroll will be coming off the books after this season, it will take a significant amount of money to bring back players who are arbitration eligible. There isn't much flexibility on the roster as presently constructed.

The Red Sox need to make difficult decisions in the months ahead. There's a strong likelihood that the team will have to lose key pieces of the current roster while bolstering the sagging pitching staff and propping up the farm system. Team ownership decided Dombrowski was not the man for the job.

"Four years ago, we were faced with a critical decision about the direction of the franchise," principal owner John Henry said in a statement issued by the team. "We were extraordinarily fortunate to be able to bring Dave in to lead baseball operations. With a World Series Championship and three consecutive American League East titles, he has cemented what was already a Hall of Fame career."

"Dave will hold a special place in franchise history as a key architect of one of the greatest Red Sox teams ever assembled," team chairman Tom Werner said in the statement. "His willingness to make bold moves helped deliver our fourth World Series Championship in the 21st century."

The team begins its search for the architect of what former General Manager Ben Cherington once called "the next great Red Sox team." The team's current baseball operations group – assistant GMs Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott, along with Senior Vice President Raquel Ferreira – will oversee the department in the interim. All four have been with the organization longer than Dombrowski and go back to a time when drafting and developing players were the focus.

That focus changed under Dombrowski, who was brought in to go "all in" and make moves to create a championship team. He did exactly what he was asked to do, constructing a team that won three straight division titles and set a franchise record with 108 wins during the 2018 championship season.

The challenge facing the Red Sox now is different. They are at a crossroads and must find a course that allows them to extend a window of opportunity. They will not become the Baltimore Orioles and blow up the roster. There is too much talent here. But it's no longer as simple as trading for a couple of key pieces to add to the fold. There must be addition and subtraction if the equation is to work.

It would be wrong for anyone to kick Dombrowski on his way out the door. It was simply time for a different voice.

Cases like this remind me of the Boston Celtics at the start of the Larry Bird Era. Bill Fitch was brought in to coach the team, and took a 27-win team to 61 victories in 1979-80. It was the biggest one-year improvement in NBA history. A year later the Celtics won the NBA championship. Two years after that, Fitch was out. His taskmaster style no longer fit the team, and a much more laid back K.C. Jones took over and led the Celtics to two more championships.

Fitch was one of the greatest coaches in NBA history. That didn't change when he parted ways with the Celtics.

Dave Dombrowski will someday be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. He added to his legendary career in Boston. Yet it is time for a change. And the Red Sox didn't waste any time making the move.

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

### **Five Takes: Red Sox brass leaves Alex Cora hanging out to dry**

Chris Mason

There was a game played at Fenway Park last night, but all the truly meaningful events transpired in the hours leading up to it.

Following Dave Dombrowski's midnight ouster late Sunday evening, the Red Sox couldn't have handled things much worse. The front office didn't hold any sort of press conference, instead leaving Alex Cora to answer for their actions during his normal media availability.

Here are five takes from a bizarre day at the ballpark:

#### 1. Brass leaves AC out to dry

Principal owner John Henry, chairman Tom Werner, and team president Sam Kennedy were all at Fenway Park on Monday, but when it came time to answer questions, Cora sat by himself atop the Red Sox podium. None of the four execs now serving as acting general managers were present either.

It was ridiculous.

The Sox brass fired Dombrowski less than a year after winning a World Series, and then didn't have the stomach to explain why they'd done it. Cora was trotted out with a manager-in-the-headlights look to field questions well above his pay grade.

The craziest part? Letting Dombrowski go is not a bad move. It's totally justifiable, which makes the refusal to comment all the more perplexing.

#### 2. Cora tries anyway

Put in a spot to explain why his own boss was fired, Cora tried his best to make chicken salad, but really didn't have much to offer during the 22 minute question-and-answer session.

"Unfair or fair, I don't know," Cora said. "The team already sent a statement."

He said a bunch of nice things about Dombrowski, called him probably a Hall of Famer, but any real insight into the decision making process was sparse.

"I think the organization decided to move in a different direction, just like it says in the statement," Cora said. "I don't think they have to go into details. I think the organization just decided that it was time to move on."

### 3. Optics get worse

It'd be one thing if Red Sox ownership was overseas or something, but they weren't.

The tone-deafness hit a crescendo before the game, when both Kennedy and Werner were down on the field to participate in pregame ceremonies. They certainly had the time on their hands, but still let Cora do all of their lifting alone.

### 4. Welcome home, Papi

There was some good pregame news, albeit oddly timed.

As "Jesus Walks" played from the Fenway Park PA, David Ortiz jogged up the dugout steps, making his first public appearance since being shot in the back three months ago.

Ortiz received a raucous ovation from the Fenway Park crowd, sauntered to the mound, fired a ceremonial first pitch to old friend Jason Varitek. He then took a microphone and thanked (both Red Sox and Yankees) fans for all of their prayers as he recovered.

It was great to have him back.

### 5. ...and the game

Oh, and as far as the ballgame goes, Eduardo Rodriguez was excellent again, Darwinzon Hernandez got roughed up, the offense didn't do much of anything and the Red Sox lost their third straight, 5-0.

## **Red Sox were right to move on from Dave Dombrowski**

Chris Mason

Dave Dombrowski did exactly what the Red Sox hired him to. It's the right time to move on from him.

Both of these things can be true. And they are.

In August of 2015, Dombrowski arrived in Boston with a ready-made reputation as an exec that was keen on star power and never shied away from a deal. Inheriting a mediocre team with a bustling farm system, Dombrowski was tasked with harvesting.

He did that.

The president of baseball operations traded for All-Stars Chris Sale and Craig Kimbrel, signed David Price to a record-breaking deal, and won three straight AL East titles and a World Series. Job well done.

But now the team must be forward-thinking, something Dombrowski struggled with in the months following his championship.

In re-signing World Series heroes Steve Pearce and Nate Eovaldi, the team lost all flexibility to sign a reliever, a far greater area of need. The farm system is now frequently ranked among the worst in baseball, and with almost \$80 million tied up in Eovaldi, Price and Chris Sale next season — all of whom have serious injury red flags — funds for a Mookie Betts extension are unnecessarily tight.

Things may be pretty in the rearview mirror, but the road ahead is littered with potholes, and the Sox have already started to smoke them.

Dombrowski wasn't just fired because the team is going to miss the playoffs this year. That's oversimplifying the situation; there's far more in play than that.

With a contract set to expire after the 2020 season, the Red Sox were never going to let Dombrowski go into a lame duck year.

"This day it probably doesn't make sense for your general manager to go into his final year without a contract," principal owner John Henry said in February. "So that would mean something should happen this year."

(We're left to use spring training quotes here because the Red Sox refused to hold a press conference yesterday, an embarrassing decision, but that's a different story.)

Henry's logic is sound.

Executives without contracts are apt to make self-serving deals to save their own jobs rather than ones that will serve the team well long term. It's human nature.

So faced with a quasi-rebuild, the Red Sox had a decision to make this fall, less than a year after winning it all: Is Dombrowski worth investing in long term?

It's a complicated question with a simple answer.

No.

Dombrowski's inactivity at the trade deadline showed a lack of vision moving forward. If he believed he'd constructed a roster that could make a real run, the Sox architect should have added to give his team a spark.

If Dombrowski saw what we see now: A team doomed to finish third, he should have sold to replenish the farm system.

If you want to see what one deadline of selling can do, look no further than the Yankees in 2016. Acknowledging his team didn't have it, Brian Cashman traded Aroldis Chapman, Andrew Miller, and Carlos Beltran, and now the Yanks are far better positioned for years to come.

Dombrowski could have set the Sox up similarly, but instead he opted to stand pat, neither improving the team in the present nor the future. It's a difficult call, but one talent evaluators like Dombrowski are supposed to make shrewdly. He simply didn't.

The recent successes also must come with another caveat: Dombrowski has been given far more money to play with than anybody else.

That World Series title didn't come cheap. The Red Sox outspent everybody in baseball in 2018, and that remains the case this season.

Nobody has come close to touching Boston's payroll, and with it looking more and more bloated, it's hard to fault ownership. They're paying \$240 million for a third place team.

Dombrowski came as advertised, and the Red Sox have a World Series banner to show for it, but in the words of the late Tom Petty, "It's time to move on, time to get going."

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

### **Dombrowski leaving good news for PawSox**

Brendan McGair

Dave Dombrowski was no fan of providing the PawSox with a competitive product.

Granted, that's not one of the prime reasons why the Red Sox decided to sever ties with their President of Baseball Operations, someone who's not even a full calendar year removed from presiding over a World Series winner. Since finger pointing is par for the course whenever a press release announces the dismissal of a high-ranking official, now seems as good a time as any to drive home the obvious talent drain that's unfolded inside the walls of McCoy Stadium during Dombrowski's time in Boston.

For the most part, the PawSox in the Dombrowski era were noticeably short on bumper harvests and abundant when it came to bad crops. From the first day Dombrowski started in Boston on August 18, 2015 and concluding with the final out of the recently-completed 2019 season, Pawtucket has featured teams that won a combined 277 games but lost 306 times. Things have only gone backwards, from 74 wins in 2016, 67 wins in 2017, 66 wins in 2018 and this past season's woeful 59-win effort that equaled Louisville for the fewest wins in the 14-team International League.

Now and forever, the goal of winning at the Triple-A level will always take a backseat in favor of developing players and sending them to the major leagues. Under Dombrowski, it's not like the sting that Pawtucket was forced to absorb as losing seasons were strung together like pearls on a necklace was somewhat mitigated due to the steady presence of blue-chip prospects, the kind that Baseball America likes to swoon and fawn all over.

If the unofficial Bible of minor-league baseball is to be believed, the PawSox between the tail end of the 2015 season through 2019 hosted less than a handful of players deemed prospect worthy. There was Rafael Devers and his nine-game cameo in 2017, followed by Michael Chavis and his 20-game stint that was spread over parts of two seasons with Pawtucket before getting the call to the majors. Darwinzon Hernandez pitched in seven Triple-A games this summer before Boston's bullpen came calling.

Bobby Dalbec, Boston's top 2019 prospect per Baseball America, takes the cake when it comes to sticking around Pawtucket the longest. The power-hitting corner infielder has 30 games of Triple-A experience under his belt. Other than the aforementioned names, Pawtucket's identity as a player development machine, a belief that fueled the respective tenures of former BoSox general managers Theo Epstein and Ben Cherington, became an endangered species with Dombrowski calling the shots.

Infielder Bobby Dalbec, above, is one of the rare Red Sox prospects who appeared at McCoy Stadium under recently fired President of Baseball Dave Dombrowski. The PawSox, with a dearth of top-end talent, finished last this season.

Even when the Red Sox farm system was stocked with prospects, Dombrowski, based on his actions, did not prioritize the need for a Triple-A education. Back in 2016, Yoan Moncada and Andrew Benintendi within weeks of each other took a ride on the Portland-to-Boston shuttle. We couldn't even say, "We hardly knew you" when we didn't even get to meet them in the first place.

With those two moves, Dombrowski sent shivers down the collective spines of everyone whose livelihood depends on promoting the PawSox brand. Instead of counting down the days when a big-time prospect washes ashore, the new reality featured bracing for the distinct possibility that talents such as Moncada and Benintendi might never grace the all-time player register section of the PawSox media guide. The jump from Double-A to Triple-A was no longer a surefire bet to happen.

Then again, if your name appeared in the top tier of the Red Sox prospect food chain when Cherington handed off the baton to Dombrowski, the odds of you taking the field with a "P" on your hat were greatly diminished. Anderson Espinoza, Michael Kopech, Mauricio Dubon, and Manuel Margot never came close to reaching McCoy Stadium. Each of them met the same exact fate – from household name to Dombrowski trade bait, sent away in an effort to enhance a core of young Red Sox players that were drafted and developed under previous Red Sox GM regimes.

With upper echelon prospects in the system's upper levels in short supply, the Red Sox filled out Pawtucket's roster with fringe/borderline prospects and minor-league free agents that didn't exactly move the needle in terms of overall excitement. Granted, there have been plenty of feel-good PawSox stories that have unfolded over the past few seasons – Robby Scott, Ryan Brasier, and Brandon Phillips spring to mind – yet nothing brings out the baseball romantic more than catching a rising star at McCoy. It's a time-tested adage that Dombrowski tossed on the backburner, as Pawtucket's roster became filled with far too many journeyman who didn't exactly pass the eye test when it comes to major league contributors.

With fingers crossed, here's hoping that whoever takes over as the top voice of Boston's baseball operations looks more favorably upon the franchise's Triple-A on-field product. The last thing PawSox principal owner/chairman Larry Lucchino or anyone in the PawSox front office wants to see is the final season at McCoy Stadium or the first season in Worcester end up featuring clubs that run the risk of yielding a collective yawn.

With Dombrowski now out of the picture, the idea of welcoming Red Sox prospects to Triple-A holds the potential of becoming the rule rather than the exception.

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

### **Papi gives heartfelt speech in return to Fenway**

Ian Browne

In a moment that sent Fenway Park into a state of delirium, Red Sox legend David Ortiz tossed the first pitch prior to Monday night's finale of a four-game series against the Yankees.

It marked Ortiz's first public appearance since he suffered a gunshot wound in the Dominican Republic on June 9.

Big Papi tossed his pitch to former teammate and Red Sox captain Jason Varitek, and they shared an embrace after.

Then, Ortiz, who was wearing sunglasses and a Red Sox home jersey, took to the microphone and spoke as he usually does -- from the heart.

"First of all, I want to thank God for giving me a second opportunity in my life to be able to be here with all of you," Ortiz said. "I want to thank the Red Sox, my real family, they have always been there for me, supported [me]. With what happened to me, they were the first supporting me. Thank you very much, Red Sox family."

Ortiz had three surgeries and was at last released from Massachusetts General Hospital on July 29. He is said to be doing much better and is expected to make a full recovery.

"I think any time you see a brother, a teammate, as someone who means so much to you, in good spirits, I think it's a positive thing," said Red Sox center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. "We're just glad to know he's back being who he is."

The 43-year-old Ortiz looked and sounded healthy.

"I want to thank all of you for all the prayers, all of them came home," Ortiz said. "I really appreciate it. Thank you very much. I want to thank my former teammates for being there for me. And also, all of them came home to check on their boy. Also, I want to thank the Yankees, a lot of my boys over there came over to check on Big Papi. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you very much. God bless you all. Go Sox."

The Yankees were thrilled to be there for Ortiz's return to Fenway.

"Awesome. Awesome to see him back and healthy," said Yankees star slugger Aaron Judge. "That was a whole scary scene, what happened with him. I prayed for him throughout that whole process. To see him go out there, walk on that field and throw a pitch out was fantastic. The city, the fans were going crazy for it. We were, too, all clapping for him. Just happy to see him back. It's Big Papi."

The retired slugger played for the Red Sox from 2003-16, guiding the franchise to three World Series championships while becoming an icon in the community. He has been staying at his Boston-area home since his release from the hospital.

As starting pitcher Eduardo Rodriguez walked in from the bullpen, he almost couldn't believe his eyes when he realized Ortiz was on the field.

"It was amazing," Rodriguez said. "I didn't know he was coming. I just saw it as soon as I was walking out from the bullpen to the dugout, and I turned to the big screen and saw he was out there. It was a really good moment for everybody here."

At the outset of the ceremony, Ortiz was greeted enthusiastically by Red Sox public address announcer Henry Mahegan.

"Tonight, we welcome one of the most beloved people to ever wear the Red Sox uniform," Mahegan said. "In fact, he may be one of the most beloved people in the history of this city, his city, our city. Won't you please welcome the symbol of resilience, strength, triumph and love, our one and only Big Papi, Red Sox Hall of Famer Number 34, David Ortiz."

From there, the crowd erupted in a joyful way, knowing that Ortiz was finally back where he belonged.

Once the game started, Ortiz took in the game with his wife, Tiffany, in owner John Henry's seats just to the side of where manager Alex Cora stood in the Boston dugout.

"It's always good to see the big man," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "For the fans to see him is awesome. For the players, I always say David is kind of like a rockstar baseball player. That vibe. It's amazing. I'm glad he was able to come here and hang out with us and see that he's doing a lot better."

As a spectator, Ortiz was his jovial self, staying for most of Boston's 5-0 loss to the Yankees.

"We all love Big Papi," said Rodriguez. "Seeing him out there was really special. He was right next to the dugout. He even gave me a high-five after the first inning. That was special for me."

In what has been a difficult season for the Red Sox, seeing Ortiz provided some perspective.

"Amazing," said Bradley. "Like he said, he's very thankful for all the prayers, the doctors. He's a special one to have and I'm glad to have him close to full strength. I mean, any time you go through something that's life altering, you're going to have that greater appreciation knowing that you get another chance. He's always enjoyed life. I'm sure he's going to enjoy it even more now."

**Cora, players react to Dombrowski's dismissal**

Ian Browne

The decision the Red Sox made to part ways with president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski was tough for manager Alex Cora and his players to come to grips with.

The main reason it is so tough is the collective remorse that their performances could have led to Dombrowski's sudden departure with three weeks left in the season.

"It's a little frustrating, because we feel like if we would have done a better job, he'd still be here," said Red Sox righty Nathan Eovaldi.

Eovaldi was a player Dombrowski secured last July in a trade with the Rays. That turned out to be a huge move, because Eovaldi dominated throughout the postseason, helping the team win the World Series.

But Dombrowski's decision to sign Eovaldi to a four-year, \$68 million contract once he became a free agent didn't work out as well -- at least in the context of 2019.

Eovaldi missed three months following right elbow surgery and has a 5.77 ERA in 19 appearances this season, eight of them starts.

"It all comes down to us," said Eovaldi. "It's our job to win and we haven't been doing that up to this point, and we haven't lived up to expectations that we had for ourselves. We have to try to finish strong."

For Cora, realizing that he will no longer see Dombrowski on a daily basis was particularly tough. It was Dombrowski who recommended the Red Sox hire someone with no professional managerial experience in October 2017.

