

## ***The Boston Red Sox Wednesday, October 9, 2019***

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

#### **Why the Sox felt their pitching infrastructure needed change**

Alex Speier

A strange soundscape characterized the Red Sox clubhouse following a loss in the middle of a mystifying season-opening West Coast swing. In the otherwise silent wake of defeat, the rotating blades of fans aimed at the skyscraper-like towers of servers in the middle of the clubhouse whirred noisily — necessary to prevent the equipment from bursting into flames.

Welcome to game-planning in baseball's modern era. Data and analytics now claim central roles in shaping on-field strategy, changing the cultural and physical landscape of how teams are organized. It is that change, perhaps more than the vague notion of an underperforming, unhealthy Red Sox pitching staff, that explained the team's announcement on Tuesday of a pitching infrastructure shakeup.

Dana LeVangie — who's been a member of the Red Sox organization for 29 years, including the last seven on the coaching staff — was reassigned from pitching coach to a role in the pro scouting department. Steve Langone, the advance scouting manager, likewise will move to pro scouting. Brian Bannister, who'd served an in-uniform role as assistant pitching coach on top of his duties as VP of pitching development, will no longer be part of the big league coaching staff. Instead, he'll focus on pitcher development programs, particularly in the minors.

Change felt inevitable as the year progressed, not necessarily because of the results but perhaps more because of the tension that existed between LeVangie's traditional approach to game-planning — he drew upon his advance scouting background by consuming video tirelessly in search of holes in opposing hitters' swings — and the team's desire to embrace the data-driven model used by teams such as the Dodgers, Astros, Yankees, Indians, Rays, and Twins.

Behind the scenes, there was a sense of an oil-and-water dynamic that never got resolved. Members of the coaching staff experienced a yearlong tension between the way the Red Sox had prepared their pitchers — quite successfully, it should be noted, as recently as 2018 — and how the team now wanted to game-plan for opponents.

There were disagreements about how to attack opposing lineups, arguments that sometimes consumed the coaching staff and led to less actual time being spent coaching the players. While those disagreements were largely walled off from the players — and the failure of the pitching staff was caused foremost by failures of pitch execution — some around the Red Sox felt that the absence of a sustained winning streak reflected the disjointed communication and headbutting that was occurring.

"It was a just tough year," said one member of the team. "We never really got on the same page at all."

#### **A changing job**

When Alex Cora came to the Red Sox from the Astros after the 2017 season, he wanted to bring with him a number of what he saw as the best practices of a state-of-the-art Astros organization. He continues to want the team to push in that direction.

"We're evolving," Cora said last week. "Here, nobody was using [analytics in game strategy]. Nobody was taking advantage of the information provided — but for great reasons. They were very successful at what they did, but here we started adding stuff. We're still a work in progress at every aspect of the game."

The Sox aren't alone in that regard. The game is changing rapidly to account for the incredible volumes of information now available thanks to the introduction of precise data from TrackMan systems via Statcast. The result has been uneasy for many in the game, with changing information meaning changing job descriptions of coaches and consequently a lot of coaching changes.

From the end of the 2016 season through the end of the 2017 season, just three teams changed pitching coaches. From the end of the 2017 through the end of the 2018 season, that number exploded, jumping to 14 (including the hiring of LeVangie). From the end of the 2018 season through the end of the 2019 season, 14 teams changed pitching coaches. Since the end of this season, six teams have already announced their intention to change pitching coaches.

Changes reaching a fever pitch

Changing information has led to increased changes in pitching coaches in the last decade.

MLB pitching coach changes, 2009-19\*

2019	14
2018	14
2017	3
2016	12
2015	3
2014	6
2013	5
2012	9
2011	10
2010	9
2009	6

SOURCE: MLB

“I think [pitching coaches] are rapidly changing because the sources of information are just as rapidly changing. We have so many new systems now — Trackman or others — [and] you're getting more and more advanced in how to use them,” said Twins chief baseball officer Derek Falvey. “If your default position is just, ‘That’s not how we’ve done it before,’ that’s not going to work in our environment.”

Falvey, who oversaw the overhaul of Minnesota’s pitching infrastructure starting in 2016 after a similar undertaking in Cleveland earlier this decade, said that coaches are still hired to be teachers, but also conceded that the state-required curriculum is changing. That certainly appears to be the case for the Red Sox.

“The pitching coach job, like some other roles on the staff, is constantly changing,” assistant GM Brian O’Halloran wrote in an e-mail.

Changing the (game) plan

Some of the Red Sox’ progress in incorporating analytics at the field level occurred rapidly. The team’s overhaul of defensive positioning received rapid buy-in and success in 2018. The dynamic on the pitching side proved more challenging.

LeVangie is considered extraordinary for his ability to watch a game and dissect the strengths and weaknesses of both pitchers and hitters. However, even acknowledging his expertise, the game is moving in a different game-planning direction.

Statcast offers data about millions of pitches — precise shapes and velocities and spin rates in very, very specific locations — that dwarfs what one individual can evaluate in preparation for a game. Information about a hitter’s struggles against curveballs in 0-2 counts might be irrelevant, depending on the specific shape and velocity of a pitcher’s curveball and where that pitcher typically can execute it.

Moreover, like other teams, the Sox wanted to move beyond outcome-based data (i.e., did a batter get a hit on a certain pitch?) to more specific ways of analyzing the value of every pitch (i.e., a lineout is a bad outcome for a pitcher, a ground-ball single often results from a good pitch).

The Red Sox front office wanted to utilize that broader dataset. Late in 2018, their catchers started using wristbands suggesting how an individual pitcher's stuff could best be employed against a specific hitter. The Red Sox coaching staff used that information and tool in concert with the traditional game-planning efforts of LeVangie and the rest of the coaching staff, a group that typically included LeVangie, Langone, advance scouting assistant J.T. Watkins, Jason Varitek, bullpen catcher Michael Brenly, and catching coordinator Chad Epperson.

"It was a struggle [in 2018]. Any change is, especially when you have people who have been involved and doing things a certain way for a long time," assistant GM Zack Scott said during the season. "It came with expected growing pains. There were several meetings throughout the year where we tried to express some ways where we could gain some advantages. It's on us to explain things in a way that the coaches can use it."

Still, entering 2019, the Red Sox wanted analytics to play an even larger role in game-planning. Cora wanted a member of the analytics staff to travel with the team and be in the clubhouse. The team hired Jeb Clarke as a clubhouse analyst, taking part in game-planning meetings. His presence signaled a different way of doing business.

"It's been a big transition on the major league side," Bannister said during the season. "You're not just watching video anymore. The whole process has been outstanding, but it's been a big adjustment for everybody. The coaches used to do things for themselves in the past. Now it's leveraging the resources of the whole organization.

"Long-term, it's something that needed to be done to stay competitive with the top organizations who are pushing the boundaries in this area," he added. "In any profession, you constantly need to update your skill set. It's been an update-your-skill-set kind of year as we all try to get better at what we do."

On occasion, LeVangie and other members of the staff found their views running counter to the recommendations of the team's analytics department. Those disagreements at times consumed the energy of the coaches. According to multiple team sources, the staff spent more time this year hashing out disputes amongst themselves than they did in 2018, with the result that there was less time spent working with players.