"I talked to him this morning just to thank him for trusting me and giving me a chance to become a big league manager," Cora said. "The process was a long one. There were four or five teams that decided to go in another direction. I learned from that process, and all of a sudden, this guy with 40 years of experience is like, 'Go ahead, kid. I think you can do this.' And here I am, because of him."

However, Cora had an understanding that these things happen in baseball, and he's confident in where the Red Sox will go from here.

Assistant general managers Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott will share Dombrowski's duties for the remainder of the season. That trio will be joined by Raquel Ferreira, the club's senior vice president of Major and Minor League operations, who will take on an expanded role.

"Right now, we've got four people that are going to be running the baseball operations who are very respected," Cora said. "They're not new for me, because between Dave and the four of them, they're always around as people we really trust and like. It's going to be interesting, obviously, because it's a new dynamic, but it's not that new."

"Because one thing about it, the last two years, it's all about teamwork here. Eddie, Raquel, Zack and BOH, that's what they're going to try to do, try to put this organization at its best every day."

Ownership decided not to hold a press conference to discuss the decision to let Dombrowski go.

Cora didn't think it was appropriate to divulge whatever reasons ownership gave him for the change.

"I think the organization decided to move in a different direction just like it says in the statement," Cora said. "I don't think they have to go into details. I think the organization just decided that it was time to move on."

The manager expressed confidence that things will run smoothly going forward.

"This organization has done amazing things for a while," said Cora. "They have made changes throughout, and obviously people outside the walls of Fenway maybe don't like it. Some of them, they do. But us, as people that work here, we've got to respect it.

"We'll see what happens, we'll see where we go, but I do believe we're going to be fine. Obviously you see the track record of our ownership group. They've been very successful. Although it's a tough day, at the same time, you trust that the decision that they made and whoever comes here is going to do the job and put us in a good spot."

## **5 players most affected by Dombrowski's exit**

Ian Browne

Just like that, the Dave Dombrowski era is over in Boston. It was certainly memorable, with three consecutive American League East titles and a 2018 World Series championship.

Dombrowski, dismissed as president of baseball operations in the early hours of Monday morning, did what ownership brought him in to do -- build around the team's core of young stars (led by Mookie Betts) and build a champion. Going back to his days as general manager of the Marlins and Tigers, Dombrowski has always been known for big splashes, and he did more of the same in Boston, such as when he signed left-hander David Price and designated hitter J.D. Martinez and made blockbuster trades for closer Craig Kimbrel and ace Chris Sale.

But the Red Sox have decided a new leader is needed for the next phase, which will better balance short- and long-term sustainability. So from that standpoint, the narrative you're hearing today in some circles -- "They just won the World Series last year!" -- is missing the point.

With all of that in mind, here are five players on the current roster who could be most impacted by Dombrowski's departure.

Mookie Betts, OF, age 26

The winner of the American League Most Valuable Player Award in 2018 is having another strong season (.914 OPS, 27 homers), if not as spectacular as the one he had a year ago. Betts has resisted any overtures from the Red Sox to explore a long-term deal. Instead, he has maintained that he wants to test free-agent waters after the 2020 season.

Dombrowski's successor is confronted with the following decision this offseason: Trade Betts, perhaps for a prospect haul, or try to win another World Series with him and risk losing him for just Draft compensation.

Given Dombrowski's win-now philosophy, the team might have been less likely to part with its star outfielder if he had stayed. Things could get interesting with Betts, who has emphasized multiple times in recent weeks that he loves Boston and his decision will be "strictly business." Perhaps a new leader of baseball operations will be better able to persuade Betts to make a long-term commitment to Boston.

J.D. Martinez, DH, age 32

The right-handed-hitting masher has been closely linked to Dombrowski through the years. It was Dombrowski who signed Martinez to the Tigers after the Astros released him a few days ahead of Opening Day 2014. It was Dombrowski who brought Martinez to the Red Sox as a free agent following his monster '17 season.

Now, Martinez is at another crossroads, as he has an opt-out clause in his contract this offseason. This time, Dombrowski won't be around to help retain Martinez. The reason this could be a factor is that Dombrowski

has always had an excellent working relationship with agent Scott Boras, who represents Martinez. Given the slow pace of the free-agent market the last two offseasons -- and the fact that he's probably an AL-only player -- there's a chance Martinez could decide not to opt out. After all, he has another one after the 2020 season. But stay tuned. Martinez's future is a big issue, considering how impactful his presence is in the middle of Boston's lineup.

Jackie Bradley Jr., CF, age 29

One thing Dombrowski has always placed a high value on throughout his career is a center fielder who plays elite defense. Bradley has certainly filled that category, though his bat continues to be an enigma. Bradley entered Monday's game with a .730 OPS and a .219 average, his third straight season of below-average offensive production, based on OPS+. Like Betts, Bradley is eligible for free agency after the 2020 season. If Dombrowski's successor doesn't place such a big priority on outfield defense, Bradley could get traded or even non-tendered. The latter would be a stunner, but Bradley will likely make close to \$10 million in his final year of arbitration, and if the club is committed to staying under the luxury tax, it could probably replicate his production for a bit less.

Dombrowski's detractors might say that Bradley should have been traded following last season, when his value was raised by being named the MVP of the AL Championship Series. His supporters might say that it was worth seeing if Bradley was at last ready to reach his potential as a hitter over a full season. One thing to keep in mind is the Red Sox have two other players on their roster who can play center in Betts and Andrew Benintendi.

David Price, LHP, age 34

The first huge move Dombrowski made with the Red Sox was signing Price to a seven-year, \$217 million contract prior to the 2016 season. The lefty has had ups and downs with his performance and his health, with the latter usually having a direct impact on the former. But he came up big in the ALCS and World Series last fall, and Boston probably wouldn't have won it all without him. One of the reasons Dombrowski went all in for Price is because of the relationship the two had built together after Dombrowski (then still with the Tigers) made one of his patented blockbuster deals and acquired Price at the '14 Trade Deadline.

Might a new executive with no personal ties to Price be more inclined to try to trade him? Obviously no team is going to take the balance of Price's contract. He is owed \$32 million in each of the next three seasons. But if the Red Sox were willing to absorb a good bit of the money, would it be worth trading Price for the type of prospects who could bolster the farm system? It might be something the club explores. Price, who is currently coming back from a left wrist injury, has made fewer than 25 starts in two of the last three seasons.

Rafael Devers, 3B, age 22

If the Red Sox part with some of their other big-ticket items under their revamped front office, the player who could benefit directly is Devers, who is having a breakout season. Though Betts has made it clear he doesn't want to discuss a long-term extension before free agency, Devers might feel differently about the situation. It is worth exploring a long-term extension with Devers now, before his value skyrockets even further.

Devers won't be eligible for arbitration until after the 2020 season, and he might want to cash in on his breakout campaign sooner rather than later. We've recently seen a number of young stars sign big extensions well in advance of arbitration, notably Ronald Acuña Jr. and Ozzie Albies of the Braves last offseason, and Devers would fit that mold. In April, Boston and Xander Bogaerts agreed to a six-year, \$120 million extension, and a long-term deal for Devers could signify that he and Bogaerts are the cornerstones the club will now build around.

**Sox's quest to four-peat as AL East champs ends**

Ian Browne

Eduardo Rodriguez turned in yet another stellar start for the Red Sox on Monday night at Fenway Park. The only thing lacking? The run support he almost always gets.

This time, the bats went stone cold in a 5-0 loss to the Yankees that officially ended Boston's run of American League East titles at three straight.

Though it was inevitable for weeks, this defeat eliminated the Sox in the division race, dropping them 18 1/2 games behind their rivals with 18 games left in the season.

The franchise-record, 108-win season of a year ago, when the Red Sox beat the Yankees by eight games in the division and then took them out in four in the AL Division Series, feels like a long time ago.

From New York to London to Boston, the Yankees absolutely took it to the Red Sox this season, taking 14 of the 19 rivalry matchups.

"They're that good and we're that far behind -- bottom line," said Red Sox manager Alex Cora. "They've been very good the whole season. Very consistent."

Then there are the Red Sox, who have been consistently inconsistent, as Cora has stated for several weeks.

If only the Sox could have gotten even one other starting pitcher to perform like Rodriguez has, perhaps they would still be in contention.

"I would say this year I'm healthy. That's what I think has been the big change for me," Rodriguez said. "Work ethic with the trainers and everything has been working really well for me this year, and like I say, being healthy this year has helped me a lot to be where I am right now."

In this one, the lefty gave up five hits and one run over six innings. He walked one and struck out nine and fell to 17-6. The 26-year-old still has an outside shot at 20 wins.

"That's a great outing right there," said Cora. "We've been talking about him not being able to go deep into games coming into the season and they did a good job fouling off pitches. But his stuff was that good even with 115 or whatever it was."

For the Red Sox, the highlight of this night came a few minutes before the game started when legendary slugger David Ortiz threw out the first pitch, marking his first public appearance since he suffered a gunshot wound in the Dominican Republic on June 9.

The crowd roared with approval, and Ortiz then took the microphone and made some heartfelt remarks.

**\* *ESPN.com***

**The Pedro Game turns 20. Yes, THAT Pedro Game**

Sam Miller

Pedro Martinez was, from 1997 through 2003, the greatest pitcher in major league history. Other pitchers had better careers -- longer careers -- but nobody was better for a sustained period of time than Martinez was in those years.

But who was the greatest Pedro Martinez in Pedro Martinez history -- in other words, when specifically did Pedro Martinez reach his ultimate peak? The answer might be 20 years ago today. He was three years into that seven-year run, he was wrapping up a season with by far the best FIP (Fielding Independent Pitching) in

modern baseball history, and he was smack in the middle of an eight-game stretch in which he would strike out 107 batters, walk eight and allow a 1.16 ERA. His start on Sept. 10, 1999, was the best of the eight.

A friend told me once that Martinez's start that night was The Pedro Game. I was confused. I already knew what The Pedro Game was, and it didn't happen 20 years ago tonight. Then a different friend told me that, no, The Pedro Game was actually a different game still. And then I asked a big group of friends and was startled to realize just how many iconic, unique, capital-letter Pedro Days there were that Pedro Martinez threw in his career. There are seven, at least.

The whole point of naming something is to give it an identity, to cure confusion. If we're all talking about different days, under the same name, we're doing it all wrong. It's time to solve this riddle.

The Canadian Pedro Game: June 3, 1995

The pitching line: 9 IP / 1 H / 0 R / 0 ER / 0 BB / 9 SO

What happened: Martinez became the second pitcher in history to take a perfect game into extra innings. Harvey Haddix lost his in the 13th inning, and would lose the game. Martinez won the game but lost his to the leadoff batter in the 10th.

But, look, it was every bit the equal of any other perfect game, right? Twenty-seven up, 27 down. At the time, there had been only 12 perfect games in major league history, plus Haddix's. That it didn't count alongside the 12 "official" perfect games was entirely arbitrary, owing not to anything having to do with Pedro, or Pedro's pitching, or general logic, but merely his Expos' inability to score a run. "I was disgusted with myself," said Darrin Fletcher, the Expos catcher, after flying out in the ninth inning with a man on. It was the offense's fault Pedro's start went into the 10th. It wasn't Pedro's.

In 1995, a lot of opposing ballplayers didn't like Martinez. He'd been in his first brawl a year earlier, and his second right after that, when the Padres' Derek Bell charged him after a strikeout. Martinez wasn't even looking when Bell came running at him, and according to Martinez another Padre -- Bip Roberts -- launched into him from behind, too. Pedro pledged to Roberts he'd remember -- "I'll get your ass."

But Roberts was the man who broke up the perfect game, on his fourth try. Pedro threw him a changeup and Roberts lined a double into right field. Pedro left immediately after the hit, despite having thrown only 96 pitches. He ended up with the win -- the Expos had scored in the top of the 10th -- but, alas, Roberts won the "get your ass" contest.

It wasn't The Pedro Game.

Why it's not The Pedro Game: Because he wasn't really The Pedro yet. He was known at the time for flashes of brilliance, some wildness and the controversial style of pitching inside. He didn't yet have command of his great curveball, and he was still throwing his two-seamer instead of his better, easier-to-command four-seamer. It was another year (or perhaps three) before he really put everything together and became the greatest pitcher who ever lived.

The Five-Baseball-Games-A-Year Fan's Pedro Game: Oct. 11, 2003

The pitching line: 7/6/4/4/1/6

What happened: A "beet-faced, roly poly old man" -- Pedro's words, in his 2015 autobiography -- charged at Pedro in the middle of a benches-cleared scrum, Pedro redirected him to the ground, and we all spent the next week debating whether Pedro Martinez is a villain or just a complicated hero.

Pedro's "tackle" of Yankees bench coach Don Zimmer had enough ambiguity to it that it's hard to know what to make of it: Pedro looks almost entirely confused/defensive, but his hands, right at the end, do look forceful and mean. Hard to say! But in New York, there was no ambiguity, and Pedro started to get death

threats. Credible threats, he writes, enough that he says he had police surveillance for his family and extra security at his hotel. "I didn't go out once," he writes of checking into his Manhattan hotel for the rest of the 2003 American League Championship Series. "Nothing but room service, and I had to be careful that the food was okay before I ate any of it. I felt vulnerable. My cocoon was threadbare and flimsy. I had never pitched a game under more pressure [than his next start, in New York]. I've always said that pressure is a lack of confidence in the things that you can do, but on that day forces that had nothing to do with baseball closed in on me. I felt physically threatened. The vise began to squeeze."

The through-line of Pedro's career -- even more than "good pitcher," because he wasn't always a good pitcher -- is that he worked fearlessly inside and the league fought to get him to stop. Figuratively, they fought by trying to shame him, by slandering him as a headhunter who didn't respect the game. But they also literally fought him, constantly: Reggie Sanders once charged Pedro after Pedro hit him with a pitch in the eighth inning of a perfect game. Pitchers threw at Pedro in retaliation, and after a few of those he became one of the few pitchers you'll see charging the mound back.

And so this is perhaps the ultimate culmination of that career-long fight: Don Zimmer, baseball's final boss, charged and got rolled to the ground, but, ultimately, he got closer than anybody else to forcing Pedro Martinez to second-guess his actions. "I made a wrong decision," Martinez would write.

But it's not The Pedro Game.

Why it's not The Pedro Game: He didn't pitch very well. (Twenty-six other starting pitchers have had the same 7/6/4/4/1/6 line, and only eight of their teams won.) There was the potential for it to become The Pedro Game because after the brawl Pedro retired the next nine straight. If it had been, say, 15 straight, and the Red Sox had come back and won the game, there'd be a case. But as it is, we should agree Pedro Martinez needs to pitch well for a game to be The Pedro Game.

The Hipster Pedro Game: May 6, 2000 and/or Aug. 29, 2000

The pitching line(s): 9/6/1/1/1/17 and 9/1/0/0/0/13

What happened: This is, obviously, two games, and we're supposed to be talking about only one. Each of these is worthy of career-highlight status, but they bleed into each other.

Both were against the Rays. In the first, he matched a career-high 17 strikeouts and got a career-high 37 swinging strikes, which, near as I can tell, is the second-most by any starter since 1988. (The Kerry Wood Game, to put this into perspective, had 24 swinging strikes.) "I would like to have that stuff for just one inning," his pitching coach, Joe Kerrigan said afterward. "Just give me one batter." But on an eighth-inning run the Red Sox lost 1-0 to Steve Trachsel, who had led the majors in losses the year before. Pedro lowered his ERA for the season to 1.22, but he lost his 13-game winning streak. "One can only guess what we'd be saying and writing today if Pedro had actually won the game," the Boston Globe's Dan Shaughnessy wrote that day.

Fast-forward to August, the Rays again. Gerald Williams led off the game, took a fastball on his hand, and charged the mound. He landed a clean punch before a pile formed on him and Pedro, and when it was all settled -- 12 minutes later -- Williams was ejected. Pedro was not. There would be a total of five scrum in the game -- Brian Daubach had to go to the hospital, Lou Merloni was hospitalized with a concussion, Trot Nixon maybe threw his bat at the pitcher, eight Rays were ejected, and a group of Rays tried to get into the Red Sox clubhouse after the game to keep the fight going -- but Martinez managed to keep his head down and stay in. He retired the next 24 batters before finally losing his no-hitter in the top of the ninth. "John Flaherty, a guy who couldn't hit himself, took a 97 mph fastball away and dropped it into right center," Pedro writes. "Go figure. If Flaherty could ruin my no-hitter in 2000 and Bip Roberts could spoil my perfect game five years earlier, there was no reason to be upset with never having one of those on my resume. It just wasn't meant to happen."

As the Boston Herald's Michael Silverman would write in 2015, "If one game could capture what made Martinez so dominating and infuriating for opponents, this was it." Indeed, it captures the subtext of Pedro, which even he seemed to underestimate. While he insisted that his pitch to Gerald Williams was unintentional, and that he had no history with Williams, Williams (and everybody else) had history with him, because of that subtext. Consider how, after the May start, a reporter had actually asked Williams whether he had expected any pitches high and tight from Pedro -- a seemingly out-of-nowhere question for a batter who hadn't gotten any pitches high and tight. But sure, makes sense as a question: It's Pedro! After the August start -- and the fastball to his hand -- Williams struggled to hold his tongue: "I want to remain professional. Sometimes, it becomes increasingly difficult when you're given a guy's background. That's all I want to say about it."

By Game Score, the August game was tied for the best start of Pedro's career. By swinging strikes, the start in May might well have been his most dominant. Neither was The Pedro Game.

Why neither is The Pedro Game: While these would easily sit atop the highlights for a normal ace, two masterpieces against a pitiful Rays team can't quite contend against Pedro's larger body of work. Besides, hardly anybody saw those games, or can see those games, and thus hardly anybody can remember those games with the appropriate sense of awe.

The Pedro Game Most Likely To Be Remembered in the Year 2119: Oct. 16, 2003

The Pitching line: 7.1/10/5/5/1/8

What happened: This was the start after the Don Zimmer game, after the death threats and the extra security, and here's what Pedro writes that was like:

"Just before I took the long, exposed walk out to the outfield to begin my long toss, I asked our resident security agent to walk beside me. Pitchers do not get police escorts on a baseball field. That night I did, for the first and last time. Before I could think about facing Alfonso Soriano, I had to stop thinking, literally, about meeting the same fate as John F. Kennedy."

He was so, so good. When the eighth inning began, with Pedro still pitching, Joe Buck read a promo for Master and Commander, "The year's most anticipated motion picture, starring Russell Crowe." Nineteen seconds later, Tim McCarver chimed in: "Master and Commander has starred Pedro Martinez tonight." Yesss.

But there's another thing Buck said that inning: "Some [people were] saying Pedro Martinez still had to have that one game -- that highlight game in his career." That's incredible, considering that all the other games we've talked about or are about to talk about had already happened, but the stakes and the performance might have justified it. Buck was suggesting, at roughly 11 p.m. on Oct. 16, 2003, that this was actually the greatest game of Pedro Martinez's career, that this was the game he'd be remembered for: Game 7 of the American League Championship Series, against the Yankees, to send Boston to the World Series, with the franchise still waiting for its first title in almost a century.

And then, incredibly, this start became exponentially more memorable, immeasurably more historic: Grady Little leaving Martinez out for one, and then two, three, four, five batters too long, long enough for Martinez to lose the lead, so that Aaron Boone could eventually hit the walk-off homer in the 11th inning. It might be the most famous baseball game of the 21st century.

But it's not The Pedro Game.

Why it's not The Pedro Game: It's the Grady Little Game. It might be the game most likely to be remembered 100 years from now, and Pedro was on the screen more than any other player, but this ultimately wasn't a movie about him. It was really a psychological thriller, with Little the protagonist.

The Not-A-Real-Game Pedro Game: July 13, 1999

The pitching line: 2/0/0/0/0/5

What happened: This was the 1999 All-Star Game, in Boston. Martinez had actually refused to pitch in the previous year's All-Star Game, after he felt snubbed when another pitcher was given the starting assignment. (Publicly, he claimed to be sore.) But the 1999 game was in Fenway Park, and by this point Martinez was a half-season into the greatest multi-year peak of any pitcher in history. He got the start.

"Joe Torre and his brother-in-law were in [Red Sox manager Jimy Williams'] office at Fenway before the game," Pedro writes in his book. "Joe was listening to his brother-in-law go on and on about the power in the NL lineup and how many home runs were going to be hit. 'Pedro will strike everyone out,' Joe told him. 'What? You realize who they've got?' 'Yeah, and I don't care -- he'll strike everyone out.'"

The six batters he faced were Barry Larkin, Larry Walker, Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, Matt Williams and Jeff Bagwell. He struck all but Williams out. Williams hit a first-pitch curveball weakly to second base.

Now, every baseball kid grows up hearing about the time Carl Hubbell struck out five Hall of Famers in a row, and there's no doubt Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Jimmie Foxx -- three of those Hall of Famers -- loom larger in the public record than Barry Larkin and Larry Walker. But Pedro's five-out-of-six strikeout victims had exactly the OPS Hubbell's five had, at the time:

Pedro's five, first half 1999: .311/.414/.609

Hubbell's five, first half 1934: .331/.428/.595

Larry Walker was hitting .382 at that point. Sosa and McGwire that year were both on their way to once again hitting more than 61 home runs. Larkin and Bagwell are each in the Hall of Fame.

"I was amped up at a level I had seldom reached," Pedro writes. It took him 28 pitches to get through his two innings. He threw six curveballs, and three caused batters to buckle: Two to Sosa, one to McGwire. He threw six changeups, four of them for swinging strikes. He threw 15 fastballs, up to 98 mph, and none were put into play. The five strikeout pitches are all GIF-able, but some of the best stuff was actually buried earlier in counts.

Those two innings are, to many, The Pedro Game, but they also cost the world an even better greatest pitching season of all time. "My shoulder was sore with what I thought was normal soreness after that game, but I was unable to work it out of my system before I went back into the rotation five days later. I only lasted 3 2/3 innings in my first start back, against the Marlins, because my shoulder was too sore to go. I had to go on the DL ... My ERA ballooned, relatively, from 2.10 at the ASB to 2.52 by the middle of August before my shoulder settled down." He had starts of 79 pitches, 77 pitches and 64 pitches in the weeks after. But in his final eight starts after it "settled down," he struck out 15, 11, 15, 17, 14, 12 and 12. If we take that timeline at face value, then this is what Pedro's season looks like without the All-Star Game:

First half: 15-3, 2.10 ERA, 184 Ks in 133 innings

Aug. 24 on: 6-0, 0.80 ERA, 97 Ks in 56 innings

Combined: 21-3, 1.72 ERA, 13.4 Ks/9

That 1.72 ERA would have come in a season in which the second-best ERA in the league was 3.44, and the league-average ERA was 4.86. (Bob Gibson's record 1.12 ERA came in a season when the league-average ERA was 2.99.) His FIP on the season -- 1.39 -- is already the lowest since the Deadball era, but without the sore-shoulder starts, it would have been 1.24. It is just wild to think that the second-shortest start of Pedro's career (by pitches), in a game that didn't even count, would have bitten so much out of such a historical season.

As it is, though, the shoulder at least settled down enough to make possible the top two contenders for The Pedro Game. The All-Star Game is not quite The Pedro Game.

Why it's not The Pedro Game: Too short, didn't count.

The Scriptwriter's Pedro Game: Oct. 11, 1999

Pitching line: 6/0/0/0/3/8 (in relief)

What happened: Pedro had started Game 1 of the ALDS, throwing four scoreless innings before he had to be removed for "something between a pinch and a pull," in his words. The Red Sox lost the game, and for the next week weren't sure if they'd lost Pedro. When the series reached Game 5, they still didn't know if he'd be available, and when he threw in the outfield before the game he didn't quite feel right.

Jimmy Williams hoped to use Pedro for the final inning, maybe two, if the game turned out to be close. "The doctors examined the strained muscle running from his right shoulder down his back and said Martinez might be able to throw 40 pitches, absolute max," Tom Verducci wrote the following spring.

But when starter Bret Saberhagen and reliever Derek Lowe each got knocked out early, and the Red Sox trailed 8-7 through three, Pedro walked over to Jimmy in the dugout.

"Jimmy, I'm sorry, but I'm going to go to the bullpen and try and see what I can do."

"No Pedro, if you can go, you're supposed to go at the end, and that's only for one inning, maybe two, and 18, 20 pitches."

"Jimmy, this is the time. I'm sorry. But I'm going to see what I can do and if I can do it, I'm going in."

"Goddammit, Pedro, I can't let you do that."

"No, Jimmy, I'm going now."

He went to the bullpen and threw. (Rod Beck, the Red Sox closer, also warmed up. It was the third inning!) The Red Sox tied the game, and in the bottom of the fourth Martinez entered the game, barely able to top 90 mph. His first two pitches were balls, and the Cleveland crowd erupted, perhaps convinced they'd actually just been given a gift -- a hurt pitcher, about to get rocked. "With every pitch Martinez felt a stabbing sensation behind his shoulder," Verducci wrote.

And still he was Pedro, just different. He threw about twice as many changeups as he typically would, and more curveballs, too, including a changeup-curve-change-curve-change-curve sequence to Roberto Alomar in the fifth. He couldn't get his arm up to its regular three-quarters slot and was throwing almost sidearm, which gave his fastballs a bit of manic, unpredictable movement. As the strike zone expanded off the edges later in the game, he painted those extra inches of the plate, throwing mostly fastballs in the final two innings. When it ended, Pedro had thrown 97 pitches, six innings, hitless -- against the only 1,000-run offense since 1950. The Red Sox won.

It's probably his greatest performance, all things considered. Even if he weren't hurt, it would have been an all-timer, but the lingering injury made it like "Kirk Gibson limping off the bench to hit his home run -- and doing it five more times," in Verducci's words. In Pedro's: "You think about being a hero in baseball, the Kirk Gibson winning homer against [Dennis] Eckersley [in Game 1 of the 1988 World Series]. Fans think of that, but players do too. For me in my life I have never known when those things are going to happen, when that moment, that opportunity, is going to come. But in my heart, I wanted them so much." The great Red Sox beat writer Chad Finn says it was "to that point the most fulfilling experience I'd had in a lifetime as a Red Sox fan. I couldn't even tell you what would have ranked second."

And add onto that what Martinez was, he says now, risking: "I risked my career that day," he told Jonah Keri. "I did it out of pure guts and adrenaline. I went out there and I did it, I risked my career. From the 84-86 mph that I was probably throwing in the first inning, I went all the way up to 94 again, but at the end of the game I was dying. I've never been in more pain than I was that day."

I do not see how this cannot be The Pedro Game, but I've become convinced it's not.

Why it's not The Pedro Game: What made it incredible was that it wasn't quite Pedro. He'd been Freaky Friday'd into another pitcher's body, and his brilliant soul adapted and took advantage of the Indians' expectations. Somehow, he equaled himself. But it was an anomalous Pedro, not The Pedro. In that game, we saw something incredible happen, but Pedro as a pitcher could be more incredible than that.

The Pedro Game: Sept. 10, 1999

The pitching line: 9/1/1/0/17, the only instance of that pitching line in major league history.

What happened: Pedro started against the Yankees, in the final month of a pennant race, in Yankee Stadium. In the second inning, he threw a truly terrible pitch and Chili Davis hit a solo home run, and you could reasonably argue he never threw another bad pitch. He retired the next 22 batters, 15 of them by strikeout. None of the final 11 batters hit a ball fair.

Buster Olney wrote the game story for the New York Times: "Hitters gossip on the Yankees' bench during games, sharing information about the opposing pitcher's flaws. But there was no free-flowing exchange of thought last night, no tips, no insight. They said nothing in the dugout because there was nothing to say. Boston's Pedro Martinez humbled the Yankees in their home park in a manner never seen before." Indeed, during the ninth inning the television broadcast cut from one Yankee face to another, maybe a dozen in all, each equally stunned and speechless. The impression was one of isolation, as though Pedro had put each batter into his own personal prison cell.

"Jimmy Williams, the Boston manager, said it was the best pitching effort he had ever seen," Olney wrote. "David Cone agreed, less than two months removed from throwing a perfect game."

The stakes were not as high as they were in the LDS relief appearance, or in later playoff games Pedro started. But this was, says Brian MacPherson, formerly of the Providence Journal, "the most characteristic start. He was more memorably dominant in the 1999 All-Star Game, and he was more consequential in the 1999 ALDS -- though, the fact that the Red Sox meekly bowed out in the ALCS takes some oomph out of that. But 1999-2000 Pedro was defined by the fact that he took the ball to start a game and just completely outclassed whatever lineup he faced, often in overpowering fashion. In the same way that 20 strikeouts is more difficult to attain than a perfect game, there was something quintessentially Pedro about the fact that he strode into Yankee Stadium and struck out Yankee after Yankee after Yankee after Yankee -- a year after those Yankees had won 114 games, in a year they'd go on to win another World Series -- and that dominance isn't something that one random Chili Davis home run in the second inning could diminish."

The style, too, was quintessentially Pedro. He made eight different hitters move their feet with inside pitches. He found the extra couple inches the umpire was giving on the outside corner and carved that sliver repeatedly, forcing batters to then chase unhittable curves. He wouldn't give in on any count, preferring to set up a batter with a 2-1 off-speed pitch than groove anything. He mixed his arm slots, and, in the words of Chili Davis, "It's like he invented pitches out there." His curveballs drew ludicrously weak swings from Joe Girardi, then buckled Chuck Knoblauch's knees. Darryl Strawberry, pinch hitting in the ninth, would later say he walked to the plate with no plan whatsoever. Yet all Pedro did was throw him four straight fastballs, and Strawberry swung like he'd left his eyes in the dugout.

Derek Jeter was hitting .353 coming into the game. Bernie Williams was hitting .344. These were the Yankees. But it didn't matter whether it was the Yankees in September or a simulated game on a spring training backfield. The game was 100 percent under Pedro's control.

When Pedro struck out 17 Rays the next year, it was this game he compared his stuff to. (He said his stuff was better in the Yankees game.) When we said earlier that those 17 Ks tied a career high, it was tied with this game. When we said another game matched his career-best Game Score, it was this one it matched. Other games were more dramatic (though not by much!), but this game alone was Pedro as he was, and at his best.

For what it's worth, Pedro wouldn't name a Pedro Game. Speaking of the final three mentioned here -- the All-Star Game, the LDS relief appearance and Yankee Stadium -- he said, "[Fans] enjoyed those three games. So did I. But a favorite? I'll keep them all."

Here's another thing he said, after the Rays' John Flaherty broke up his no-hitter in Aug. 2000: "I don't really care. A no-hitter is not what's going to dictate what kind of pitcher I am. I think my career is more interesting than one game." Strongly agree.

### **Cora 'very surprised' by Dombrowski's dismissal**

Joon Lee

Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora took the podium on Monday afternoon, left alone for 22 minutes to answer media questions about Sunday's sudden dismissal of president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

Cora had to handle questions solo because Red Sox principal owner John Henry, chairman Tom Werner and team president Sam Kennedy addressed the move through a statement earlier in the day, deciding not to answer questions about why Boston ousted its baseball-operations leader less than a year after a World Series championship.

And when asked if it was unfair that he alone had to face the noise, Cora deflected.

"Unfair, fair, I don't know," Cora said. "The team sent a statement. They want to make sure we appreciate what Dave did as an organization. For some people, that's not enough. For others, it isn't. I'm here every day to talk to you guys. From my end, I was very surprised, but at the same time, you think about it today, this is the guy that gave me a shot to be a big league manager.

"For four or five years, you go through this process and nobody gives you a shot and then all of a sudden Dave Dombrowski gives me a chance to run this organization as a manager. We had a lot of success last year. This year, not as much. This is a business that sometimes you have to make tough decisions, and it was a tough decision."

In a statement to the Boston Globe, Dombrowski said he was "appreciative of my time here," but added, "this season did not go as we all planned."

"[I] enjoyed working with the personnel in our organization," Dombrowski told the Globe. "However, [I] respect ownership's decision to make any changes they choose."

Cora said he met with Henry, Werner and Kennedy along with assistant general managers Eddie Romero and Brian O'Halloran, half of the quartet who will run baseball operations in the interim with senior vice president Raquel Ferreira and assistant general manager Zack Scott, after Sunday's 10-5 loss to the New York Yankees.

"They told me: 'You have to tell the players,'" Cora said. "It's not easy. I always talk about it with you guys. There's the game, and then there's what happens off the field, and then your feelings and all that. It was a tough night for everybody."

Cora said he called Dombrowski on Monday morning to thank him for giving him opportunity to manage in Boston, repeatedly mentioning their talks about life and baseball on team flights. Cora flatly denied reports that Dombrowski was disconnected from the analytics department, contributing to his departure.

"Right now, we have four people that are going to be running the baseball operations that are very respected, people that are not new for me because between Dave and the four of them, they were always around," Cora said. "These are people we really trust and we really like. It's going to be interesting obviously because it's a new dynamic but it's actually not that new. One thing you saw was all the teamwork here. Eddie, Raquel, Zack and [O'Halloran], that's what they're going to do. Try to put the organization in the best position every day."

Henry, Werner and Kennedy also addressed the team Monday, according to Cora.

"Everybody is on the same page and knows what's going on," Cora said.

"Everybody is on the same page and knows what's going on," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said in the wake of Dave Dombrowski's firing. AP Photo/Michael Dwyer  
With 19 games left in the season, Boston's playoff odds are at less than 1%, according to FiveThirtyEight research. Cora said some regulars will see more rest.

"We'll do our best to win every game possible, but at the same time, we have to take care of some players," Cora said. "There are some arms here that are not part of the now, but the future of the organization. I know a lot of people like the all-in approach, at the same time, we've been all-in for a long time."

With the Red Sox changing direction, beginning their search for a new head of baseball operations, Cora reflected on the annual pressures that come with leading a sports team in Boston, a city that has seen its sports teams win 12 championships since 2001 across the four major American sports.

"Last year, when I came here, I knew what I was getting into obviously," Cora said. "The expectations here are to win a championship every year. Is it realistic? No. But as a fan, that's who we are. I'm a fan of other teams and that's what I want for my teams. I don't think it's unfair. It is what it is. We live in a city where the standards are set very, very high since 2002 or right around that. This is what make it enjoyable, that on a daily basis, you show up and do your best because if not, they're going to let you know that you didn't. That's what pushes me."

Cora's job is not expected to be in jeopardy in light of Boston's disappointing season, though he added the ownership group has not told him specifically that he was safe.

"We haven't talked about that," Cora said. "I think we're like in the first stages of whatever is going to happen in the upcoming months."

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

### **The next Red Sox general manager could come from the Theo Epstein tree**

John Tomase

If the Red Sox want to entice an established executive to replace Dave Dombrowski atop their baseball operations department, the sell might be tougher than they think. The rest of baseball has noticed that Boston's last two World Series-winning architects found themselves unemployed within two years.

Ben Cherington won it all in 2013 and was replaced by Dombrowski in August of 2015. Dombrowski didn't even last a year after building the 2018 juggernaut that romped to 108 wins and the team's fourth championship in 15 seasons.

He was fired on Sunday night, which puts the Red Sox in the market for a general manager at one of the most pivotal moments in recent franchise history. The team faces a number of challenging decisions this winter, not least of which is whether to extend or trade defending MVP Mookie Betts. They must also rebuild their farm system, determine whether they can trust their top three starters, and prepare for the possibility that J.D. Martinez opts out of his contract.