Meanwhile, in a year where the pitchers executed poorly — a problem that dwarfed any others related to the team's pitching performance — and where results were worse than in 2018, tension mounted. What was meant to be a collaboration between the analytics department and the staff sometimes felt adversarial.

"I fully expected to go through growing pains this year with this stuff, because it's new. We're changing it and making it better, more valuable in my mind," Scott said in August. "[But] I get it. We're asking people to change things up. Sometimes that goes well, and sometimes it's a struggle."

#### The road forward

The friction experienced between parts of the coaching staff and the analytics department is cultural; it doesn't fall on LeVangie or any other single member of the organization. For that matter, the analytics department warrants some blame for the inability to get buy-in for the changes it sought.

Perhaps now, with some new hires, the Red Sox will face less of a struggle. With a new pitching coach and, perhaps, a full-time assistant pitching coach (according to O'Halloran, the team had yet to determine whether it would hire someone for that role), the division can be clearer. Game-planning is likely to be led by the analytics department, a notion that will be understood by whoever is hired to replace LeVangie.

Who might that be? It's tough to say. Teams have been desperate to find voices who are versed in pitching analytics in a way that allows them to translate them into easily digestible form for pitchers. Falvey and the Twins made a nontraditional hire in tabbing Wes Johnson from the University of Arkansas last winter. A desire to take advantage of new resources has resulted in an influx of coaches with atypical backgrounds, and O'Halloran suggested the Sox will "cast a wide net in our search for the next pitching coach."

LeVangie is respected and beloved by many in the Red Sox organization. He's done a number of jobs exceptionally well, as his four World Series rings (earned in four different roles) suggest. Still, his departure reflects an unsurprising outcome for a team that is trying to overhaul how it translates information from its analysts to its players.

"It sucks that we're going to have time to reset and go over every department and say, 'We're doing this well, we can do this better . . .'" Cora said last week, prior to the decision about the coaching staff. "It sucks because it means that we're done, but I think going into spring training next year, it's going to be a lot easier for everybody that, this is it, we don't have to make adjustments throughout the season in the information that's provided or the information we use."

"We're finding new tools, fixing tools that are going to give better information for us," Cora continued, "and we'll use it the right way."

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

### **Dana LeVangie out as Red Sox pitching coach**

Jason Mastrodonato

One year after being covered in praise for leading the Red Sox pitching staff on the way to a World Series title, Dana LeVangie is out as pitching coach.

The Sox announced a few coaching changes on Tuesday morning and among them was news that LeVangie, pitching coach in 2018 and 2019, would not return in that role. Advanced scouting manager Steve Langone will also not return to the field staff in 2020, but both he and LeVangie accepted positions as pro scouts with the club.

LeVangie was previously a pro scout in 2005 and worked as an advanced scout from 2006 through 2012.

He was beloved as a bullpen coach under former manager John Farrell, and when manager Alex Cora came on board before the 2018 season and asked the pitchers for suggestions on a new pitching coach, LeVangie's name kept coming up.

"Dana is about as good as they get when it comes to the knowledge of pitching," Chris Sale said at the time. "I know the bullpen guys are pretty upset that we're taking him, but I think he's definitely the right guy for the right spot."

The first Red Sox pitching coach to have never pitched professionally since Mike Roarke in 1994, LeVangie led the staff to a 3.75 ERA, tied for sixth-best in MLB in 2018.

The following year was a different story as Sale, David Price and Nathan Eovaldi struggled to stay healthy after a long October, and a slow spring training build-up plan that Cora defended through the final days of the season didn't pan out. The Sox finished with a 19th-ranked 4.70 ERA in 2019, including a 4.95 ERA by the starting rotation.

"I go back to our plan, our plan was the right one," Cora said last week. "I've been saying all along, what those guys did in October was very unique, it was very special. We did what we thought they needed going

into the season. I hate comparing us to other organizations, but if you look around at some of the guys that had great seasons, they tapered their usage in spring training. That's the nature of the sport.

"There's a lot of information that's more than just pitches and innings or bullpens that we use to make decisions. We thought it was the right plan. We felt very strongly about it. We did the same thing in '17. We were just short by two or three innings, compared to this year. We'll do the same thing."

The Sox were also noticeably late to adjust to a pitching strategy that was no longer working for them.

"I think everybody knows that we pitch up," catcher Christian Vazquez said in August. "They make adjustments. They have reports and they look for it."

The Red Sox ranked No. 1 in pitches in the top third of the strikezone and fastballs in the top third of the strikezone for most of the year, and often paid for it.

In another shakeup, Brian Bannister will not return to an on-field role as assistant pitching coach, but will continue as the vice president of pitching development and focus more on the minor leagues.

Bannister, a former big leaguer who survived with a high-80s fastball, is well respected for his work with analytics and was honest about the Sox' struggles from the first month of the season, when the starters' velocities were down.

"It's the reality of today's game," Bannister said in April. "You either train for stuff, go out and execute stuff, or it's very hard to pitch to right now."

It was also announced that Andy Barkett will not return as assistant hitting coach.

The Sox have yet to fill any vacancies on their staff.

### **Red Sox to increase ticket prices 1.7 percent in 2020**

Jason Mastrodonato

Red Sox tickets will be 1.7 percent more expensive in 2020, the club announced on Tuesday.

The news comes as no surprise after team president Sam Kennedy said last week he expected the prices would increase, as they have for each of the past five years. Prices haven't frozen since after the 2014 season.

On average, Red Sox ticket prices have increased 1.4 percent, 2.9 percent, 2.5 percent, 2.5 percent and 1.7 percent from 2016 through 2020, respectively.

The news was met with a lot of criticism when Kennedy announced it last week, particularly as the team missed the postseason and will now look to cut payroll and get under the \$208-million luxury tax threshold next year.

"We've had a pretty consistent approach to ticket pricing the last five years," he said. "Low single digits and cost of living inflationary increases."

Games are broken up into tiers based on expected demand and the top four tiers will cost more in 2020, though the prices for the tier 4 and tier 5 games will decrease.

On average, every seat in the park will see its price go up except for those located in the right-field terrace, which will drop 78 cents per game.

The cheapest tickets will again be the standing room only tickets, which will average \$25.86 per game after averaging just \$21.14 in 2019.

The cheapest seats will be in the last rows of the outfield bleachers, where the average cost will be \$33.37, up from \$30.38 last year.

The Sox will continue offering a select number of \$9 tickets for high school and college tickets to every game as well as some free tickets for kids 14 and under through the Kid Nation Program. There will be special reduced pricing offers for clergy, veterans and active duty members.

Kennedy said in August the team was also considering an open house day, where kids would be entered free.

“Could we have an open house day, where we put aside 10,000 to 15,000 tickets just for kids on an ongoing basis free of charge? The obvious answer is yes,” Kennedy told the Herald last month. “There’s a market for that. We need to challenge ourselves to see if that could be a possibility. We’ve talked about that. On lower demand games you might have an opportunity to do that. It really is an investment in the future.”

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

### **Red Sox announce coaching staff changes, ticket price increase for 2020**

Bill Koch

The fallout from a disappointing Red Sox season continued Tuesday.

Decisions have been made on pitching coach Dana LeVangie, advance scouting manager Steve Langone, assistant pitching coach Brian Bannister and assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett.

LeVangie and Langone have been reassigned as pro scouts, Bannister will focus on pitching development in the minor leagues and Barkett will not return for a third season. Boston released a morning statement announcing the changes.

The Red Sox struggled on the mound throughout the 2019 season, finishing 19th in the big leagues with a 4.70 earned-run average. Boston’s bullpen blew 28 saves – only the Athletics, Nationals and Mariners were more wasteful with late-game leads. Chris Sale, David Price and Nathan Eovaldi each spent extended time on the injured list.

Boston’s difficulties in certain situations with men on base were also a departure from the 2018 World Series champions. The Red Sox managed just 39 hits – 12 for extra bases – while striking out 37 times with the bases loaded this season. Boston collected 54 hits – 25 for extra bases – and struck out just 31 times in the same situation in 2018.

LeVangie has been with the club since being drafted as a catcher out of American International in 1991. He spent 2005 as a pro scout and was an advance scout from 2006-12. Bannister was hired a director of pitching analysis and development in 2015.

Barkett was hired prior to the 2018 season after spending 12 years as a minor league manager, coach and coordinator. Triple-A Indianapolis – the top Pirates affiliate – went 79-63 in his final season in charge, winning the International League West Division. Hitting coach Tim Hyers is expected to return.

These are the latest in a round of Red Sox moves approved by the collaborative group currently overseeing day-to-day operations. Eddie Romero, Brian O’Halloran, Zack Scott and Raquel Ferreira have also made four promotions in the scouting department, including the elevations of Mike Rikard to scouting vice

president and Paul Toboni to amateur scouting director. Boston's search continues for its next president of baseball operations or general manager.

The Red Sox also announce an average ticket price increase of 1.7 percent for the 2020 season. Pavilion level standing room and general standing room will see the largest increases, with the average ticket going up \$4.62 and \$4.72, respectively. Select tickets for high school and college students will remain priced at \$9.

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

### **Marcus Wilson, Boston Red Sox trade acquisition for Blake Swihart, named AFL All-Star with Jarren Duran, C.J. Chatham**

Christopher Smith

Three Boston Red Sox prospects, Marcus Wilson, Jarren Duran and C.J. Chatham, were named 2019 Arizona Fall League All-Stars.

The game is Saturday at 8 p.m., eastern.

Wilson — who the Red Sox acquired for Blake Swihart in April — is 7-for-18 (.318) with a .423 on-base percentage, .500 slugging percentage, .923 OPS, one double, one homer, eight RBIs, three runs and two stolen bases in six games.

The right-handed hitting center fielder turned 23 in August. He struggled for Double-A Portland after the trade to the Red Sox. Boston demoted him to High-A Salem where he slashed .342/.413/.603/1.016 with eight homers, 12 doubles and one triple and 29 RBIs in 45 games. He then returned to Portland where he posted a .250/.325/.486/.811 line, seven homers, 13 doubles and 20 RBIs in 43 games.

Chatham is 12-for-44 (.273) with a .333 on-base percentage, .364 slugging percentage, .697 OPS OPS, four doubles, six RBIs, 11 runs and three stolen bases in 11 games.

Both Chatham and Wilson are Rule 5 Draft eligible this offseason. They must be added to the 40-man roster by early November to protect them from the draft.

Duran is 11-for-45 (.244) with .333 on-base percentage, .356 slugging percentage, .689 OPS, one homer, two doubles, three RBIs, nine runs and two steals in 12 games.

### **Boston Red Sox prospect Noah Song, a Navy graduate, values his service time & knowing how far he can get in baseball**

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox drafted talented right-handed pitcher Noah Song in the fourth round out of the United States Naval Academy in June. One of the top storylines became whether the Navy would accept his petition to become a reservist and delay his active service time to play professional baseball.

An MLB team likely would have drafted him in the first round if not for the uncertainty surrounding his military service time. He has a four-pitch repertoire that includes a fastball that topped out at 98 mph in college and a plus curveball, per his Baseball America scouting report.

Song has strong values. He's not concerned about fame and earning millions playing baseball. He has the talent to make good money.

The 22-year-old, a 2019 Golden Spikes Finalist, simply wants to pursue what makes him passionate. He's passionate about both serving in the military and playing baseball.

"Obviously my service time for my country and our service members is a huge thing that I value and I feel very passionate about," Song told MassLive.com near the end of Short Season Lowell's season. "So on that end, something like that, it goes into my own personal goals in life: my self-fulfillment and things I want to accomplish throughout my lifetime.

"From the baseball aspect, really the reason why I'm playing baseball or why I even want to keep playing baseball at this level is obviously it's fun and everything. But it's really kind of about the competition level," he added. "At the end of the day, I want to know for myself just kind of how far Noah Song is able to play baseball. Whether that be in Short A and this is it, or maybe a level higher or two. Really for me, it's just trying to see where my peak is."

Baseball America listed him on the Red Sox's fall instructional roster. But he remained in Newport, R.I., where he's stationed.

In spite of his situation, the Red Sox drafted a talented pitcher.

The 6-4, 200-pounder received permission from the Navy to pitch at Lowell this summer while he also served in Newport. He allowed just two earned runs in 17 innings (1.06 ERA) and posted a .167 batting average against. He struck out 19 and walked five.

SoxProspects.com already ranks him the No. 9 prospect in the system.

"As far as physical development, it's really been the changeup that's come along a little bit," Song said. "I threw it slim to none in college. And then our pitching coach (Nick Green) here, he's really, really big on the changeup. He's really trying to emphasize that to me. Obviously I had a lot of trust in him. And I started to trust the pitch a little bit more. It by no means is a perfect pitch. But it's one that obviously has developed into one I can use in every start now."

He'll obviously accept whatever path his life takes him. His parents taught him to pursue what make him passionate. His father works for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. His mother is a middle school special education-aide instructor.

"Growing up, I was by no means in a rich household or anything," Song said. "Our parents did a good job raising us. They were able to supply everything that we needed. But I think everything past the necessities in life, everything else really is a luxury. And it's just kind of how your perspective is. And I think going through the Naval Academy makes you realize a lot of things in life our luxuries. People just don't realize that they are.

"I think when it comes down to it, you've got basically your food, water and your freedom. It's pretty much the necessities that you really need in life. For me, everybody talks about how the military doesn't get paid that much. But the fact that you get paid to do an honor like that and to serve your country and to protect that freedom for yourself and for your family members and friends, it's a great thing to do. And whether it be next year or a few years after baseball ends, one way or another, that service time will get paid back by me in full. And I'm very much looking forward to it."

A Navy graduate also could petition and request for reserve status after two years of active duty.

"There's no guarantee there, either," he said.

**Wilson, Red Sox trade acquisition for Swihart, named AFL All-Star with Duran, Chatham**

Christopher Smith

The Red Sox' decision to dramatically shake up the structure of their pitching department by reassigning pitching coach Dana LeVangie and assistant pitching coach Brian Bannister on Tuesday speaks to the broader mission of the franchise this winter -- getting the entire organization to operate in a more cohesive manner with defined philosophies from top to bottom.