That's not an easy job, and the Red Sox know it. They're prepared to take their time filling the position, which decreases the likelihood that they'll simply hand the reins to an internal option like assistant GM Eddie Romero or analytics chief Zack Scott.

If they go outside the organization, whom might they target? It's possible they don't even know at this point, but here's a hunch -- it's worth focusing on the Theo Epstein executive tree.

The former GM took over in November of 2002 and had the Red Sox in Game 7 of the ALCS a year later before securing the Curse-busting title of 2004. Principal owner John Henry is comfortable with the systems and processes Epstein built way back when, which is what made the more instinctual Dombrowski such a departure.

The Red Sox under Epstein and then Cherington married scouting and analytics in a way that blazed a trail, though most organizations have caught up in the last decade. Both believe in winning from within -- Epstein boasted of building a "player development machine," while Cherington focused on turning homegrown talent into "the next great Red Sox team."

When Cherington's style proved a little too deliberate during last-place finishes in 2014 and 2015, ownership altered course with Dombrowski, who aggressively swapped youngsters for veterans en route to a magical 2018.

With Theo holdovers peppering the front office -- including the interim brain trust of Romero, Scott, Brian O'Halloran, and Raquel Ferreira -- it makes sense from a continuity standpoint to return to the Epstein model.

The good news is there should be no shortage of options. The name that's sure to leap to mind is Diamondbacks general manager Mike Hazen, a Massachusetts native and Princeton grad who has overseen exactly the kind of rebuild-on-the-fly the Red Sox hope to undertake themselves.

The D-Backs were a game under .500 when they traded ace Zack Greinke at the July 31 deadline. Instead of imploding like the Red Sox, though, they've caught fire. They're 21-14 since and have leapfrogged three teams to draw within two games of the Cubs in the wild card standings.

It's unclear if Arizona would allow Hazen to interview for a lateral move, however, or if he'd even want to, given what he's building in the desert with former Red Sox bench coach Torey Lovullo.

He's not the only Arizona exec with Boston ties, though. Former Red Sox amateur scouting director Amiel Sawdaye and pro scouting director Jared Porter are also members of Arizona's front office, and both remain well-respected in Boston.

Another possibility, albeit a remote one, is Cubs general manager Jed Hoyer, a Wesleyan grad who served as one of Epstein's most trusted assistants in the 2000s before leaving to run the Padres. He has since reunited in Chicago with Epstein, where they ended a second title drought in 2016.

Another name that hasn't come up in a while is Josh Byrnes. One of the first Epstein assistants to ascend to GM, he has spent time running the Padres and Diamondbacks. He's currently one of the many former GMs working as a VP with the Dodgers.

If the Red Sox want to go younger, Mets farm director Jared Banner spent more than a decade in Boston after graduating from Amherst and is considered a rising star in the game.

These names are mostly speculation, because the job has barely been open a day. But as the Red Sox begin their search, they'll certainly give some consideration to the Epstein tree, which means we should, too.

### **Dave Dombrowski is leaving behind a mess for his Red Sox replacement**

John Tomase

Dave Dombrowski built a champion, but he's leaving behind a bit of a mess. Whomever the Red Sox hire to replace him will be staring at the organization's most consequential winter in a decade.

You want a challenge? Try being in charge of the following:

- \* Mookie Betts will probably be extended or traded this winter, and the latter option no longer feels so far-fetched.

- \* The starting rotation is anchored by three pitchers Dombrowski signed for more than \$400 million, and not one of them is guaranteed to be healthy next season, whether it's Chris Sale, David Price, or Nathan Eovaldi.

- \* Slugging DH J.D. Martinez could opt out of his contract and force the Red Sox to step up or watch him walk away, though the qualifying offer gives the team some leverage.

- \* With a payroll pushing \$240 million and dead money in the form of Dustin Pedroia's extension, Pablo Sandoval's buyout, and the final year of Rusney Castillo's \$72.5 million contract (which doesn't technically count against the luxury tax since he's not on the 40-man roster, but try telling John Henry that \$14 million isn't real), the Red Sox will be financially squeezed to address needs in the starting rotation and bullpen, especially if they hope to reset their luxury tax clock and avoid another round of penalties.

- \* Rafael Devers looks like a superstar in the making, and the Red Sox must decide if they can lock him up to a long-term extension, even though he won't be arbitration eligible for another year.

- \* Can the team live with Jackie Bradley's inconsistent offense now that he's looking at an eight-figure contract arbitration award? Might outfielder Andrew Benintendi be dangled to acquire young pitching? Is Brandon Workman really a closer, or do the Red Sox need one of those, too?

These complicated issues must be addressed in Dombrowski's wake, and the clock is already ticking.

Because the Red Sox have committed so many resources to an iffy rotation, for instance, there is almost certainly no longer money for both Martinez and Betts. The former will be more affordable because of his age (32), position (DH), and skillset (slugging), but the latter is a younger and more dynamic player.

If Betts is dealt — and that feels increasingly likely, since retaining him will cost at least \$300 million — it won't necessarily be because the Red Sox fear losing him, but because they realize they can't afford him. And if that's the case, then you will have lost the defending MVP because of payroll mismanagement.

The rotation serves as ground zero in that regard, since that's where Dombrowski lavished huge deals on Price (7 years, \$217 million), Sale (5 years, \$145 million), and Eovaldi (4 years, \$68 million). Sale has already been shut down, Price will probably soon join him, and Eovaldi just threw five innings for the first time since April elbow surgery.

Because all three are signed through at least 2022 (and Sale through 2024), the problems they pose aren't going away anytime soon, unless Magic Johnson decides to buy another baseball team. That's a massive expenditure for such distressing levels of uncertainty.

Fixing one of baseball's statistically worst rotations won't be accomplished atop the free agent market, where Astros right-hander Gerrit Cole is expected to receive \$200 million. There's no way the Red Sox throw such money after yet another 30-something starter.

Acquiring arms behind left-hander Eduardo Rodriguez will require trades, then. Betts is one candidate to be moved, with Benintendi another. The problem is, the Red Sox are so thin in the outfield, dealing any of the current starters will require a parallel move.

Plug one leak, watch another spring.

Likewise, they should prepare to open their checkbooks for Devers, a transcendent talent who is already the best overall hitter on the team, even though he doesn't turn 23 until October. The Braves recently locked up NL MVP candidate Ronald Acuna Jr. for eight years and \$100 million, with options that could keep the 21-year-old in Atlanta through age 30. Let the Devers bidding start there.

With Mitch Moreland and Brock Holt on expiring contracts and Michael Chavis limited for now by the hole atop his swing, the Red Sox will need infield help, too, at first and second base. That's a lot of pieces to acquire in one offseason on a limited budget. Bobby Dalbec, anyone?

That's what Dombrowski is leaving behind. His brute-force approach produced a World Series champion, but it also broke a lot of china, and his successor's first order of business will be grabbing a broom.

### **Red Sox ownership goes AWOL, forces Alex Cora to conduct pointless press conference**

John Tomase

The Red Sox fired their president of baseball operations on Sunday night, so naturally they made their manager explain it.

Alex Cora addressed the media for more than 22 minutes on Monday afternoon, but there's little point in relaying what he said. An ownership group that preaches honesty and accountability found itself bereft of those qualities when it came time to explain the how and why of Dave Dombrowski's ouster.

They instead hid behind an empty press release, leaving the task of explaining how Dombrowski could be fired just 11 months after winning a World Series to one of his underlings.

Cora did the best he could, noting that owners John Henry and Tom Werner, as well as CEO Sam Kennedy, broke the news to him after Sunday night's loss to the Yankees, leaving Cora to "call an audible" and inform his team.

That led to the absurdity of Monday afternoon, when Cora was peppered with very specific questions about why ownership decided to cut ties with Dombrowski, questions he was in no position to answer. In a Belichickian twist, they let the statement speak for itself.

"I know for some people, it's probably not enough," Cora said. "For others, maybe it is. I'm just here like every day to talk to you people for whatever you guys want to talk about it. From my end, like I said yesterday, I was very surprised, but at the same time, you think about it today, and this is the guy that gave me a shot to become a big-league manager. For four or five years, you go through this process and nobody gave you a shot. All of a sudden, Dave Dombrowski, 40 years in the big leagues, decides to give me a chance to run this organization as a manager. We were successful last year. This year, not that much. This is a business where sometimes you've got to take tough decisions, and this was a tough decision.

"Ownership decided that from now on they're going to look forward for someone else to run baseball operations. They explained it very simple. The guy is amazing. He's probably a Hall of Famer, what he did for the organization the last four or five years, it was great. I think everybody appreciates what Dave has done."

Cora said lots of other stuff, but let's just stop right here, because the only ones who can explain the motivations behind this move own the team, and for whatever reason, they're not talking.

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

### **Why the firing of Dave Dombrowski came Sunday night instead of after the season**

Sean McAdam

Ever since a Boston Globe report earlier this summer suggested that Dave Dombrowski was in jeopardy of not returning for the 2020 season, his job security has been a matter of open speculation — both inside and outside of Fenway Park.

Indeed, in recent weeks, Red Sox ownership had come to the determination that Dombrowski was not the executive they envisioned running their Baseball Operations department in the future. With the organization about to enter a period of transition and some difficult decisions ahead on the horizon, Dombrowski's approach — with a penchant for big moves, both in trades and free-agent signings — and, by extension, his need for a big payroll, convinced the Sox they needed to make a change at the top.

That no one in the Red Sox organization — on or off the record — disputed the basics of the Globe story for weeks represented an ominous sign for Dombrowski.

Dombrowski's original five-year deal was set to expire after the 2020 season, but the Sox didn't want to go into next season with Dombrowski in lame-duck mode. Additionally knowing that they were going to make a change, they didn't want him tackling a number of issues this offseason, knowing that he was going to be around for the long-term.

And so, the determination had been made to inform Dombrowski at the end of the season that he wouldn't be returning.

But that timetable changed quickly Sunday night, according to an industry source.

Dombrowski was spotted on the field Sunday evening, having taken part in some pre-game ceremony. He was then seen leaving the field, cutting through Fenway's lower box seats, stopping to take a selfie with some fans and shake hands with others.

Somewhere between the stands in Fenway and the GM box — located on the EMC Club Level, overlooking the box seats between home plate and first base — Dombrowski apparently ran into someone at the ownership level and saw this as an opportunity to press for some clarification on his future.

(Both principal owner John Henry and chairman Tom Werner were present at Fenway over the weekend, as they often are for series involving the Yankees. Team president and CEO Sam Kennedy, as is the case nearly every day, was also at the ballpark).

In a subsequent meeting, Dombrowski was told he would not be returning for the final year of his contract and he eventually left the ballpark.

After informing Dombrowski of the decision, the Red Sox had planned to keep the news from going public Sunday night and scheduled a press release for Monday.

But then some hints of the firing began showing up on social media. In some areas of the ballpark, workers got word of the move and began spreading the news. Fearful that news would break before they could issue the news on their own, the Sox hastily began making plans to confirm the news verbally in the immediate aftermath of the game, shortly after midnight.

The team then issued a press release Monday morning, making the firing official while also noting that ownership did not intend to hold a press conference to address the dismissal, or comment further on the move.

(Ownership was reluctant to answer questions about the firing, recalling that the team was criticized for some negative portrayals of former manager Terry Francona after Francona was fired in October of 2011, and thought it best to let the release speak for itself. Francona believed that ownership had been the source of such negativity, and his relationship some eight years later remains strained with those at the top of the organization.)

Sunday wasn't the first time that Dombrowski had sought some clarification on his future from ownership — merely the last.

Perhaps mindful that Henry himself had vowed to get Dombrowski extended past 2020 on the morning of last fall's World Series parade, Dombrowski sought an extension on numerous occasions, only to be put off.

It's likely that even had the Red Sox been of a mind to extend Dombrowski, the two sides might have been at loggerheads over his compensation on a new deal.

Dombrowski had repeatedly told friends around the game that he considered himself underpaid relative to his career accomplishments — he was believed to be paid somewhere in the \$2.5-\$3 million annually by the Sox — especially in comparison to the salaries of the Chicago Cubs' Theo Epstein and the Los Angeles Dodgers' Andrew Friedman, both of whom make more than \$7 million annually under their current deals.

### **BSJ Game Report: Yankees 5, Red Sox 0 – Sox shut out, eliminated from division title**

Sean McAdam

Yanks dominate Sox all year: A year ago, the Red Sox went 10-9 head-to-head against the Yankees and finished eight games ahead of New York in the standings while wrapping up the AL East title for the third year in a row. But this year, it was a completely different story, with the Yanks dominating from April all the way through Monday night when they officially eliminated the Sox from the division title and went 14-5 in the 19 meetings between the rivals. Of the six series between the two clubs, the Sox won only one — taking three of four in late July. Otherwise, the Yankees rolled, winning here, in New York, and, of course, in London. Alex Cora said the Yankees have improved when it comes to putting the ball in play more, cutting down on strikeouts and have upgraded defensively. “They’re doing a lot of things better than last year,” said Cora, “and we’re not playing at the same level.”

Return of Ortiz lifts Fenway: About an hour before game-time, word began circulating that David Ortiz would be throwing out the ceremonial first pitch. Ortiz, who was critically injured in a shooting in his native Dominican Republic exactly three months ago and required a number of life-saving surgeries and weeks of hospitalization, jogged to the mound and waved to the adoring fans. Speaking to the crowd he thanked God for giving him a “second opportunity,” then thanked the Red Sox organization and the fans for their support during his recovery process. “It’s always good to see the big man,” said Cora. “It’s great for the fans to see him. I’ve always said that David is kind of like a rock star/baseball player. We could see that he’s doing a lot better.” Wearing his trademark No. 34 jersey, Ortiz zipped a pitch to former teammate Jason Varitek, then watched the game from the box seats adjacent to the home dugout.

Rodriguez pitches well in defeat: Lefthander Eduardo Rodriguez, attempting to take a step toward becoming a 20-game winner for the first time, fell short of win No. 18, but deserved better. Over six innings, he allowed just one run — an opposite-field homer to right by catcher Austin Romine in the fifth inning. He gave up just four other hits, walked one and fanned nine over six innings and 117 pitches, which represented a career-high. But because the Sox were shutout, he was on the hook for the loss. Even with the

loss, Rodriguez has now set career highs in starts (30), wins (17), innings pitched (178.2) and strikeouts (177).

#### TURNING POINT

Rookie reliever Dawinzon Hernandez had racked up eight consecutive scoreless innings of late, but coming into a 1-0 game in the top of the seventh, the lefty flamed out. He was tagged for a solo homer by Gio Urshela. After a strikeout, he yielded a double to Romine, wild pitched him to third then gave up a run-scoring single before being lifted. In all, he was charged with three runs in one-third of an inning while a 1-0 deficit quickly grew to 4-0.

#### ONE UP

Jackie Bradley Jr.: Bradley made two fine catches in center and, at the plate, reached four base times with two singles, a double and a walk.

#### ONE DOWN

Gorkys Hernandez/Chris Owings: Brought up from Pawtucket to provide depth, the two journeymen are struggling mightily. Hernandez started in left and was 0-for-4 while Owings struck out in a pinch-hitting appearance. Together, they're a combined 1-for-26 since being promoted.

#### QUOTE OF NOTE

"They're still battling; it's just that the results are not there." – Cora on his team, which has lost four of its last five.

#### STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

The Sox finished with 33 homers against the Yankees, the most ever in a single season against New York.

Over his last 23 games, Bradley Jr. is slugging .633 with a 1.017 OPS.

Mookie Betts extended his on-base streak to 23 consecutive games.

The shutout loss was the first for the Sox since July 21 at Baltimore.

#### UP NEXT

The Red Sox travel to Toronto for a three-game set with the Blue Jays. RHP Nathan Eovaldi (1-0, 5.77) vs. RHP T.J. Zeuch (0-0, 4.50).

### **Assessing Dave Dombrowski's legacy with the Red Sox**

Sean McAdam

Dave Dombrowski served as the Red Sox' President of Baseball Operations for just over four years. In that span, the Red Sox' championship last October stands as the pinnacle of his achievements while on the job.

In 2018, a franchise with more than a century of history set a club record for most regular-season wins, that easily outclassed the competition in the postseason going 11-3. They never trailed in any of their three postseason series and were tied (1-1 with the Yankees in the ALDS) only once.

But his time spent in Boston is more complicated than wins and losses.

Here's a look at the good and the bad associated with Dombrowski's tenure:

## THE GOOD

### 1. Three consecutive first-place finishes, culminating in a 108-win season and a world championship.

It may be easy to forget, but when Dombrowski was hired, the franchise was headed for its third last-place finish in four years with, oddly, a World Series win mixed in the middle.

There was a revolving door on the manager's office, with the team going through three managers in as many seasons from 2011-2013.

Dombrowski went right to work in his first offseason, focusing mainly on the pitching staff, resulting in a division title in 2016 and another in 2017. The team stalled out on its first two playoff tries — swept in the Division Series the first time, and winning just one game the next — before breaking through with his championship run in 2018.

Say this much for Dombrowski: he's one of three executives since 1918 to be the architect of a Red Sox championship club. That's pretty select company.

### 2. The blockbuster trades for pitching.

In Montreal, Miami and Detroit, Dombrowski earned the reputation of being a big-time wheeler-dealer, pulling off mega-deals for superstars. Often, Dombrowski plundered his own minor league system for proven major-league talent.

That pattern followed him to Boston. After just three months on the job, Dombrowski sent four prospects to the San Diego Padres in exchange for closer Craig Kimbrel, who anchored the team's bullpen for the next three seasons.

Some 25 months later, Dombrowski struck again, packaging another four minor leaguers — headed by Yoan Moncada and Michael Kopech, arguably the top-ranked position player and pitching prospects in the organization at the time — for Chris Sale, who went 29-12 with a 2.56 ERA over 372.2 innings in his first two seasons with the Sox.

### 3. Hiring Alex Cora.

After the Sox fired John Farrell, the Red Sox began a brief — and direct — search for his replacement.