After a near-perfect championship season in 2018, the Red Sox appear to have veered away from a cohesive culture in a disappointing 2019 campaign. While it doesn't appear there were any significant personal issues between the team's decision-makers, it's clear some philosophical differences presented challenges on a day-to-day basis.

Alex Speier of the Boston Globe reported Tuesday that there was tension within the pitching department over how different coaches approached game-planning. That tension was less of a classic analytics vs. traditional scouting battle, a baseball source said late Wednesday night, and more of a staff-wide frustration over a team philosophy that often felt disjointed.

Manager Alex Cora alluded to an organizational disconnect shortly after the Red Sox were eliminated from postseason contention Sept. 23.

"From top to bottom, we have to do a better job saying, 'This is what we want at the big-league level,'" Cora said. "From Boston all the way to the Dominican Summer League, we have to stick to the approach. That's the way you're going to be successful. That's the way you maintain a winning culture. You do it from top to bottom."

As they look to spring themselves back into playoff contention next season, the Red Sox are open to dramatic change. Significant turnover is coming at every level of the organization, with a new head of baseball operations being hired to lead the front office, a new pitching coach joining the coaching staff and a significant number of player transactions expected before Opening Day.

While the fate of the team's pitching staff largely relies on the arms of Chris Sale, David Price and Nathan Eovaldi, the next pitching coach will be tasked with righting a ship that went off course within a year of a World Series title. Doing that will require significant collaboration with the team's analytical department and Cora, whose understanding of the pitching side of the game has grown exponentially after being exposed to it for the first time over the last two seasons.

How exactly the Sox plan to reshape their pitching infrastructure remains up in the air and the decision may ultimately be made by the incoming head of baseball operations. It's unclear if Boston will hire a new pitching coach before making the front-office hire and if they'll bring along an assistant to fill the void left by Bannister's reassignment.

If one thing is certain, it's that the Red Sox are keeping an open mind when it comes to their next pitching coach. Outside-the-box options -- like someone from the college ranks or somewhere else outside of professional baseball -- will surely be considered. For more traditional candidates, the Red Sox will likely look at internal options like bullpen coach Craig Bjornson, pitching coordinator Dave Bush and Pawtucket pitching coach Kevin Walker. External fits include Astros pitching coach Brent Strom, ex-Mets manager Mickey Callaway, ex-Angels pitching coach Doug White, Mets bullpen coach Ricky Bones and Giants bullpen coach Matt Herges.

The Red Sox aren't certain to hire an analytically minded pitching coach and instead are looking for someone who will fully buy into forming an organizational identity. That makes it exceedingly likely that someone with connections to Cora or the front office will take over for LeVangie.

Since John Farrell left his post to become the Blue Jays' manager in 2011, the Sox have cycled through six pitching coaches with little luck. The next one will have to be a perfect fit in the eyes of those trying to ignite the unification of a system that clearly wasn't operating as effectively as possible.

## **Boston Red Sox coaching changes: Dana LeVangie out as pitching coach, Brian Bannister reassigned in staff shakeup**

Chris Cotillo

Red Sox pitching coach Dana LeVangie will not return to his role in 2020 and has accepted a role as a pro scout with the team according to a release sent Tuesday.

Boston also announced three additional coaching decisions:

Brian Bannister will no longer serve as Assistant Pitching Coach, but will continue as Vice President, Pitching Development, focusing on pitcher development programs, primarily in the minor leagues.

Andy Barkett will not return as Assistant Hitting Coach (as previously reported).

Steve Langone (Manager, Advance Scouting) will not return to his role and has accepted a position as a pro scout.

The biggest shakeup comes in the pitching department, where both LeVangie and Bannister will not return to the staff. Boston's pitchers ranked 19th in baseball with a 4.70 ERA and its starters ranked 20th with a 4.95 mark.

LeVangie has spent 29 seasons with the Sox, working as an advance scout, pro scout, bullpen catcher and bullpen coach before being promoted to pitching coach when manager Alex Cora was hired after the 2017 season. Bannister has been with the team since Jan. 2015 but served his hybrid role as a member of both the coaching staff and front office since Nov. 2016.

Both LeVangie and Bannister will now take on less public-facing roles, with LeVangie returning to scouting and Bannister continuing in the front office with a focus on the minor leagues. The Red Sox likely face three hires in the upcoming weeks, needing to find a pitching coach, assistant pitching coach and assistant hitting coach.

Bench coach Ron Roenicke, hitting coach Tim Hyers, first base coach Tom Goodwin, third base coach Carlos Febles, bullpen coach Craig Bjornson and major league coach Ramon Vazquez will all likely return.

## **Boston Red Sox to increase ticket prices by an average of 1.7% in 2020**

Christopher Smith

The Boston Red Sox announced Tuesday that they will increase ticket prices by an average of 1.7% in 2020.

It's an interesting decision after the team failed to make the 2019 postseason and ownership has expressed a desire to keep the payroll under the \$208 million Competitive Balance Tax threshold in 2020. Principal owner John Henry and team president Sam Kennedy have said cutting payroll to under \$208 million is only a goal, not a mandate.

The Red Sox will avoid a tax penalty and receive more of a revenue sharing refund if they are able to stay below the CBT in 2020.

The club has increased ticket prices eight times since 2010. Boston didn't increase prices in 2009, 2012, 2013 and 2015. The largest increase during the past 10 years came after the 2013 World Series. The Sox increased prices by an average of 4.8% in 2014.

Ticket prices increased an average of 2.5% both in 2018 and 2019 and 2.9% in 2017.

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

### **LeVangie out as Red Sox pitching coach**

Ian Browne

Dana LeVangie's two-year run as Red Sox pitching coach has come to an end, but one of the longest-tenured members of the organization will stick around as a pro scout.

In addition, the club announced that Brian Bannister will no longer serve as assistant pitching coach, but will continue on as vice president of pitching development. Bannister's focus will mainly be in the Minor Leagues going forward.

Steve Langone will move from manager of advance scouting to a pro scout.

Last week, assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett was told he wouldn't be coming back.

This leaves manager Alex Cora with several spots to fill on his coaching staff in the coming days or weeks. In this offseason of transition, the Red Sox are also seeking a replacement for president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski.

The news of LeVangie's re-assignment comes on the heels of the Red Sox finishing 19th in the Majors with a 4.70 ERA this season. In particular, the starting rotation, billed as the anchor of the team coming into the year, had a disappointing 4.95 ERA.

The 49-year-old LeVangie has been in professional baseball for the last 29 seasons dating back to his time as a Minor League player, all with the Red Sox.

Once his playing career was over, he became the team's bullpen catcher from 1997-04. He became a pro scout from 2005-12.

In '13, LeVangie put the uniform back on as John Farrell named him bullpen coach and catching instructor. He stayed in that role for Farrell's five seasons, and even moved to interim bench coach in '15, after Farrell had been diagnosed with cancer.