Just three names were considered — Brad Ausmus and Ron Gardenhire were the others — before the team seized upon Cora.

At the time, it's no stretch to suggest that Cora would have been the first choice of a handful of teams looking for a manager. But behind Dombrowski, the Sox moved swiftly and made the smart hire.

In his first season, Cora successfully changed the clubhouse culture, improved communication with the players, integrated input from the analytics department and, not incidentally, won the division by eight games and a World Series on his first try.

## THE BAD

### 1. The cost of doing business.

In 2018, the Red Sox spent more money than ever in their history, with a payroll just a few shekels under \$240 million. Of course, when you're dominating the regular season, then trampling the next three best teams in the game in October, it looks like money well spent.

But in the postgame celebration on the Dodger Stadium infield, John Henry was already bemoaning the size of the payroll and thanking his limited partners and minority owners for their patience and willingness to forgo returns on their investment for the satisfaction of winning a title.

However, when Dombrowski oversaw a payroll even larger this season — in fact, by some measures, the biggest payroll in the sport's history — and failed to have it result in a playoff spot, that helped spell the end of Dombrowski's tenure in Boston.

If you're going to spend big, you'd better have something to show for it. The 2019 Red Sox did not.

## 2. The plundering of the minor league system.

When Dombrowski took over for Ben Cherington in 2015, the Red Sox developmental system was universally regarded as one of the Top Five in the game.

But after the trades for Sale, Kimbrel, Tyler Thornburg, Drew Pomeranz and others, the system has been stripped down. And even with a strong 2019 and the return to health of Jay Groome, it's still thought of as a bottom-third system.

Of course, this should hardly come as a shock, especially to Red Sox ownership, since this was Dombrowski's well-established pattern: win now and worry about the future later. It happened in Detroit, where on Dombrowski's watch, the Tigers won two pennants and went to the ALCS two other times, but now, four years after Dombrowski left town, have the worst record in the game.

The next GM/President of Baseball Operations will not inherit a system anywhere near as deep and plentiful as the one bequeathed to Dombrowski 49 months ago.

## 3. Lack of creativity.

Again, Dombrowski's big moves were (mostly) good ones — Kimbrel, Sale and to a mixed degree, David Price. Even some smaller deadline acquisitions were strong — Steve Pearce, Nathan Eovaldi, Eduardo Nunez among them.

But what was lacking were the smaller, unheralded acquisitions that improve the organizational depth and prove to be invaluable when injuries strike or underperformance happens.

Look at the New York Yankees, who were ravaged by a string of injuries earlier this year, yet have led the division wire-to-wire and stand as one of the American League's two best teams. GM Brian Cashman obtained Luke Voit, Gio Urhela and Mike Tauchman in under-the-radar acquisitions over the last two seasons and each has proven invaluable.

By my count, the lone player on the Red Sox' current 40-man roster who fits that description is reliever Josh Taylor, who was the player to be named later in the deal that sent Deven Marrero to Arizona.

It's not always difficult to spend big money on free agents or ship out prospects someone else has developed.

What's hard is uncovering undervalued talent to improve a roster, and that's something Dombrowski didn't do nearly often enough.

## **\* *The Athletic***

**Dave Dombrowski's departure long seemed like a foregone conclusion. But why?**

Chad Jennings

Given a day to process, it's surprising how little we were surprised.

A veteran baseball executive with Hall of Fame credentials was fired at the stroke of midnight, in the midst of a fourth straight winning season, only 10 months removed from a championship parade, and the response was nothing but head nodding and page turning. No shock. No confusion.

The Red Sox fired Dave Dombrowski? Well, of course they did. A longtime local newspaper columnist had predicted it a month ago. The Athletic's Peter Gammons went on MLB Network to say it was basically to be expected. We at The Athletic Boston had, for days, written to one another in an email chain titled "Plan for when Dombrowski is fired." Granted, we thought it would happen after the season, but we definitely thought it would happen.

The question is, why was it so obvious?

Even after all of his farm system dismantling, Dombrowski had traded very few prospects the Red Sox truly miss. He spent lavishly, but that was to be expected when ownership gave the green light to boost payroll. This season had been the worst of his tenure, and it should even end with a winning record, one similar to some National League playoff teams. Dombrowski was friendly, approachable and rarely, if ever, controversial.

So, what was it about Dombrowski's style, tactics and performance that put him so clearly on the hot seat?

It surely started with his outsider status. Dombrowski's predecessors, Theo Epstein and Ben Cherington, were hometown boys and homegrown executives. They'd grown up in New England and paid their dues as lower-level Red Sox employees. Three of Dombrowski's assistant general managers and four of his vice presidents — including the VPs of amateur scouting, pro scouting and player development — had been in the Red Sox organization for more than a decade.

Then there was Dombrowski himself, a 63-year-old from Chicago, who'd cut his teeth with the White Sox, Expos, Marlins and Tigers, and showed up four years ago with a proven track record, an established way of doing things. He eventually closed ranks with old friends Frank Wren and Tony La Russa, two more established baseball men from other organizations and other parts of the country as trusted advisors and confidants. There was always a smoldering sense of disconnect.

And even through four winning seasons, three division titles, and one World Series championship, there was also a sense of the limitations. Dombrowski had arrived and done just what he was expected to do. He was predictable, and that made him rigid.

He gave David Price the largest contract ever for a starting pitcher. He traded the farm for Craig Kimbrel and Chris Sale. He got J.D. Martinez under contract in the first week of spring training, when all of baseball had been waiting for that signing since the first of November.

Even when Dombrowski needed to make smaller moves to plug last year's holes, he did it by trading for one of the most notorious right-handed platoon hitters in the game and an all-star second baseman in the twilight of his career. Effective, but hardly creative.

Fair or not, Dombrowski became labeled a one-trick pony. Once he performed his trick — making a series of bold moves to put a contending roster over the top — there was little left for him to do. Even his response to the championship season was single-minded. Dombrowski had been looking forward to truly defending a title ever since the moment he won his first World Series with the Marlins and was immediately ordered to trade away his best players.

Given a chance to truly defend this year, Dombrowski simply brought back Steve Pearce and Nathan Eovaldi, two World Series heroes he'd already acquired once before. Given a manager interested in playing matchups without assigned roles in the bullpen, Dombrowski did not add a reliever to make such a plan

easier. He simply left the bullpen alone and let Alex Cora figure it out. Recognizing the need to rebuild the farm system, he didn't pick his battles on which top prospects to trade. He simply traded none of them, minimally supplementing the big-league roster when it clearly needed help.

It was an approach without nuance, and the Red Sox are going to need some finesse going forward. They can't stack predictable moves on top of the roster and expect it to stay upright. What to do with Mookie Betts? How to repair the pitching staff? Which minor-leaguers can feed the roster, and which should be dealt for better fits? These are not questions for the single-minded.

Cora said Monday any outside perception of Dombrowski being out of step with modern baseball and advanced analytics was incorrect. Cora is a decidedly modern manager and said he truly enjoyed and appreciated his time with Dombrowski. He loved hearing Dombrowski's old stories. He enjoyed getting his experienced take on the game. He liked bouncing ideas back and forth to make the Red Sox win again. That those ideas never worked only hastened a change that felt inevitable.

Dombrowski had a very specific job to do. Why be surprised that when the job was done, the Red Sox were ready to move on?

### **Memo to the next Red Sox GM: It's going to end badly**

Steve Buckley

Memo to the next person who runs baseball ops for the Boston Red Sox: It's going to end badly. Very badly.

It ended badly for Dan Duquette, reduced to tears while talking with the media after being fired during spring training in 2002.

It ended badly for Theo Epstein, who at least had the dignity of being able to quit. Twice. The second time he quit was over his inability to coexist with Sox president Larry Lucchino, Epstein's mentor during the innocent early years in Baltimore. But it ended badly in Boston — again, it always ends badly — because Lucchino had become a meddlesome patriarch who insisted on total control of, well, everything.

It ended badly for Ben Cherington, who assembled a World Series winner in 2013 but found himself usurped in 2015 when Dave Dombrowski was hired. The Sox didn't exactly "fire" Cherington. Instead, Dombrowski landed the nifty title "president of baseball operations," which placed him above "general manager" Cherington on the corporate flowchart.

Cherington, thoroughly embarrassed, did what anyone would have done. He quit.

Now it has ended badly for Dombrowski, rendered jobless just after the stroke of midnight Monday morning following Boston's 10-5 loss to the Yankees.

No statement, no news conference. Just a team spokesperson walking into the interview room and telling media members (who were awaiting manager Alex Cora's postgame presser) the team was "parting ways" with Dombrowski.

What a relief. I was worried they were going to fire the poor guy.

But that's just the way it is when you run baseball ops for the Red Sox, whether the title is "general manager," "president of baseball operations" or "grand exalted poobah of hardball." It's going to end badly. Very badly.

And it's not just that you're going to be fired, though that's most likely how it will come down. But worse even than being fired, you'll come out of the experience bloodied, bruised and finding that your right eye twitches uncontrollably. You might even take to talking to the paintings and photographs on the walls of

the executive level at Fenway Park, as Richard Nixon did during his last days in the White House before resigning the presidency.

What, you don't think being general manager of the Red Sox could cause you to lose it? Consider that Epstein — again, he holds the distinction of twice quitting as general manager of the Red Sox during the ownership of John Henry and Tom Werner — put an exclamation point on his first resignation by skulking out of Fenway Park dressed in a gorilla suit.

It was Oct. 31, 2005, when that happened — Halloween, kids! — and the popular and enduring explanation is there happened to be a gorilla suit laying about and Epstein used it to escape the media hordes that were milling about outside the ballpark.

Fine. You go with that. I choose to believe it had been a long, frustrating season for the Red Sox, culminating with a three-game Division Series sweep by the Chicago White Sox, and, well, how else to say it: Such is the stress that goes with being general manager of the Red Sox that you just might wind up walking the streets of Boston dressed up like a gorilla.

Terry Francona used to say being manager of the Red Sox is the toughest job in Boston. I disagree. Being general manager of the Red Sox is the toughest job in Boston. When the manager makes a boneheaded in-game decision, it gets chewed over for a couple of cycles on talk radio and then it's on to the next game. But every move made by a general manager has the potential to be a blunder of such epic proportions that it gets talked about for ... well, forever.

On Aug. 30, 1990, the late Red Sox GM Lou Gorman infamously traded hot prospect Jeff Bagwell to the Houston Astros for relief pitcher Larry Andersen, an unpopular move at the time and then an unpopular move for all coming time once Bagwell began building a Hall of Fame-bound career.

Now I ask you: Name one move made by Red Sox manager Joe Morgan in 1990 that still pisses you off. You can't.

Yes, managers commit blunders. Some of them are infamous, such as past-his-prime Joe McCarthy handing the game ball to journeyman pitcher Denny Galehouse for Boston's 1948 playoff game against the Indians, or Grady Little leaving in Pedro Martinez to fry against the Yankees in Game 7 of the 2003 ALCS.

Moves such as these alter just one season. But a bad trade or signing has the power to be the horrible gift that keeps on giving, wasted paycheck after wasted paycheck, season after season. Ask Cherington about his decision to sign Pablo Sandoval and Hanley Ramirez, a pair of past-their-prime busts. Ask Epstein about signing free agent Carl Crawford, who turned out to be overwhelmed by the Boston Baseball Experience.

It has been said that perhaps the Crawford signing was ownership driven and that the Sandoval signing might have had something to do with selling those adorable panda heads. Stop that. Signings and trades belong to the person in charge of baseball ops. Try to imagine the stress that a baseball GM faces just before agreeing to a big deal: Ownership is leaning on you, the media types are weighing in, and fans are screaming in defense of their proposed five-for-one deal that's guaranteed to put the Red Sox right back on top.

And that's before the deal is made. After it's made, the GM/president of baseball ops/grand poobah of hardball lives or (symbolically) dies with the successes and failures of the new guy. This helps explain why Dombrowski wanted to make it absolutely, positively sure that Chris Sale's recent season-ending arm issues were not in evidence during spring training, when he agreed with the lefty on a five-year, \$145 million contract extension that doesn't kick in until next season.

Dombrowski had no idea what he was getting himself into when he came to Boston, though he claims he did. The next person, then, would be wise to study up on modern Red Sox history, the sooner the better.

No, it won't change anything, since it's going to end badly, but at the very least the new person can prepare for the inevitable.

Yes, there are exceptions ... and that brings to mind my favorite Gorman story. It takes place in January 1996, the day Gorman retired from his full-time position as executive vice president of baseball operations of the Red Sox. He had been shunted aside a couple of years earlier, having been given a nice office and a fancy title after Duquette was brought in as general manager. Now Gorman was giving up the full-time gig, though he would continue to do special projects for the club.

After the news conference, I approached Gorman and said, "So, Lou, are you OK?"

I was referring to Lou's emotions. His response was to give me a complete breakdown of his financial situation, including the monthly payouts of his Major League Baseball and United States Navy pensions, as well as the amount of his social security check. He made sure to point out that the mortgage on his house was paid off.

That was so Lou. He was born in 1929, which means he was a Depression baby. To people from Lou's generation, being asked if they were "OK" was to ask if there was meat on the table, if there was coal in the furnace, if the old man was earning a paycheck.

It just never occurred to Lou that asking him if he was "OK" had anything to do with his state of mind after having been general manager of the Boston Red Sox.

Those were simpler times.

Today, I'm hoping Dombrowski is OK. And I'm not referring to his 401(k).

### **Here are the candidates who could replace Dave Dombrowski with Red Sox**

Jen McCaffrey

The shock of Dave Dombrowski's departure from Boston has barely worn off, but the Red Sox have already begun their search for his replacement.

Red Sox owners declined to speak publicly about their decision to fire Dombrowski on Monday, so we're not exactly sure what they're looking for in his successor. With a rebuilding farm system and several player contracts in flux, the next Red Sox decision-maker will have to find a delicate balance between managing a massive payroll, adding significant pieces to the major league roster and protecting the current prospect pool.

In the interim, the Red Sox placed a quartet of front office executives in charge: Assistant general managers Eddie Romero, Brian O'Halloran and Zack Scott and senior vice president of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira.

Each brings a strong, specific skillset. Romero represents the scouting side. O'Halloran is the main resource in creating player contracts. Scott leads baseball research and development. Ferreira is like a Swiss Army Knife, helping to manage baseball operations and assist players in the logistics of their path through the organization.

Of the four, Romero and O'Halloran seem to offer the strongest candidacies as future general managers.

So let's dig into the potential candidates the Red Sox might pursue.

Admittedly we've cast a very wide net, but it speaks to the abundance of candidates across baseball as well as the uncertainty of exactly what traits the Red Sox are looking for. Any person the Red Sox wish to interview currently under contract with another team would need permission from their club.

In no particular order:

Derek Falvey, Twins executive VP and chief baseball officer

Prior to joining the Twins, Falvey was an executive for the Indians and developed a strong relationship with manager Terry Francona. The 36-year-old is a native of Lynn, Mass., attended Governor's Academy prep school north of Boston and Trinity College in Connecticut. The Twins made the postseason for the first time six years in Falvey's first year with the club in 2017. This year, they're on pace to win the AL Central division for the first time since 2010. Known for his ability to develop players from within, Falvey would be a perfect fit with Boston trying to grow its farm system, but would likely be hard to pry from a burgeoning Twins club.

Thad Levine, Twins GM

Levine, 47, was hired shortly after Falvey and has been his second-in-command as the Twins have surged back into contention the last three seasons. He could be an easier get than Falvey for the Red Sox and has a wealth of experience working in baseball administration for the Rockies, Rangers and Twins.

Eddie Romero, Red Sox assistant GM

Romero has been with the organization since 2006, rising from a scouting assistant. He was director of international scouting from 2012 to 2015, where he was responsible for finalizing the signings a number of current and former Red Sox prospects, including Rafael Devers, Yoan Moncada, Darwinzon Hernandez, Tzu-Wei Lin and Manuel Margot. Since entering his current role, he has continued to assist with international scouting efforts and player development.

Brian O'Halloran, Red Sox assistant GM

O'Halloran's days in Boston stretch back to 2002 when he began as a baseball operations assistant. He's worked in baseball ops his entire tenure in Boston, adding assistant general manager duties in 2012 alongside then-GM Ben Cherington. O'Halloran is the main architect of all contracts that pass through the Red Sox system. He's heavily involved in player acquisitions, luxury tax calculations and overall financial analysis of the team.

Mike Hazen, Diamondbacks executive VP and GM

Hazen, another Massachusetts native, spent 10 years with the Red Sox, rising from director of player development to assistant GM under Cherington. He was farm director for four seasons, including in 2011 when the Sox had one of their most successful drafts. Hazen remained in Boston for one season under Dombrowski after Cherington left, but took the job in Arizona at the end of the 2016 season. In his first year in Arizona, the Diamondbacks earned a wild card spot and his club is bidding for a second berth in the last three seasons now.

Despite his history with Boston, The Athletic's Zack Buchanan reported on Monday the Diamondbacks do not expect the Red Sox to ask about Hazen. Arizona can deny the Sox permission to speak to him.

See Zach Buchanan's other Tweets

Amiel Sawdaye and Jared Porter, Diamondbacks senior VPs and assistant GMs

When Hazen left Boston for Arizona, he took one of Boston's top executives with him in Sawdaye. Another Boston area native, Sawdaye spent 15 seasons with the Sox, most recently as VP of amateur and international scouting. He was at the helm for that successful 2011 draft class and helped stock the core of Boston's current team — Matt Barnes, Jackie Bradley Jr., Andrew Benintendi, Mookie Betts, and Brandon Workman. Sawdaye has interviewed for GM openings in San Francisco and Minnesota before.

Porter, yet another Boston-area native, had an 11-year tenure with the Red Sox from 2004 to 2015, working most recently as director of pro scouting. He left Boston for a two-year stint with the Chicago Cubs in a similar role before reuniting with Hazen and Sawdaye in Arizona.