When Cora took over for Farrell, he appointed LeVangie as pitching coach, a move that many in the organization supported, including Pedro Martinez, Jason Varitek and several of the team's veteran pitchers.

LeVangie was in charge of a staff in 2018 that was third in the American League with a 3.75 ERA.

But from the very start of '19, when Chris Sale was rocked on Opening Day, the Red Sox had a tough season as a pitching staff.

## **\* *WEEI.com***

### **The specific change the Red Sox are looking for from their pitchers**

Rob Bradford

It's always a dangerous proposition to start heaping blame on the coaches for the players' failures. But this is also part of the deal when it comes to trying to fix what ails an underachieving team.

Players have big contracts that can't be moved while coaches are easily moved on from. This was a lesson we were reminded of Tuesday when the Red Sox reassigned Dana LeVangie.

The success that LeVangie had during the 2018 season might have led to some surprise when it came to the transaction, but knowing the dynamic that exists from year to year -- as was evident in Milwaukee after its successful 2018 campaign, when the Brewers moved on from three coaches -- it couldn't have been that much of a shock.

But for better or worse there is more to the coaching staff alterations than just keeping up appearances. Organizations these days are desperately trying to stay ahead of the ever-changing curve in baseball with the latest move serving as another example of that. More than ever folks in the game believe different times call for different approaches, even if we're talking about a span of 365 days.

Suddenly the skill-set of Triple-A pitching coach Kevin Walker or Pitching Development Analyst Dave Bush might be prioritized over what LeVangie brought to the table.

The macro view of the change in approach is a more cohesive implementation of analytics, as was detailed by Alex Speier in his excellent piece Tuesday. But according to sources, there is undeniably one part of the Red Sox pitchers' philosophy that the organization believes needs to be adjusted: It's time to start reintroducing more pitches into the heart of the plate.

Start attacking the strike zone and then expand to the edges instead of beginning on the edges and venturing out even more from there.

The impetus for the previous approach was clear. The Red Sox identified the new mindset of hitters, not wanting to play into this new ultra-aggressive mentality.

"There's no 2-0 fastball I'm trying to get over. Even an 0-0 fastball. Even a 3-0 fastball. You'll be asking for a new ball," said Red Sox reliever Matt Barnes when appearing on the Bradfo Sho podcast. "We're trying to make things look like a strike and not be a strike which is incredibly hard to do.

"There's no such thing as a get-me-over-breaking ball. There's no such thing as a get-ahead fastball. Everything you throw has to be almost 100 percent or it has to be a kill pitch. You can't risk throwing something not lazy in the zone but a quality pitch in the zone."

Asked if the change was dramatically different than the year before Barnes' answer was quick and succinct. "Yes," he responded.

But the thought now is that perhaps the Red Sox' pitchers went too much to the extremes.

Thanks to BaseballSavant.com, we can get an idea of what we're talking about, both the good and bad:

- The Red Sox totaled the second-most strikeouts, but also the second-most walks. (Conversely, the Astros had the most strikeouts but the second-fewest walks. That is obviously what the Sox are aspiring to.)
- The Red Sox were 25th in the majors in terms of the percentage of pitches placed in the heart of the strike zone on the first pitch.
- The Red Sox threw the most balls in baseball.
- The Red Sox finished with the most called strikes.
- The Red Sox induced the third-most swings and misses and the most foul balls.
- The Red Sox had the sixth-highest batting average against when pitching in the heart of the strike zone.
- The Red Sox totaled the second-most batters faced. (Houston and the Dodgers squared off with the least.)

The moral of the story is that the Red Sox' pitchers were trying to do what others very successful teams were attempting but it wasn't translating the same way. That led to a lot of free passes and a perceived lack of trust of stuff when it came to jumping into a pitcher's count. The Red Sox' new message: It's time to trust in your stuff.

There will be other desired changes -- with better health being at the top of the list -- but this sort of change in approach is clearly very much a priority.

### **Red Sox announce Dana LeVangie out as pitching coach**

Rob Bradford

The assumption was that somebody had to pay the price for the Red Sox' underachieving in 2019. Tuesday we found out who those coaches were.

The Red Sox announced that pitching coach Dana LeVangie would not be returning to the position, having been reassigned to the professional scouting department. Also moved to pro scouting will be the team's manager of advance scouting Steve Langone.

Other moves include assistant pitching coach Brian Bannister leaving that spot but continuing as the Vice President of Pitching Development, focusing on pitcher development programs, primarily in the minor leagues.

The team also officially announced they were moving on from assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett.

LeVangie is the most notable of the transactions after having been universally praised in his first year as a pitching coach during the Red Sox' World Series run in 2018. That came after being retained from John Farrell's staff, which had seen the Massachusetts native serve as the Red Sox' bullpen coach.

This year, however, much of the blame for the Red Sox' troubles fell on a group of starting pitchers that went 50-50 with a 4.95 ERA while eating up a significant chunk of the club's payroll.

LeVangie has been in the Red Sox organization since being drafted as a catcher in 1991. He began his path toward a coaching career while serving as a bullpen catcher starting in the 1997 season.

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

### **Why the Red Sox were right to replace pitching coach Dana LeVangie**

John Tomase

Name a veteran Red Sox pitcher who exceeded expectations this season, and you'll understand why the team revamped its coaching structure on Tuesday.

The list is short: Eduardo Rodriguez and Brandon Workman. If you want to include rookies Marcus Walden and Josh Taylor, that's fine, but technically they arrived with zero expectations.

The heavy hitters flamed out. Former Cy Young Award winner Rick Porcello posted one of the worst ERAs in baseball while trying to force the team's fastball-up, offspeed-down mantra that never really fit his repertoire. Ace Chris Sale delivered the worst record (6-11) and ERA (4.40) of his career. Nathan Eovaldi got hurt. David Price got hurt. Ryan Brasier crashed and burned. Matt Barnes flamed out. On a smaller scale, Hector Velazquez and Brian Johnson regressed.

Following such a disappointing performance, change was inevitable, and on Tuesday it came swiftly. Pitching coach Dana LeVangie is out, retained as a pro scout as he closes in on 30 years with the

organization. Assistant pitching coach Brian Bannister has also been reassigned, primarily to the minor leagues, as a VP of pitching development. Advance scout Steve Langone will join LeVangie in pro scouting.

It's tempting to say that injuries to Sale, Price, and Eovaldi cost these men their jobs, and there's some truth to that, but the Red Sox struggled as a staff all year in ways that suggested they were falling behind the times.

Their anti-launch angle approach failed to take into account rivals like the Astros and Yankees, who began to adjust offensively with more level swings that still allowed them to produce record home run totals, especially against fastballs up in the zone — 288 for Houston, 306 for New York — without sacrificing the ability to put the ball in play. The Astros struck out less than any team in baseball, and the Yankees led the AL in line drives.

Red Sox pitchers took a chase approach that became predictable, particularly in the bullpen, where it felt like every reliever threw either fastballs above the letters or curveballs in the dirt. The Red Sox walked more batters (605) than every team except the Marlins, and not even a franchise-record 1,633 strikeouts (10.0/9 IP) could compensate.

Their attempts to simplify the game plan only seemed to make things more complicated. In an act of paranoia straight out of a '70s thriller, they chose to combat sign stealing with something requiring the constant consultation of nuclear codes. Watching Red Sox pitchers step off the mound, scrutinize index cards tucked into their hats, and then give it up anyway became one of the most frustrating sights of an extremely frustrating season.

All of that said, LeVangie would probably still have a job if he had been able to unlock Sale. The team insisted all season that the left-hander's problems were mechanical, even though he ended up shutting it down with elbow issues in August. While his average velocity has dropped considerably from its Red Sox peak of 98 mph in June and July of 2018, the southpaw was still hitting 98 mph this August.

So why were his results so mediocre despite strong peripherals (35.6 K percentage, 3.39 FIP)? He lacked fastball command early in the season, especially up in the zone to right-handers, and his slider periodically lacked bite, too. His slugging percentage allowed on fastballs jumped over 100 points, to .447. His foul ball percentage on sliders — typically a put-away pitch — jumped from 13 percent to 19 percent.

Those are the kinds of results that, fair or not, LeVangie is judged upon, and they were consistently lacking in 2019. The job won't be any easier for his replacement, whose primary task will be keeping the rotation's Big Three healthy and effective. That might be a losing battle.

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

### **Dana LeVangie out as Red Sox pitching coach; other changes to staff announced**

Sean McAdam

Following a season in which their starting rotation failed them badly and contributed to a 24-game drop in their win total, the Red Sox Tuesday announced that Dana LeVangie, who had served as the team's pitching coach in each of the last two seasons, would not return to the role in 2020.

LeVangie will, instead, continue to work for the team as a pro scout.

The Sox announced additional changes to their staff as well, with Brian Bannister ending his time as assistant pitching coach but continuing to serve as Vice President, Pitching Development focused on pitching development programs primarily in the minor leagues.

Meanwhile, Steve Langone, who had served as the manager of advance scouting, will return to a scouting role.

The Sox also confirmed that assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett will not return, a development widely reported last week.

### BSJ Analysis

Even after the Sox finished 19th overall in staff ERA (4.70), the removal of LeVangie qualifies as something of a mild surprise.

In the final week of the season, both members of the Baseball Operations staff and manager Alex Cora seemed to dodge questions about the makeup of the coaching staff going forward, saying that evaluations were ongoing.

That serve as a hint that a shakeup was coming, and it seemed apparent, in the wake of Barkett's dismissal and the team's continuing refusal to say that the rest of the staff would return for another season, that additional changes were in store.

LeVangie was praised for his work with the staff when the Sox won the 2018 World Series and remained highly popular with the pitching staff. His promotion from bullpen coach to pitching coach after the 2017 season was heartily endorsed by the team's veteran pitchers, led by starters Chris Sale, David Price and Rick Porcello.

In the 2018 postseason, the Sox deftly used most of their starting pitchers as "rovers" in the postseason, helping to fill in gaps in the team's suspect bullpen.

But the 2019 season got off to wretched start, in part because the team's collection of starting pitchers was given a light spring training workload in recognition of the toll of the wear-and-tear incurred in the previous October. That strategy backfired in a big way when the Sox stumbled to a 2-8 start as the team's starters flopped in the first few weeks while still trying to build up arm strength.

LeVangie was not alone in his support of the spring program; manager Alex Cora fully endorsed it too and continued to do so throughout the season, even as it became obvious that it had backfired.

But the team's pitching woes weren't limited to the first few weeks. Sale experienced his worst season and was shut down in August with an elbow injury; Price began well in the first half, but made several trips to the IL — once for elbow/forearm issues and later, with a wrist cyst; and Porcello posted the highest ERA of his career.

The team's bullpen also under-performed, done in by the lack of a proven closer and a poorly constructed "bullpen-by-committee" approach in the first half.

LeVangie had been a Red Sox employee for better than 30 years — first as a minor league catcher and later as a bullpen catcher, scout, bullpen coach and pitching coach. In the uncertainty that followed former manager John Farrell's dismissal after the 2017 season, LeVangie had offers from a number of other organizations, but preferred to remain with the Sox — partly out of loyalty to the only organization he had known and for family reasons, with two children in high school at the time.

Cora, who had formed a relationship with LeVangie during his playing days, was impressed enough with LeVangie's baseball acumen that he originally proposed having LeVangie serve as his bench coach. That request was vetoed by former president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski, who insisted that Cora, who had managed before, choose a more experienced dugout assistant.

Bannister is steeped in both analytics and biomechanics of pitching, and in truth, his "re-assignment" actually began during the season. He was absent from the major league team for large chunks of the season,

instead focused at the minor league level, overseeing the development of the organization's pitching prospects.

The Sox have struggled to produce starting pitching from within and haven't developed a starter of any note for themselves since Clay Buchholz made his debut in 2008.

It's unknown in what direction the Sox might turn to replace LeVangie. One in-house possibility could be former catcher and captain Jason Varitek, who has seen his role with the team increase in recent seasons. In the past, Varitek, who has young children, had been reluctant to commit to the notion of being a full-time coach or manager, given the amount of travel and time away from home such a role would require.

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

**You might not remember Ed Romero's time with Red Sox. But it laid the foundation for son Eddie Romero to help lead the franchise**

Steve Buckley

It happened twice this past season at Fenway Park: The descendant of a former Red Sox player sat before a collection of microphones and television cameras and answered question after question after question about how things got to where they are and what his hopes are for the future.

One of those occasions turned out to be the feel-good moment of an otherwise lost season: San Francisco Giants outfielder Mike Yastrzemski, grandson of Red Sox legend Carl Yastrzemski, conducted a lengthy, all-hands-on-deck pre-game interview in the third-base dugout and later that night did the family proud by socking a home run.

Two weeks later, on the morning following the end of the season, a collection of Red Sox executives, including a veteran-but-still-very-much-wide-eyed employee named Eddie Romero, met with the media to discuss the now-upon-us offseason.

Eddie Romero has been a member of the front office since 2006, his current title being executive vice president and assistant general manager. But for the purposes of this story he is Eddie Romero, son of former Red Sox utility infielder Ed Romero, and it turns out that Eddie, like young Mike Yastrzemski, grew up to love baseball because it's in his veins.

And talk about learning while watching: Just as utility infielder Ed Romero knew what it was like to be signed, traded, released and even fined, here's young Eddie, who turns 41 next week, working in the department that does the signing, trading, releasing, and, yes, fining.

With the Sox seeking a head of baseball operations in the aftermath of the Dave Dombrowski exodus, Romero is a candidate for the job. But while the Sox have indicated they plan to look outside for someone with more experience, the smart money holds that Romero is going to be a general manager — if not in Boston, then somewhere else.

You might think that working in the front office of a major-league baseball team is cold, gutless, heartless. And, well, to some degree it is — just ask Eddie Romero what it was like on Aug. 5, 1989, after the late Lou Gorman, general manager of the Red Sox at the time, signed a piece of paper that resulted in his father being released. Little Eddie was nine years old.