If Hazen were to remain in Arizona, his right-hand men might be more realistic targets. Both have long been suggested as future GM types.

Jed Hoyer, Cubs executive VP and GM

Hoyer, a New Hampshire native, worked in the Red Sox front office from 2002 to 2009 under Theo Epstein. He even has experience in this job, as he and Cherington were named co-GMs while Epstein stepped away from the team during a contract dispute in late 2005. Following the 2009 season, Hoyer left Boston to become the GM of the Padres. While with the Padres, he helped execute the blockbuster trade that sent Adrian Gonzalez to the Red Sox in exchange for Anthony Rizzo, Casey Kelly, Reymond Fuentes and Eric Patterson. He rejoined Epstein in 2011 when Epstein took the reins as president of baseball operations for the Chicago Cubs. Hoyer is currently signed through 2021 as the Cubs general manager but could be seeking a return to more authority as the head of a club.

David Forst, A's GM

Forst has worked with president of baseball operations Billy Beane for 18 years in Oakland, and was promoted to GM in 2015. He has turned down opportunities to interview for other GM positions in the past, but he has ties to the Boston area as a Harvard grad. His wife is from the area also.

Chaim Bloom, Rays VP baseball operations

The 36-year-old who's been with the Rays since 2005 was promoted to their highest ranking front office position following the 2016 season. Last offseason, Bloom was runner-up for the Mets general manager vacancy before the club hired Brodie Van Wagenen. He was also a candidate for the Giants vacancy.

David Stearns, Brewers president of baseball operations

Like several on this list, Stearns has turned a small-market club into a strong competitor and could be looking to move to a bigger opportunity. Just 34, Stearns became GM of the Brewers at age 30 before a promotion to president of baseball operations in 2018. Under Stearns, the Brewers tied a franchise record for wins last year and won their division for the first time since 2011.

Chris Antonetti, Indians president of baseball operations and Mike Chernoff, Indians GM

The Indians duo has guided the club to playoff appearances in each of the last three seasons, including a World Series run in 2016. Antonetti is a Connecticut native who got his masters degree at UMass-Amherst. Chernoff has been in Cleveland for 16 years, but could be an intriguing option, if he's looking for a role as the primary decision-maker.

Sig Mejdal, Orioles sabermetrics analyst/assistant GM

Mejdal likely doesn't have enough traditional front-office experience, but certainly would enhance the analytics operations. The Astros hired Mejdal in 2012 to become director of decision sciences where he used a variety of formulas to fuel the Astros' analytics engine. When Baltimore hired former Astros assistant GM Mike Elias as its GM last offseason, Elias brought Mejdal with him.

A.J. Hinch, Astros manager

An off-the-wall idea, Hinch could be an intriguing option. The 45-year-old was vice president and assistant general manager of the Padres from 2011-14, so he's not a front office novice. He's also well versed in

analytics, well known as a strong communicator, and already has a relationship with Red Sox manager Alex Cora from their time together on the Astros bench. If Hinch has accomplished all he wants to accomplish in Houston, would he want the chance to run a team from the very top? Would the Red Sox want to let him?

Don't count on it: Ben Cherington, Blue Jays VP of baseball operations

The name of the former Red Sox GM has floated around since Dombrowski — his successor — left. Cherington seems comfortable behind the scenes in Toronto and after the Red Sox awkwardly pushed him aside in favor of Dombrowski in 2015, there's not much incentive for him to return.

### **From high to low: Ranking Dave Dombrowski's moves as Red Sox boss**

Chad Jennings

Within weeks of becoming Red Sox president of baseball operations in 2015, Dave Dombrowski made his intentions known. Hired in August, he traded for Craig Kimbrel in November and signed David Price in December. With that, he was off to the races with a win-now strategy that heaped high-profile additions atop a foundation of homegrown players.

Through trades, signings, releases, waiver claims and one managerial hire, Dombrowski wound up making more than 40 major league moves during his four-plus years at the helm.

The Kimbrel and Price deals proved to be one of his best, and one of his worst.

In attempting to rank all of Dombrowski's major league moves, we ignored minor league deals with guys like Marcus Walden and Ryan Brasier. While they had major league impact, they were no-risk decisions largely credited to the pro scouting department. Similarly, we ignored the decision to move Andrew Benintendi, Yoan Moncada and Rafael Devers quickly through the farm system. Dombrowski surely deserves some credit for that approach, but much more goes to the amateur scouts and player development staff which made such promotions possible. In reality, Dombrowski's best move might be the one he didn't make: holding onto Devers when there were surely opportunities to trade him away.

As for the moves he did make, here's our ranking of Red Sox major league transactions of the Dombrowski era:

#### 1. Extended Xander Bogaerts – April 1, 2019

The best move of Dombrowski's tenure might be last long-term deal he struck. Given Bogaerts' age, trajectory and homegrown appeal, the extension — for six years and \$120 million — with the budding superstar is off to a tremendous start. Bogaerts could have been a free agent this winter, meaning he might have hit the open market coming off a season in which he'll likely finish top five in MVP voting. Instead, the Red Sox have him under team control through 2025 (albeit with an opt-out in the middle and a team option at the end).

#### 2. Traded for Craig Kimbrel — Nov. 13, 2015

Last year's championship and the lack of immediate impact by any of these prospects make the Kimbrel deal — for Manuel Margot, Logan Allen, Javy Guerra and Carlos Asuaje — Dombrowski's best trade. Kimbrel was shaky in the postseason, but he was an All-Star all three seasons in Boston. Meanwhile, Margot has not been the impact center fielder the Padres imagined, and the other three prospects have thus far been below replacement level (although Allen still has considerable upside). Given Kimbrel's struggles in Chicago this season, Dombrowski perhaps gets bonus points for moving on when Kimbrel became a free agent.

#### 3. Signed J.D. Martinez – Feb. 26, 2018

Throughout that offseason, the Red Sox signing Martinez seemed obvious, but the deal — for five years, \$110 million — didn't get done until spring training. When it was complete, Martinez promptly delivered his best David Ortiz impression with a 1.031 OPS and a league-leading 130 RBIs. He also raked in the postseason, and he's been one of the game's best offensive performers again this season. Further evidence that the contract is a good one: Martinez has the right to opt out after this season, and it's unclear whether he's better off staying or going. He seems to be compensated more or less right at market value.

#### 4. Hired Alex Cora as manager – Oct. 21, 2017

This was not Dombrowski's decision alone. Ownership obviously plays a large role in choosing a manager, but firing John Farrell after back-to-back division titles and replacing him with a first-year manager who immediately won 108 games and a championship has to rank near the top of Dombrowski's Red Sox resume. Even in this disappointing season, Cora has remained a voice of stability.

#### 5. Traded for Steve Pearce – June 28, 2018

A small move with giant impact. In need of a right-handed platoon hitter, Dombrowski capitalized on the strong season of a 10th-round pick and acquired Pearce, who proved a perfect addition to that championship roster, for Santiago Espinal. It's hard to have a better four-month rental than one who wins the World Series MVP.

#### 6. Traded for Nathan Eovaldi – July 25, 2018

This would not have been a particularly good trade — one in which the Sox surrendered Jalen Beeks — if not for last October. Eovaldi was great when he first arrived, then had a bad month and a minor injury before getting on track again in late September and becoming a star in the playoffs. Eovaldi's postseason was enough to be worth giving up the organization's most advanced piece of rotation depth.

#### 7. Traded for Brad Ziegler – July 9, 2016

Did the Diamondbacks think they were getting the other Basabe brother when they sent Ziegler to the Sox for prospects Jose Almonte and Luis Alejandro Basabe? Luis Alejandro's twin brother, Luis Alexander, was a highly touted prospect, but Luis Alejandro has never advanced above Class-A ball. Neither has the other prospect in this trade. Ziegler, meanwhile, had a 1.52 ERA through three terrific months with the Red Sox.

#### 8. Traded for Chris Sale – Dec. 6, 2016

This was a massive outlay of young talent — prospects Yoan Moncada, Michael Kopech, Luis Alexander Basabe and Victor Diaz — but Sale had three years left on a remarkably team-friendly deal, and he delivered back-to-back sub-3.00 ERAs with a pair of top-five Cy Young finishes and the final out of the 2018 World Series. Pitchers like that don't come cheap, and so far Moncada is the only involved prospect who's had a real impact for the White Sox.

#### 9. Re-signed Mitch Moreland – Dec. 18, 2017

Had some injury problems and lefties sometimes gave him fits, but in the course of this two-year, \$13 million contract Moreland has hit 30 home runs, made an All-Star team and delivered one of the biggest hits of last year's World Series when he came off the bench with a three-run homer to get the Red Sox back on track in the pivotal Game 4. As a bonus, he's been a helpful mentor to Rafael Devers.

#### 10. Claimed Doug Fister off waivers – June 23, 2017

Desperate for rotation help, the Red Sox plucked Fister right out of the Angels minor league system. From July 31 through Sept. 6, he had a 2.79 ERA over seven starts, five of them wins and one a complete game.

Fister's terrific month and a half coincided perfectly with the Red Sox moving up from second place to take control of the American League East.

11. Traded for Eduardo Nunez – July 26, 2017

Nunez arrived — in exchange for minor leaguers Shaun Anderson and Gregory Santos — in a burst of white-hot offensive firepower. He had 21 hits in his first 11 games with the Red Sox, including a 10th-inning walk-off in his second game. Nunez was exactly the short-term spark plug the Red Sox needed before a knee injury knocked him out of the postseason and largely derailed his career. It did come at a cost, though, as Anderson's made 16 starts for the Giants this season and would have been a welcome bit of rotation depth in Boston.

12. Signed Mitch Moreland – Dec. 8, 2016

The deal that originally brought Moreland to Boston was this one-year, \$5.5 million deal to form a kind of platoon with Hanley Ramirez.

13. Traded for Josh Taylor – March 24, 2018

Surely the pro scouting department deserves much of the credit for targeting Taylor, a lefty reliever who's become a key piece of this year's bullpen. At the time, it was clear Deven Marrero — whom they sent to Arizona — wasn't going to make the Red Sox roster and thus his value was at a bare minimum, yet Dombrowski still got a viable major leaguer in return.

14. Signed Chris Young – Dec. 2, 2015

Young, on a two-year, \$13 million deal, helped bridge the gap to Andrew Benintendi. He was a tremendous role player in 2016, but he wasn't nearly as good in 2017.

15. Traded Clay Buchholz – Dec. 20, 2016

This was a salary dump when it seemed the Red Sox had too many starting pitchers, and the biggest upside was opening \$13.5 million in payroll. The Phillies got only two games out of Buchholz.

16. Released Hanley Ramirez – May 30, 2018 | 17. Released Pablo Sandoval – July 19, 2017

Dombrowski did not sign either of these ugly contracts, but he paid both to go away. Dumping Sandoval was more costly — 2 1/2 years and roughly \$48 million still owed at the time of release — but getting rid of Ramirez was more effective. Dombrowski followed Cora's advice and cut Ramirez rather than part ways with a young player like Blake Swihart. With Ramirez out of the picture, the Red Sox found a place for Pearce.

18. Traded for Drew Pomeranz – July 14, 2016

Without Pomeranz, the Red Sox would not have made the 2017 playoffs. That one tremendous season came between a disappointing 2016 and a bad 2018, but it was enough to give him a solid 4.24 ERA and a winning record during his time in Boston. To get him, the Red Sox maximized the value of teenaged pitching prospect Anderson Espinoza. Perhaps they could have gotten more for him, but Espinoza wound up undergoing two Tommy John surgeries and hasn't pitched since 2016.

19. Traded for Addison Reed – July 31, 2017 | 20. Traded for Fernando Abad – Aug. 1, 2016 | 21. Traded for Colten Brewer – Nov. 20, 2018

Three different trades in three different years for three different relief pitchers. None cost the Red Sox much in terms of impact prospects, and all had some level of impact. Reed did the most in a short amount

of time (a 0.93 WHIP down the stretch), while 26-year-old Brewer still has time to establish himself with his cutter/curveball combination.

#### 22. Traded for Carson Smith and Roenis Elias – Dec. 7, 2015

This one begins the no-harm, no-foul section of our rankings. This trade was massive disappointment, but we'll call it a wash. The Sox sent pitchers Wade Miley and Jonathan Aro to Seattle at a time when Smith looked like one of the better young relievers in baseball, but he pitched just 23 2/3 major league innings after the trade. He had Tommy John surgery in his first year with the Red Sox, then blew out his shoulder slamming his glove in 2018.

#### 23. Claimed Chase d'Arnaud off waivers – April 27, 2017 | 24. Traded for Rajai Davis – Aug. 23, 2017 | 25. Claimed Bryan Holaday off waivers – Aug. 5, 2016 | 26. Claimed Steve Selsky off waivers – Jan. 25, 2017 | 27. Traded Garin Cecchini to the Brewers – Dec. 10, 2015

A series of minor moves to add depth (or, in the case of Cecchini, get some money while opening a 40-man spot). All of these are basically zero-impact additions that came at no real cost, though perhaps d'Arnaud should be much higher on our list. The friendly utility man was with the team less than a month, played in only two games and had only one at-bat, but he went 1-for-1 with two runs scored. On a per-at-bat basis, he's surely one of the most productive Red Sox in franchise history.

#### 28. Extended Chris Sale – March 22, 2019

This one is cloudy, and it serves as a tipping point toward moves with diminishing returns. Sale's extension — five years, \$145 million — kicks in next season, and it may still prove to be a great one for the Red Sox. But the overpowering lefty with a Hall of Fame trajectory is currently on the injured list with a sore elbow, and he'll finish this season with the highest ERA of his career. He turns 31 in March, and his velocity was mysteriously low early in the season. Sale does have a typically tremendous strikeout rate and one of the lowest WHIPs in the American League, so there are positive signs, but the first six months after the extension brought an uncomfortable number of red flags.

#### 29. Signed David Price – Dec. 4, 2015

Price had played for Dombrowski in Detroit and was one of the most coveted free agents on the market. Dombrowski gave him the largest contract ever for a pitcher — seven years, \$217 million — and he's pitched to a 46-24 record with a 3.84 ERA, punctuated by a 2018 playoff performance that might have deserved World Series MVP honors. But his time in Boston has been complicated, to say the least. He's been a lightning rod for controversy, and injuries have held him to 358 innings the past three years. For \$31 million per year, he's never been an All-Star or a top Cy Young finisher. Price probably has been better than he gets credit for, but Dombrowski bet big on him being one of the elite pitchers in all of baseball. That hasn't happened.

#### 30. Re-signed Nathan Eovaldi – Dec. 6, 2018

Similar to the Sale extensions, it's hard to say anything definitive about this four-year, \$68 million deal. The Red Sox clearly needed rotation help, so re-signing Eovaldi instead of Kimbrel had merit. Charlie Morton looks like a far better choice, but the free agent market didn't offer many rotation alternatives. Glass half full: Eovaldi's pitched pretty well lately. Glass half empty: This was another season partially lost to injury, meaning the Red Sox have committed themselves to three more years, at a massive salary, with a pitcher who's only once thrown more than 155 innings and currently has a career-worst 5.77 ERA.

#### 31. Acquired Michael Martinez for cash considerations – July 8, 2016 | 32. Selected Josh Rutledge in the Rule 5 draft – Dec. 8, 2016

Two small moves with negative returns. Martinez was purchased from the Indians to add versatility, but weeks later, the Indians claimed him off waivers to get him back at no cost. Rutledge was a relatively rare

veteran Rule 5 selection who seemed to give the Red Sox much-needed depth at third base, but he put up poorer offensive numbers than Sandoval.

33. Released Eduardo Nunez – July 20, 2019 | 34. Released Tyler Thornburg – July 10, 2019

By the time the Red Sox pulled the trigger on these moves, both Nunez and Thornburg had played well beyond their usefulness. In both cases, it was best to move on, but the Red Sox already had held on too long. The decision to tender Thornburg one last contract offer cost the team \$1.75 million that could have gone to any number of bullpen alternatives.

35. Traded Roenis Elias for cash considerations – April 23, 2018

This was a move to open a 40-man roster spot, and it involved a player who clearly had no role to play in Boston. But Elias wound up having a couple of decent years in Seattle and had some additional trade value at this year's deadline.

36. Traded for Andrew Cashner – July 13, 2019

This was a low-cost attempt to improve the fifth starter situation, but Cashner performed so poorly out of the rotation that he's currently in the bullpen while the team throws bullpen games every fourth and fifth day. Two things keeping this trade from being a total disaster: Cashner's pitched much better out of the bullpen, and the prospect cost was a couple of teenagers — Elio Prado and Noelberth Romero — who are total lottery ticket wild cards. Organizations have dozens just like them.

37. Traded for Aaron Hill – July 7, 2016

Hill was having a nice bounce-back season in Milwaukee, and the Red Sox needed some right-handed infield depth. The trade didn't cost much – prospects Wendell Rijo and Aaron Wilkerson, who has become an up-and-down depth arm for the Brewers – but Hill hit just .218 with two home runs during his half season with the Red Sox.

38. Traded for Ian Kinsler – July 30, 2018

Impossible to argue the end result. Kinsler was acquired to stabilize the team's defense at second base, and he wound up being a regular at that position for a World Series run. But Kinsler had just a .604 OPS for the Red Sox, and he played only 37 games in the final two months of the regular season. His error in World Series Game 3 was, for a while, the most costly moment of the playoffs. Obviously it worked out, but surely not the way Dombrowski intended it. Meanwhile, reliever Ty Buttrey, sent to the Angels along with minor leaguer Williams Jerez, has become a good strikeout weapon for the Angels.

39. Re-signed Eduardo Nunez – Feb. 18, 2018

When Nunez got hurt at the end of 2017, the Red Sox lost a key spark plug at the top of the lineup. They tried to recapture that magic by re-signing Nunez the following winter for two years, \$9 million, but it quickly became clear that his knee was worse than expected. Nunez was a wildly popular teammate and occasionally a bright spot on the field – his pinch-hit home run in the World Series was unforgettable — but he was released this summer with just a .644 OPS over the life of this two-year deal.

40. Re-signed Steve Pearce – Nov. 16, 2018

Two weeks after the World Series parade, the Red Sox pounced on an opportunity to re-sign their World Series MVP for one year at \$6.25 million. The result has been the exact opposite of the previous year's success. Injuries have limited Pearce to just 29 games, and he's hit just .180 with a single home run. Meanwhile, both Michael Chavis and Sam Travis have emerged as in-house right-handed first baseman options. Think of the pitching depth the Red Sox could have added with that \$6.25 million.

#### 41. Traded Blake Swihart – April 19, 2019

In a vacuum, this trade, for minor league outfielder Marcus Wilson, was fine. It might even be a good one because Wilson is a legitimate prospect and Swihart hit so little in Arizona that he wound up designated for assignment. But the trade ranks so low on this list because it represents the bungled career of a once-elite prospect. Dombrowski was at the helm when Swihart moved to left field, hurt his ankle, and went through a long, uncertain path toward a cloudy future. No one seemed to ever know what to do with Swihart, and eventually Dombrowski did well to dump him for a Double-A outfielder. What a waste.

#### 42. Traded for Tyler Thornburg – Dec. 6, 2016

Travis Shaw had fallen out of favor in Boston, and the Red Sox had myriad alternatives at third base, so they traded him as the headliner in a package for Thornburg as a cheap bullpen standout who filled a need. The logic made sense, but the end result was a mess. Thornburg missed all of his first Red Sox season, pitched to a 6.54 ERA the next two years and wound up released earlier this year. Meanwhile, Shaw had back-to-back 30 homer seasons in Milwaukee while Mauricio Dubon, another part of the prospect package, is currently a big league utility man in San Francisco.

### **Beyond replacing Dave Dombrowski, Red Sox must rebuild collaborative culture at Fenway**

Peter Gammons

In late 2005, a year after delivering the first world championship since 1918, Theo Epstein briefly retired and snuck out of Fenway in a gorilla suit.

Six years and another World Series title later, after Terry Francona was fired because of a September collapse — although he was never actually told by ownership — Epstein quit again and was on his way to Chicago to launch an attack on 1908.

He was replaced by Ben Cherington, and in 2013 the Red Sox won their third world championship in 10 seasons.

Less than two years after that title, Cherington was ousted in favor of Dave Dombrowski, who had a longtime relationship with owner John Henry. Just more than three years later, with three major trades and/or signings and the best positional team in the American League signed, drafted and developed and raised by the previous regimes, they won another world championship.

And five minutes into Sept. 9, 2019, Dombrowski was dismissed. Which means that when the 2020 season opens, the Red Sox will have won four World Series under Henry ownership and will be turning to their fourth general manager over that period — not counting interims from Mike Port to Jed Hoyer and Bill Lajoie to the four extraordinarily gifted members of the present organization.

The gorilla suit was a mess. The Tito/Theo departures were a mess. The behind-his-back treatment of Cherington was a mess. Now, Sunday night's events were as strange as the way the Colts departed Baltimore in moving vans.

Understand, this is a very difficult job. The easy part is replacing Dombrowski; what's hard is finding what the Dodgers' Andrew Friedman, Epstein and Arizona's Mike Hazen have built in terms of organizational collaboration. Dombrowski was estranged from many of the people who are the framework and soul of a franchise who at times this season fielded a team where every positional player was homegrown, and installed by those who preceded Dombrowski. His cabinet was perceived to be Frank Wren and Tony LaRussa.

One former Red Sox front office member who is now in the National League came to a Saturday afternoon game in April and said, "these guys just got their World Series rings, and everyone's miserable. It's

unbelievable.” Another former member of the inner circle said last month, “I hate all that I hear about that place. It should be great. But it seems like everyone wants to leave.”

And there were many indications that Dombrowski and Red Sox President Sam Kennedy, arguably one of the most trusted people in the business, weren't on the same page. Kennedy is the face and voice of the franchise. Many of Kennedy's associates said where Kennedy and Epstein had melded baseball operations and business into one focused unit, this was not what Dombrowski was told would be the case when he was hired.

In fact, when Dombrowski arrived in Boston, Kennedy picked him up at the airport. Dombrowski asked Kennedy to arrange a meeting between him and Cherington. He'd been hired and didn't know Cherington was already gone. A year later, Hazen, Jared Porter and Amiel Sawdaye, three key figures in a decade of success, left for Arizona with no love lost for Dombrowski.

This is what the next general manager faces:

\$69M a year from 2020-2022 to Chris Sale, David Price and Nathan Eovaldi, all of whom have suffered injury issues from their fierce pitch-at-any-cost ethos. Rick Porcello is a free agent. J.D. Martinez can opt out of his contract.

Mookie Betts and Jackie Bradley Jr. are free agents at the end of next season, and if they do not sign extensions, they could be traded.

They had a \$239 million payroll, the highest in the game. Paring payroll in a market that isn't going to tolerate a battle for third place with the Blue Jays isn't going to fly. The TV ratings suffered when up against Patriots exhibition games. Thankfully, their 2019 MVP, Xander Bogaerts, did his six-year, \$120 million extension with VP Raquel Ferreira, who is taking on an expanded role in the transition and is one of the most respected people in the game. Mookie might stay if she were the GM.

Dombrowski has had a distinguished career and is likely headed to Cooperstown. In many ways, he was from another era, when general managers stayed upstairs and made trades; today, as Friedman, Epstein, Brian Cashman, Hazen and some others operate, the chief executive has relationships with everyone from scouts to minor league managers to the players in the clubhouse.

Replacing him is one thing, replacing him with someone who comprehends all the complexities of the necessary collaboration in today's world will not be easy. Hazen isn't likely to leave Arizona, where his Diamondbacks have one fewer win than the Red Sox; he's from Abington, Mass., but he has been building his own culture. Minnesota's Derek Falvey grew up eight miles from Fenway, but he's unlikely to leave after three years and a playoff berth. Is it fair to future general managers like Jared Porter in Arizona or Eddie Romero to start with this situation in this market? Would Chris Antonetti leave Cleveland? Dubious.

No one can argue that this ownership hasn't produced a historic era in terms of Red Sox World Series rings, the rebuilding of Fenway Park and a total regeneration of the Fenway neighborhood. But, strangely, there have been some bizarre, ugly breakups. As one front office member likes to say, “you couldn't make this stuff up.”

It may be that the long term solution is for Kennedy and Epstein to put together a group — which one prominent Boston venture capitalist says “would take three days”— to buy the team and maintain it in the visions they shared growing up in the shadow of Fenway.

Possible? Hazen is possible. So is Hoyer.

Likely? It is about as possible as Michael Bennet winning the presidency in 2020.

**Dave Dombrowski's success with the Red Sox masked difficulties behind the scenes**

Evan Drellich

Last year's World Series win says little about Dave Dombrowski's ability to run the Red Sox long-term.

The championship doesn't speak to a multi-year plan for the roster and payroll, to a vision to push the organization forward — to do exactly what American League powerhouses, like the Astros and Yankees, are doing year-in and year-out. To sniff a Dodgers-like run.

A general manager can win while hiding deficiencies behind the scenes. Talent, money and strong people in supporting roles can enhance strengths and cover up holes. But only for a time. Eventually, process matters — particularly in the modern baseball environment, which is ultra-competitive.

Little advantages, or disadvantages, eventually prove to be separators. There is a reason the Red Sox may miss the playoffs this year: not just bad luck, but a series of management decisions that played into one another.

Red Sox ownership had been grappling with Dombrowski's future for some time. More than once since winning the World Series, Dombrowski asked ownership for an extension and was rebuffed, a person with knowledge of the situation said in August. A \$145 million extension for Chris Sale this spring required a push from Dombrowski to ownership in order to get done, a push that, The Athletic has learned, Dombrowski did not handle smoothly.

The short version: Dombrowski is out because he spent a huge amount of money and was no longer delivering results.

The long version: Dombrowski's job is to control and direct processes, which are often unseen. And those processes during Dombrowski's tenure were sometimes chaotic. He did not take full advantage of the available information and resources. There were many days when functionality inside the Red Sox front office felt like a minor miracle to the people around him. That was true even as the 2018 World Series championship season unfolded.

Dombrowski's arrival and dismissal in Boston are as much a story of Sox ownership in Boston as anything else, of John Henry and Tom Werner.

It's unclear whether Dombrowski's pedal-to-the-metal approach to the roster was a product of demand by his bosses, the owners. He appeared to have free rein to build a winner — and a sustained winner. Yet, there was no reason to believe Dombrowski's style in Detroit for 14 years under owner Mike Ilitch (whose win-now mandate was explicit) was going to be different in Boston.

Mandate or no mandate, Dombrowski's hiring in Boston was really a striking departure from what the Sox' roster-building process has most often stood for. It was, however, unsurprising in other ways.

Star power sells to Henry and Werner, and that includes in the front office. Theo Epstein was not their first choice in 2002. Billy Beane of "Moneyball" fame was. When the Ben Cherington-run teams were floundering at the big league level — but building tremendous strength in the minors — Henry turned to a friend with luster, someone he'd seen win a title in the previous millennium. Dombrowski was the GM of the 1997 World Series-winning Marlins; Henry bought the team in 1999.

Sox ownership has been prone to flip-flops. Henry once publicly cast a skeptical eye on large contracts for pitchers, then did an about-face after the franchise regretted seeing Jon Lester go to the Cubs. Of course, philosophical changes can sometimes make sense — the Sox don't win the 2018 World Series without David Price and Chris Sale, two Dombrowski acquisitions. Yet the frequent changes in strategy could present challenges for the front office.

Even with a mercurial disposition at the very top, the Sox have been the most successful baseball franchise this century, with four titles. They would not have those championships were it not for the strength of

structures established in baseball operations — structures that the owners themselves deserve some credit for, because they put Epstein and Larry Lucchino in place to set the whole thing up.

There was a certain ethos established a long time ago in Boston during that Epstein reign, one of holistic strength through the farm system and scouting and statistics. Something short of a crusader's attitude toward change, but with a strong sense of devotion to progress, toward a well-rounded organization.

In practice in his time in Boston, Dombrowski did not share that ethos. At the least, he was not equipped to live it today. Dombrowski once represented the gold standard for GMs, or something close to it. But that time had long passed by the time he was hired in 2015, as advanced analytics were increasingly influencing the game. And the World Series he won in 2018 didn't really change that.

Dombrowski's methodology in roster building was see hole, fill hole. There was not sufficient concern for efficiency of resources, or flipping players to set up for the future. He cashed in prospects and players, and the Red Sox' title last season did not offer reasons to feel confident in his ability to build sustained championship contenders. The standards for comparison, again, are the top big-market clubs.

To Dombrowski's credit, the prospects the team traded away (Yoán Moncada, as one example) and held on to (Rafael Devers, as another) have worked out well. But each decision a GM makes carries a process: What information and which employees do you rely on? The answers to those questions reflect the art of decision making, of handling people.

It is very easy to publicly talk about sustainability, to preach a belief in both scouting and analytics, to suggest that you have a vision for an entire roster. Walking the walk is much more difficult.

Dombrowski's arrival in Boston wasn't quite a matter of oil and water. But think of what ownership was doing: they took an organization that operated one way for almost a decade and a half under Epstein and Cherington and Co., and asked it to keep largely operating that way under a leader, Dombrowski, who was not really on board with the style of operation he was overseeing.

Before arriving in Boston, Dombrowski embodied an old-school approach, relying very little on analytics while in Detroit.

"We had an analyst and a half," Dombrowski said in 2017. "We had a couple guys that did that for us. We got what we needed at that point. But then to be much larger, no. Because we were spending so much money on payroll."

Dombrowski allowed the Red Sox' analytics staff to grow. But as cohesion inside front offices and farm systems and scouting processes grows in importance, Dombrowski wasn't well equipped to lead the Sox into the next decade. GMs control process and priorities. They control how many chances, year in and year out, a franchise has at a World Series.

Which makes it all the more incredible that the 2018 team was so dominant — because the Red Sox' process had been strained for a while.

## **\* *The New York Daily News***

### **James Paxton wins eighth straight start as Yankees eliminate Red Sox from AL East contention**

Kristie Ackert

James Paxton made sure the Yankees got a little satisfaction Monday night. The Yankees' lefty dominated the Red Sox, giving them 6.2 innings in a 5-0 win at Fenway Park in their final scheduled meeting of 2019. The loss eliminated the Red Sox, who have won the last three American League East titles, from the division race and dropped the Yankees magic number down to nine.

Paxton may not have been there last year when the Red Sox celebrated twice in the Bronx, but he enjoyed knocking them out of the division race.

“Absolutely. It’s awesome,” Paxton said. “We feel really confident as a team right now, and it feels great to knock those guys out of the division anyway. We’re just going to keep on going forward, focusing on one game at a time and get ready for the postseason.”

Business-like on the field and in front of the cameras, the Yankees did let their anthem play loudly in the clubhouse after racking up their third straight win Monday night. “New York, New York,” which plays at the Stadium after every Yankees game, could be heard in the clubhouse after the game.

“It’s a good song,” catcher Austin Romine said with a smile.

The Yankees (95-50) finished the season against the Red Sox (76-68) with a 14-5 record. That is the most wins in a season the Yankees have notched against Boston since 1960. They become one of five teams in the Expansion Era to win 14 games against the Red Sox and the most since the 1973 Tigers.

While the Red Sox are still technically in the race for the AL Wild Card, the loss to the Yankees effectively put the cap on a disastrous 2019 for Boston, coming less than 24 hours after the team fired Dave Dombrowski, their President of baseball operations.

With the Red Sox now in their rear-view mirror, the Yankees also dropped their magic number to clinch their first division title since 2012 to nine. They remained on pace with the Astros in the race for the best record in baseball, which will determine home-field advantage in the playoffs.

“That’s what we’re shooting for. We want to be the best team in the AL East, the best team in the AL,” Aaron Judge said. “That was our goal out of spring training, win our division first. We saw how it helped out Boston going down the stretch, getting to set up their lineup for the postseason and give their big boys some rest here and there, to get them ready for the real season. That’s our goal. We’re not there yet, but we’re getting close.”

When they get there, Paxton is proving he could be the pitcher to get them through the playoffs.

Paxton scattered four hits, walked three and struck out seven. With home runs from Romine and Gio Urshela, Paxton earned his career-high eighth straight win and his career-high 13th win of the year.

“Obviously, the stuff speaks for itself. I mean, when you have three great pitches like that. I think the conviction from a game plan, knowing exactly what he wants to do, how he wants to attack,” Boone said. “He’s in a really good place and excited for him to go out and finish a really nice series for us.”

He’s been dominating over his last eight starts. Paxton has allowed 14 earned runs in 49 (2.57 ERA) innings work. He’s walked 18 and struck out 58 over that span.

That is a dramatic turnaround from June and July, when he struggled through 10 starts with 6.38 ERA.

It was the eighth shutout the Yankees pitchers have posted this season, the last Aug. 28 at Seattle.

Romine had a solo shot in the fifth, his seventh of the season and second in three games at Fenway in 2019. Romine also doubled. Gio Urshela, in his first start since coming off the injured list, had a solo homer in the seventh.

That put a cap on the Red Sox for the Yankees this season. There was the brief, semi-private celebration with Frank Sinatra crooning their theme song, but then they turned the page quickly.

“We’ve got to grind it out. We’ve still got work to do in Detroit and Toronto and finish up a road trip that started off pretty well,” Romine said.

### **David Ortiz throws out first pitch at Yankees-Red Sox game, receives standing ovation from Fenway crowd**

Kristie Ackert

Making his first public appearance since being shot in June, David Ortiz was welcomed back to Fenway Park Monday night with a standing ovation — including both the Yankees and Red Sox dugouts.

After throwing out the first pitch, Ortiz spoke to the crowd, who had gathered for the final meeting of the Red Sox and Yankees this season.

“I want to thank God for giving me a second opportunity to be here with all of you,” he told the crowd. “Thank you very much Red Sox family.

“I want to thank all of you for all the prayers. All of them came home. I want to thank my former teammates for being there for me, also. I want to thank the Yankees, a lot of my boys over there came to check up on Big Papi, I appreciate it. CC (Sabathia), (Edwin) Encarnacion, all y’all man.”

Less than a day after the Red Sox fired their president and head of Baseball Operations Dave Dombrowski, the appearance of the Red Sox’s beloved former slugger was clearly a way to turn the page on a miserable 2019 season at Fenway.

A three-time World Series champion with the Red Sox, Ortiz was shot in a bar in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic June 9. The initial reports were that he was the target of a hired hit man, but local authorities have later claimed that Ortiz was the victim of mistaken identity. There have been several suspects arrested, but no clear story of the events.

Ortiz underwent three hours of emergency surgery in the Dominican, affecting several of his internal organs. After he was flown by the Red Sox back to Boston where he spent six weeks at Massachusetts General, undergoing two more surgeries and recovering.

Encarnacion and Yankees catcher Gary Sanchez used the off day on Thursday to go visit Ortiz at his home. Sanchez said his fellow Dominican native gave him some good advice last season when he was struggling.

“When I started playing, I had the opportunity to play against him back in 2016, I believe he retired in ‘17. He’s always been very good to me,” Sanchez said Friday. “He has always given me very good advice. Even going back to last year, when I was struggling. I had a rough season last season. There were some spots where he gave me really good advice. That’s the way he’s always been.”

In a 2018 season in which the overwhelming opinion of Yankees fans was that Sanchez should be benched, Ortiz was giving the younger player solid advice.

“He talked about defense. He told me to really focus on defense, because he understood and saw I had the ability to hit,” Sanchez said. “So he gave me a lot of good advice about defense.”