"It seemed like the end of the world to me," said Eddie. "I had gone on road trips with the team. I made so many friends. I remember being in the clubhouse with my father after he had been released, and he asked me if I wanted to take the letters of his name off of his locker. They were these little magnetic letters. So I got up on a chair and took them off one at a time."

Upon returning to the family home in West Palm Beach after the season ended, little Eddie attached the magnetic letters — R-O-M-E-R-O — to the front of the refrigerator.

“Leaving Boston was tough for him,” said Ed Sr., now 61, retired, and living with his wife Ivonne in Wellington, Fla., where the two of them watch every Red Sox game as a means of keeping far-flung tabs on their son’s baseball ops career.

“He was a little young when I came up with the Brewers, but in Boston he’d run around the entire park and he knew everyone,” said Ed. “It was home to him.”

And yet there’s a goofy subplot to the circumstances leading up to Ed Romero being released by the Red Sox. It’s a subplot that was treated with a measure of seriousness as it was playing out, but then, over time, faded into history. If it’s talked about at all today, it’s with a wink and a shrug. It’s practically a banquet story.

On the late afternoon of Sunday, June 11, 1989, in the eighth inning of the second game of a doubleheader at Yankee Stadium, the Red Sox were trailing 7-2 when suddenly things got very interesting. The Sox started rattling the ball all over the park off Yankees relievers Lance McCullers and Dale Mohorcic, eventually tying the game when Ellis Burks scored on a wild pitch as catcher Rick Cerone was taking ball four.

Up came Ed Romero. Mohorcic threw three straight balls, and that’s when Yankees manager Dallas Green stormed out of the dugout and brought in reliever Scott Nielsen, who inherited a 3-0 count against Romero. It should be noted here that Mohorcic and Nielsen were both right-handers, and Romero was a right-handed hitter.

Red Sox manager Joe Morgan now sent up the lefty-hitting catcher Rich Gedman to pinch-hit for Romero on a 3-0 count. Morgan also chose that moment to have Kevin Romine pinch-run for Cerone at first base.

Romero, not pleased, returned to the dugout and tossed a Gatorade bucket onto the field.

Gedman walked. Jody Reed grounded out. The Yanks pushed across the go-ahead run the bottom of the eighth, and the Red Sox were held scoreless in the ninth. The Yankees swept the doubleheader.

Romero was fined for tossing the Gatorade bucket.

Looking back 30 years, Morgan, who turns 89 next month, said, “I don’t blame him for getting pissed off. It must have been one of those crazy moves I’d make once in a while. I think the fine was 50 bucks. He walked into my office and put the money on the table and that was the end of it. And we never talked about it again.

“What still jumps out at me was how surprised I was, the bucket going out like that. He was a very mild-mannered person. I see him once in a while at various things the Red Sox have and it still never comes up. All he talks about is his son. It’s Eddie this, Eddie that. He’s really proud of his son.”

Morgan called me back to make the point that, having decided to have Romine run for Cerone, he would need to insert Gedman as his catcher anyway. Why Morgan didn’t simply have Gedman pinch-hit from the beginning of the plate appearance helps explain why Romero was upset.

To look at the event through Ed Romero’s eyes, he was in his fourth season with the Red Sox but hadn’t been able to build on the success of his 1987 campaign, when he hit .272 in 235 at-bats. He also had a 15-game hitting streak that year while filling in for Marty Barrett at second base and Spike Owen at shortstop. He was also a member of the Sox’ 1986 pennant-winning team; though he hit just .210 that year he appeared in 100 games, including 54 starts at shortstop.

And now, on that late Sunday afternoon at Yankee Stadium, getting pinch-hit for on a 3-0 count led him to the Gatorade bucket.

“That’s in the past,” Romero said. “It was in the heat of the moment. At the time, it was just a reaction in the game. I think Joe understood where I was coming from and I understood, too. It was a tough situation but it’s like anything else. When you make an error or you strike out with the bases loaded, you gotta put it aside and keep moving forward.”

Eddie Romero wasn’t on that trip to Yankee Stadium.

“I know he was fired up about it,” the son said. “We talked about it a couple of times. He said he was frustrated. That’s a tough situation not to be ticked off about.”

Nobody’s reputation suffered because of the incident. Morgan, whose “Morgan Magic” had led the Sox to a division title in 1988, led them to another one in 1990. Lou Gorman remained general manager of the Red Sox for another four seasons and continued to be involved with the club in various capacities until his death at age 82 in 2011.

As for Ed Romero, he was picked up by the Braves after being released by the Red Sox and had five hits in his first 14 at-bats. He was then traded to the Brewers, and closed out his playing career in 1990 with the Tigers. He quickly transitioned to a long, successful career as a minor-league coach and manager, and in 2008 and ’09 he was back in the big leagues as a coach with the Houston Astros. Still in possession of a jones for baseball, he helps out as a volunteer assistant at Wellington High School.

And yet long, long before Ed Romero was working on the management side of baseball, he was honing his administration skills at home. Young Eddie was a senior catcher on the baseball team at The King’s Academy in West Palm Beach (the team is now coached by former Red Sox catcher Jarrod Saltalamacchia), and he was looking at the steps he should be taking that would lead to the big leagues.

“He came to me and we sat down and talked,” said Ed. “He was a very good defensive catcher and he was very smart behind the plate, calling the game. He knew the game and had a very good relationship with the pitchers. But I sat down with him and said, ‘This is a very tough business and it’s very difficult to make it to the big leagues, so you decide if you think you have what it takes to play in the big leagues. I could make some calls, whatever, and get you signed. I just don’t want you to get hurt in a couple of years.’”

In so many words, Ed Romero was telling his son he shouldn’t count on a career playing professional baseball, perhaps not even Division 1 college baseball. What young Eddie never forgot, beyond the weight of his father’s words, was the old man’s ability to deliver those words in a fashion that preserved his dignity.

“He obviously left it up to me,” said Eddie. “but he gave me a detailed scouting report on myself, and he was honest in his assessment. He told me he didn’t think I was going to be a big-leaguer, and that played into my ultimate decision to focus on school. And I’m incredibly thankful for that.

“It was obviously tough to hear at the time, because the one thing I wanted to do was play baseball, especially growing up the son of a big-leaguer and growing up around the game. It was the truth, and I needed to hear it from him.”

Eddie Romero believes he could have played Division III baseball somewhere and still been able to focus on his schoolwork. But something clicked into place during those conversations with his father: If he really wanted to work in baseball, as he so often professed, there were alternate ways to make that happen. What he did, then, was study sports management at the University of Florida and then attend law school, also at the University of Florida. After a stint as a prosecutor in Jacksonville, he joined the Red Sox in 2006.

“I grew up in baseball,” Eddie said. “And when my father went into coaching we lived in Memphis, El Paso, Spokane, all around the country. And you get a real education on the fly on the treatment of players and how to make that work.”

An education that would be reinforced when Eddie was graduating from high school.

“I think back to those days and the way he handled things when those decisions were being made, and how he handled individual players,” Eddie said. “It wasn’t that I was in those meetings, but I’d be with him before and after and I could see how tough that was.

“And that helps with the way I relate to players nowadays. You need to be direct, not mincing words, but do it with some compassion. You need to respect the work and sacrifice that player made.

“These are things I learned from my father.”

### **Times are changing and the Red Sox, as they shake up coaching staff, are adjusting to new demands**

Chad Jennings

Even as they overhaul key pieces of their baseball operation, the Red Sox seem focused on reimagining rather than rebuilding. They’ve fired their president of baseball operations, let go of a popular assistant hitting coach, and reassigned a trusted and loyal pitching coach – but within the deconstruction, there is continuity. It’s a familiar structure operating in a different way.

The latest changes came on Tuesday when the team announced pitching coach Dana LeVangie will move into a pro scouting role next season. No replacement was announced.

“I think it’s fair to say there is some staff restructuring and process-adjusting going on,” assistant general manager Eddie Romero said. “We all think incredibly highly of Dana, he’s very talented in various areas and will be impactful on the scouting end. We thought we could benefit from a new voice due to the constantly-evolving responsibilities of the pitching coach position.”

The fate of LeVangie was the most fascinating of the Red Sox coaching decisions given his longevity in the organization and his success as a pitching coach in 2018 season, his first in that role. LeVangie is respected if not beloved, but manager Alex Cora often acknowledged the team’s pitching staff let the Sox down this season.

After finishing third in the American League with a 3.75 team ERA in 2018, the Red Sox fell to 19th in the majors at 4.70 this year. A combination of poor health (Nathan Eovaldi, David Price), underwhelming performance (Chris Sale, Rick Porcello) and questionable personnel decisions (Tyler Thornburg, Andrew Cashner) led to a pitching staff that couldn’t make the most of a Red Sox lineup that scored the fourth-most runs in baseball. The team’s problems went beyond its pitchers, but no issue stood out more.

Hence, LeVangie being reassigned along with assistant pitching coach Brian Bannister, the analytic guru of the coaching staff. According to the Sox, Bannister will move into a role, “focused on pitcher development roles, primarily in the minor leagues.”

It’s notable that pitcher development in the minor leagues has long been part of Bannister’s job, and he was often away from the big league team to work with minor leaguers. Also, pro scouting is one of many roles LeVangie has previously held within the organization, and his familiarity with the existing staff makes it impossible to believe he won’t maintain some level of input and influence. Manager of advance scouting Steve Langone – a behind-the-scenes mainstay – was also moved into a pro-scouting role, keeping his experienced eye in the organization, but in a job that better fits his desire to get away from video screens and back into ballpark seats.

With each change, there is consistency within the upheaval. Even in the decision to part ways with assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett, the Red Sox kept hitting coach Tim Hyers, signaling no desire to drastically change the team's offensive approach. From the firing of president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski to the changes of Barkett and LeVangie on the coaching staff, the team has mentioned a desire to keep pace with an evolving baseball landscape rather than some sense of punishment for those who played a hand in this season's disappointment. These were once the right people at the right time, but the time has changed, and the Red Sox are structurally changing with it.

Without a replacement for Dombrowski, the team continues to make significant decisions under the guidance of long-time vice presidents Romero, Brian O'Halloran, Zack Scott and Raquel Ferreira, another nod toward consistency within the evolution. Among their first moves was to promote vice president of amateur scouting Mike Rikard into a role overseeing all scouting operations, another change within a framework of familiarity.

Few in the organization are more familiar than LeVangie, who has been with the Red Sox since he was drafted by the team in 1991. He's been a bullpen catcher, pro scout, advance scout, bullpen coach and pitching coach. When Cora was hired, the Red Sox pitchers heavily endorsed LeVangie as the new pitching coach.

"Dave and Alex and everybody called all the pitchers and (asked), 'What do you think about Dana?'" David Price said last season. "I was like, the only people who are going to be mad are all the bullpen guys, because he's not going to be down there in the bullpen anymore."

That guidance seemed to work in 2018, but the same could not be said for this season, when Cora and LeVangie faced questions about their pitchers' preparation from the very beginning when workloads were limited in spring training and performances were particularly bad in April.

"I go back to our plan, our plan was the right one" Cora said at the end of the season. "I've been saying all along, what those guys did (last) October was very unique, it was very special. We did what we thought they needed going into the season."

## **\* *The New York Post***

### **Mets' new manager could be plucked from Red Sox**

Mike Puma

Only 30 MLB managing jobs exist, making each of them precious, but a Hall of Fame manager sees plenty of reasons the Mets opening is attractive.

"The Mets have been struggling, but you look at what they have and they don't have and I have to start with the fan base," Tony La Russa told The Post on Tuesday. "They have a very loyal and passionate fan base, just like that year they went to the World Series [2015] with Terry Collins.

"You look at the other things they have, they have done a great job of developing pitchers and now you have got core young hitters, so I think it's a combination of the history, the support, and the winning hasn't been consistent there lately, but that is a great opportunity. You have some assets there. I think a lot of people would like to manage that club."

The Mets have started contacting candidates, according to an industry source, but it's unclear whether the first wave of interviews will occur face-to-face with GM Brodie Van Wagenen and his staff or through phone conversations.

Joe Girardi, Buck Showalter and Dusty Baker are marquee names available (with Joe Maddon expected to land with the Angels), but the Mets could also go the first-timer route, with Carlos Beltran, Luis Rojas, Joe

Espada or Joe McEwing, among others. Bob Geren, Mike Matheny and Clint Hurdle are experienced names available, albeit without the star-studded appeal.

There is much skepticism within the industry that Beltran would return to the Mets because of his tumultuous relationship with owners Fred and Jeff Wilpon during Beltran's tenure playing for the team, but the former All-Star outfielder recently attempted to minimize the past.

"You can't rule anything out in life," Beltran told MLB.com. "You can't live life thinking about the past. You have to live in the present."

Does that mean he would talk to the Mets about the job, if given the opportunity?

"You'd have to listen," Beltran said.

A key member of Van Wagenen's staff involved in the search includes Allard Baird, who spent a decade-plus working in Boston's front office before departing last offseason to become an assistant GM with the Mets. That connection could put at least two Red Sox coaches in play for the Mets managerial opening: Carlos Febles and Ron Roenicke.

Febles, the Red Sox third base coach, played for the Royals during Baird's tenure as Royals GM in the 1990s and 2000s. And Baird was instrumental in bringing Febles into the Red Sox organization in 2007. Febles served as a minor league manager in Boston's system for six seasons before becoming a major league coach.

Roenicke was Alex Cora's bench coach for last season's World Series winning team. Roenicke also managed the Brewers to the NLCS in 2011.

"I have really been impressed with [Febles'] knowledge, he does infield work and he's shown really good judgement coaching third — Fenway Park is one of the toughest places around," said La Russa, who has spent the last two seasons as a Red Sox special assistant. "But more importantly he's got a way of connecting with players. He's very good on relationships, which is one of the keys nowadays. You have got to get to know players and connect with them."

La Russa has needed no introduction to Roenicke, whom he managed against in the NL Central. Roenicke was previously a top lieutenant for Mike Scioscia with the Angels.

"Ron is one of the best baseball men in the game today," La Russa said. "You look at his résumé and now I have watched him firsthand for a couple of years. There is no man with experience out there that's better than Ron. He's right at the top of the list."