### **\* *The New York Post***

#### **Red Sox bosses hide from David Dombrowski fallout**

Ken Davidoff

In their first day after firing the man who built the most recent World Series champion, the Red Sox owners' played a game of hide and seek with their public.

People sought answers. Boston's bosses hid.

The Red Sox released a statement Monday morning to confirm the firing of Dave Dombrowski, their president of baseball operations since August 2015, and the appointment of assistant general managers Brian O'Halloran, Ed Romero and Zack Scott to lead the department, with senior vice president of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira also assuming an expanded role.

The statement featured full praise of Dombrowski from each of the club's three leaders — principal owner John Henry, chairman Tom Werner and president and CEO Sam Kennedy — and offered no hint why Dombrowski would be canned despite his success with the franchise.

Yet neither the Red Sox's power trio nor their interim leadership group made themselves available for questions from a plentiful media. Instead, manager Alex Cora, whom Dombrowski hired in November 2017, spoke alone on behalf of the club.

"Unfair, or fair, I don't know," Cora said, when asked if it was fair for him to hold the bag in a situation he didn't create. "The team already sent a statement. They wanted to make sure that we appreciated what Dave did for the organization. I know that for some people, it's probably not enough. For others, maybe it is."

Henry, Werner and Kennedy spoke to the Red Sox players about the decision, Cora divulged, so they were all on site. Kennedy even appeared on the field in a pregame ceremony. And that would represent the extent of their communication and representation on the matter.

Cora said that he learned of Dombrowski's fate shortly after Dombrowski did, following the Yankees' 10-5 victory over the Red Sox late Sunday night. He informed the Boston players of the news before holding his postgame news conference.

"It's not easy," Cora said. "Tough night for everybody."

Tough day-after assignment, on top of that, for Cora.

### **Yankees get sweet Red Sox revenge, and then rub it in**

Dan Martin

To a man, each player who was here a year ago, when the Yankees had their season ended by the Red Sox in the ALDS, said they didn't place much importance on knocking Boston out of the AL East race on Monday night.

But there was "New York, New York" blaring from the visiting clubhouse after the Yankees beat their rivals, 5-0 at Fenway Park.

"It's a good song," Austin Romine said of the music that caused some controversy when Aaron Judge played it as the Yankees left Fenway during the playoffs last October — only to lose the series.

This is a much different season, though.

It's one that has seen the Yankees emerge as perhaps the best team in the league and Boston, less than a year removed from a title, already undergoing a front-office shake-up after winning three straight AL East races.

And if the Yankees want to finish the job, their next goal will be to wrap up the division. Their magic number dropped to nine over second-place Tampa Bay with Monday's win — behind another outstanding performance from James Paxton.

The left-hander delivered another scoreless start, this one 6 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings after he pitched seven scoreless against Texas his previous time out.

"He's the best pitcher in the game," Judge said. "He's getting right at the right time."

He got all the offense he needed from Romine and Gio Urshela, who each hit solo homers.

Paxton had his worst outing of the year at Fenway on July 26, when the Yankees' entire rotation seemed to be imploding. In that game, Paxton allowed seven runs — all earned — and it was Paxton's second consecutive start in which he'd given up seven runs.

"Maybe the best thing that happened to him was that game," Boston manager Alex Cora said. "Because he kind of changed the script. He's not relying only on the cutter. He's using his breaking ball to get ahead and then he's using that two-seam fastball away to get big outs and get guys on soft contact."

Paxton has won each of his eight starts since then and allowed two earned runs or fewer in his past four.

The Yankees took the lead in the fifth on Romine's opposite-field solo homer to right off Eduardo Rodriguez.

Boston threatened in the sixth with two out on a J.D. Martinez walk and Christian Vazquez single to left on an 0-2 pitch. Paxton recovered to get Sam Travis to ground to third to end the inning.

Urshela's homer added a run in the seventh against Darwinzon Hernandez. It was Urshela's first start since returning from the injured list with a strained left groin.

Later in the inning, Romine doubled and scored on a single by DJ LeMahieu.

Paxton retired the first two batters in the seventh and then walked Bradley to end his night, but Zack Britton got the final out of the inning.

Cory Gearrin pitched a scoreless eighth and the Yankees tacked on another run in the ninth before Tyler Lyons finished it.

"I'm in a good spot," Paxton said. "I feel great and want to stay there and go into the postseason feeling this way."

Aaron Boone feels the same.

"We're coming down the stretch and hope to have a lot of baseball left," the manager said. "You like to see guys at their best this time of year."

And if they can make things more difficult for their rivals, that's fine.

Judge said eliminating the Red Sox from the AL East race "wasn't even on our radar, to be honest. We wanted to come here and continue our success. Our goal is to dominate every series."

And they're approaching their first division title since 2012.

"That's what we're shooting for," Judge said. "We want to be the best team in the AL East and the best team in the AL. We have to win the division first. We're not there yet, but we're getting close."

## **\* *The USA Today***

### **Red Sox legend David Ortiz throws out first pitch in first public appearance since he was shot**

Jace Evans

David Ortiz, the legendary Boston Red Sox designated hitter, returned to Fenway Park on Monday night to throw out the first pitch before the game against the New York Yankees.

It was Ortiz's first public appearance since he was shot in his native Dominican Republic in June.

After tossing the ceremonial pitch to longtime teammate Jason Varitek, Big Papi grabbed a mic to address the crowd in a short but emotional address.

"First of all, I want to thank God for giving me a second opportunity in my life to be able to be here with all of you," Ortiz said.

"I want to thank the Red Sox, my real family, they always have been there for me, supporting me. They were aware of what happened to me and they were the first ones there supporting me. Thank you very much Red Sox family."

Ortiz was flown up to Boston in the aftermath of the shooting by the Red Sox.

He continued his thanks by saluting fans and his former teammates.

"I want to thank all of you for all the prayers. All of them came home. I really appreciate it, thank you very much."

"I want to thank my former teammates for being there for me. And also, all of them came home to check up on this boy."

Then, in a touching moment that put the rivalry aside, Ortiz thanked the members of the Yankees who had come to visit him, which received among the biggest cheers from the Red Sox faithful during Ortiz's speech.

"Also, I want to thank the Yankees. A lot of my boys over there came over there to check up on Big Papi, thank you very much, appreciate it.

"God bless you all. Go Sox!" Ortiz concluded.

## **\* *The Bergen Record***

### **Celebrating with their signature anthem, Yankees eliminate Red Sox from AL East contention**

Pete Caldera

In words, the Yankees tried to say this was just another September series victory.

In music, they let on what it really meant.

From the visiting manager's office Monday night at Fenway Park, it was easy to hear Frank Sinatra's 'New York, New York' blaring from the Yankees clubhouse.

Riding another sharp effort from lefty James Paxton, that winning anthem was the Yankees' way of saying goodbye to their rival - the fast-fading defending world champions.

“I mean, it’s a good song,” said catcher Austin Romine, offering the standard deadpan answer after the Yankees’ 5-0 victory eliminated the Red Sox from AL East contention.

Boston was left clinging to a far-flung wild card bid, while the Yankees lowered their magic number of clinching their first AL East title since 2012 to nine.

“That was our goal out of spring training, to win the division first,” Aaron Judge said.

By taking three of four games at Fenway, the Yankees (95-50) completed a dominating 14-4 regular-season record against the Red Sox (76-68) and officially ended Boston’s run of three straight division crowns.

Of course, the Red Sox knocked the Yankees out in last year’s Division Series and mocked their demise by adding “New York, New York” to their own victory play list, even after their World Series clincher at Dodger Stadium.

“Wasn’t even on our radar, to be honest,” said Judge, who’d carried that same tune – past the Red Sox clubhouse – as the Yankees headed out of Fenway following last year’s Division Series Game 2 win.

Boston would win the next two games at Yankee Stadium, celebrating a clinching party to the tune of – you guessed it.

“We just want to come here and continue our success, play well on the road,” Judge said. “Our idea is to go out and dominate every series and we were able to get three out of four.”

#### Rolling along

A day after the Sox dismissed Dave Dombrowski as president of baseball operations, the Yankees headed off to a series at Detroit, armed with a nine-game AL East lead with 17 games remaining in the regular season.

“No matter where we are in the season, no matter what level of grind it is ... that hunger has carried them well,” manager Aaron Boone said of his club earlier this week. “In a lot of ways, they feel like there’s a lot of unfinished business.”

“Maybe after the fact,” Yankees pitcher J.A. Happ said earlier this week, asked if the club might take some pleasure in closing off a division-title path for a team that eliminated the Yanks in last year’s AL Division Series.

“We’ve done such a good job on the one-day-at-a-time cliché,” Happ said. Still, “they knocked us out (in 2018, so) I’m sure it wouldn’t feel bad” to return the favor in 2019.

#### Eight in a row

Paxton was brilliant again, pitching 6.2 scoreless innings and striking out seven batters.

The lefty gave up four hits and did not walk a batter in winning his eighth straight start, dating to Aug. 2 against the Red Sox at Yankee Stadium.

“He’s kind of had these blinders on the last few starts,” Romine said of Paxton’s focus. “He’s predominantly known as a fastball guy, so guys are kind of selling out for the heaters and...they can’t guess as easy.”

Paxton said it’s a great feeling “going into the postseason feeling this way,” with the longest consecutive winning streak by a Yankees starter since Ron Guidry’s 11 in 1979.

He wasn't a Yankee last October, but "it's awesome...it feels really great to knock those guys out" of divisional contention.

Over his last four starts, Paxton has pitched to a 1.42 ERA, and he has not allowed a run since the fourth inning of his Aug. 28 start at Seattle – a span of 15 innings.

His offensive support was initially provided by backup catcher Romine (2-for-2, three runs), who homered off lefty Eduardo Rodriguez in the fifth.

Making his first start since coming off the injured list due (tight left groin), third baseman Gio Urshela homered to start a three-run seventh inning against the beleaguered Boston bullpen.

Romine doubled and scored on D.J. LeMahieu's single and Judge's double pushed LeMahieu to third, allowing him to score on a Gleyber Torres sacrifice fly.

All-out attack

In closing out their regular-season scheduled against their rivals, the Yankees' 14 wins against Boston is their highest total in one season against Boston in the Expansion Era (since 1961).

And the Yankees are the first team since 1973 to win at least 14 games against the Red Sox in one season.

Plus, in taking three of four games against the Red Sox during this extended weekend series, the Yankees are now 17-3 in their last 20 games against AL East opponents (51-17 overall this year) and 40-13 over their last 53 divisional games.

## **\* *The Newark Star Ledger***

**Yankees blast 'New York, New York,' celebrate officially ending Red Sox's quest for 4th consecutive AL East title**

Randy Miller

There was a little something extra special about the Yankees' 5-0 blanking of the Boston Red Sox on Monday night at Fenway Park, so someone added a certain Sinatra song to the post-game music mix that blared in the clubhouse before the media was let in.

"New York, New York" was blasting and there was some singing, and there's no doubt it's because everyone was very aware that the Red Sox, AL East champs from 2016-18, had just been officially eliminated from the 2019 division race.

The soon-to-be-crowned Yankees really enjoyed sticking to the Red Sox, right?

Catcher Austin Romine, a hero of this win with a homer, double and two walks in four plate appearances, smiled and responded, "It's a good song."

That's all, Austin?

"That's it," he added with another smile. "It's a good song."

Right fielder Aaron Judge, who famously (or was it infamously) played "New York, New York" loudly on his boombox walking past the outside of the Red Sox clubhouse following a Game 2 Division Series win at Fenway last October, went out of his way to downplay his club being the one that ended Boston's division reign. Perhaps it because the Yanks wound up being ousted in four games in the 2018 ALDS by the Red Sox, who went on to win the World Series.

Regardless, Judge acted as if this was just another win for the Yankees, whose magic number to clinch their first division since 2012 is eight.

"It wasn't even on our radar, to be honest," Judge said. "We just wanted to come here and just continue our success. We play well on the road. Our idea is to go out here and dominate every series, and we were able to go out there and get three out of four."

Don't buy all of that.

The Yankees greatly enjoyed being the ones to end the division reign of the Red Sox, who probably will miss the playoffs altogether because they're eight games out of the second AL wild-card spot with 2 ½ weeks to play.

Yankees pitcher James Paxton, who was dealing again Monday night with 6 2/3 shutout innings, admitted the truth in his post-game interview. He said it was fun delivering a knockout punch to rival Boston.

Absolutely," the left-hander said. "It's awesome. We feel really confident as a team right now, and it feels great to knock those guys out of the division. We're just going to keep on going forward, focusing on one game at a time and get ready for the postseason."

The Yankees probably will wrap up the division sometime next week, then the focus will be beating out the AL West-leading Houston Astros and NL West-leading Los Angeles Dodgers for the best record in baseball, which would bring home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

Buy Aaron Judge Yankees jersey: [Fanatics.com](http://Fanatics.com), [Dick's Sporting Goods](http://Dick's Sporting Goods), [Champs Sports](http://Champs Sports), [MLB.com](http://MLB.com), [Lids](http://Lids)

Monday night was monumental though for the Yanks, who earned a little revenge for last October whether they admit it or not.

"We want to win the division," manager Aaron Boone said. "That was one of the specific goals we set out when we got to spring training. We wanted to be in a position to win this division.

"We know the Red Sox are obviously defending world champions. We know how great they were a season ago. We know what they are capable of even though it's been a little up and down for them. To play well against that team is satisfying, but as far as who you eliminate and knock out, we want to win some more and shore up the division as a whole."

## **\* *Associated Press***

### **Yankees end Boston's three-year run atop AL East, win 5-0**

The music blared in the clubhouse behind the door to manager Aaron Boone's office -- "New York, New York" was playing through the speakers, and a few voices could be heard joining in on the lyrics.

The New York Yankees had an extra reason to be happy after ending their longtime rivals' run atop the AL East.

New York officially stopped Boston's three-year reign as division champs, blanking the Red Sox 5-0 Monday night behind another big effort by James Paxton.

"Absolutely, it's awesome," Paxton said. "We feel really confident as a team right now and it feels great to knock those guys out."

Hours after the defending World Series champion Red Sox parted ways with team president Dave Dombrowski, and right after former star David Ortiz returned to Fenway Park three months after being shot, they were shut out at home for the first time this season.

Boston dropped 18 1/2 games behind the division-leading Yankees with 18 games left.

The Red Sox are still in playoff contention, but barely. They remained eight games behind the second wild-card spot.

Paxton (13-6) won his eighth straight start, allowing four hits in 6 2/3 innings, as the Yankees increased their lead to nine games over second-place Tampa Bay. New York is tied with Houston for the best record in the majors.

Austin Romine and Gio Urshela each hit solo homers for the Yankees, who took the final three of a four-game series and finished the season 14-5 against their longtime rivals. New York increased its club record to 270 homers, a night after setting the mark.

"It's not about talent. We're very talented, it just happened that over 19 games they were better than us," Boston manager Alex Cora said.

Last year, the Red Sox clinched the East in Yankee Stadium, and also knocked them out of the playoffs there in the divisional round.

"We wanted to be in a position to win this division," Boone said. "We know the Red Sox, defending world champs. We know how great they were a year ago. To play well against that team is satisfying. As far as who you knock out, we want to win a little more to shore up the division."

Paxton struck out seven and walked three in setting a career best in victories.

Eduardo Rodriguez (17-6) gave up one run in six innings, striking out nine with five hits and a walk while throwing a season-high 117 pitches. He was 4-0 with a 1.03 ERA in his last four starts, and the Red Sox lost for just the second time (12-2) when he started at Fenway Park.

Romine sliced his homer down the right-field line past the Pesky Pole, making it 1-0 in the fifth.

New York broke it open by getting three runs off Darwinzon Hernandez in the seventh. Urshela led off with his homer into the Green Monster seats. DJ LeMahieu had an RBI double and scored on Gleyber Torres' sacrifice fly.

Jackie Bradley Jr. had three hits for Boston.

#### CENTER OF ATTENTION

Ortiz threw out the first pitch, thanking the fans for their support after he was shot in the back in his native Dominican Republic.

In his first public appearance since June 9, when he was shot and seriously injured in a Santo Domingo nightclub, Ortiz walked out steady and strong to a cheering crowd before he threw the pitch to former teammate and catcher Jason Varitek.

"It's amazing. It's always good to see him back and in good spirits," Bradley said. "He's very thankful for all the prayers and doctors. He's a special one to have, and we're glad to have him as close to full strength."

Yankees star Aaron Judge echoed the sentiment.

"To see him go walk on that field and throw a pitch out is fantastic," Judge said. "I know the whole city loves him. The fans were going crazy. We were, too. I was just happy to see him back. It's Big Papi."

#### CENTER PLAY

Yankees CF Brett Gardner made a diving grab of Xander Bogaerts' sixth-inning liner and Bradley had a leaping catch at the wall on Edwin Encarnacion's fly to end the seventh. Bradley also made a jumping snag of Luke Voit's drive on the track, opening the eighth.

#### TRAINER'S ROOM

Yankees: Placed OF Mike Tauchman on the injured list (Grade 2 left calf strain; out 6-8 weeks). "Right now, I'm bummed out for him, but we've got to keep moving," Boone said. ... Boone doesn't expect OF Giancarlo Stanton (right knee sprain) to play for Double-A Trenton before re-joining the Yankees. "Being down in Tampa, he's able to face pitchers and able to rack up a lot of at-bats while he's getting all the way back to physically being able to play games," the manager said.

Red Sox: Cora said they are not planning yet to shut LHP David Price (cyst left wrist) down for the season. He hasn't pitched since Sept. 1.

#### UP NEXT

Yankees: Haven't announced a starter yet for their series opener at Detroit Tuesday. RHP Edwin Jackson (3-9, 9.16 ERA) is slated to go for the Tigers.

Red Sox: RHP Nathan Eovaldi (1-0, 5.77) is scheduled to start Tuesday when they open a three-game series Tuesday in Toronto. RHP T.J. Zeuch (0-0, 4.50) is in line to go for the Blue Jays.