

## ***The Boston Red Sox Monday, November 4, 2019***

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

#### **Red Sox outfielder Mookie Betts catches Gold once again**

Julian McWilliams

Mookie Betts went gold for the fourth consecutive year on Sunday.

In taking home the fourth Gold Glove of his career, the Red Sox superstar beat out the Los Angeles Angels' Kole Calhoun and Houston Astros' Josh Reddick as the American League right-field honoree.

The Gold Glove Award honors the best defenders at each position in each league.

Betts led American League outfielders with 15 defensive runs saved.

His 12.6 Ultimate Zone Rating was second in the AL. Betts came up as a second baseman but has turned into the best right fielder in the majors based on his body of work and accolades. Since 2015, he's led all right fielders with 99 defensive runs saved. Commanding that position at Fenway isn't easy either as Betts is tasked with the responsibility of covering the vast ground behind him. Betts is entering his final season of arbitration eligibility and is projected to pull in more than \$25 million in 2020.

Betts joins Colorado third baseman Nolan Arenado and Arizona pitcher Zack Greinke as the only major leaguers to win a Gold Glove Award in each of the last four years. He is the fifth Red Sox player with at least four career awards, joining second baseman Dustin Pedroia (4) and outfielders Dwight Evans (8), Carl Yastrzemski (7), and Fred Lynn (4).

As ownership looks to cut payroll, team president Sam Kennedy said it would be tough to keep both J.D. Martinez and Betts, but the team understands each of their values.

Martinez has until midnight Monday to decide if he'll opt into his \$23.75 million deal for the 2020 season. Martinez, 32, has another opt-out at the end of next season. His contract calls for him to receive \$19.375 million in both 2021 and 2022. New chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom said he looks forward to having discussions with both Betts and Martinez

"Obviously I come in with some information, having competed against this team for a long time," Bloom said. "There's a lot I don't know. I'm eager to get together with our group. I would say generally that our top priority is going to be sustainability and competitiveness over the long-term."

Boston's other AL Gold Glove finalists (center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr., left fielder Andrew Benintendi, and catcher Christian Vazquez) lost out to their competition.

Tampa Bay center fielder Kevin Kiermaier, Kansas City left fielder Alex Gordon, and Cleveland catcher Roberto Perez took home those honors.

Gordon, who won his seventh Gold Glove Award, is now a free agent after the Royals declined their half of a \$23 million mutual option for 2020, allowing the 35-year-old outfielder to become a free agent. Gordon had exercised his part of the option but was allowed to go free Saturday. He will receive a \$4 million buyout, completing a \$72 million, four-year contract he agreed to in January 2016. Gordon, a three-time All-Star, batted .266 this year with 13 homers and 76 RBIs.

Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo, who became a three-time winner, had his \$16.5 million option for next season exercised by the team. Rizzo agreed in 2013 to a \$41 million, seven-year contract that included two club options.

Chicago's option for 2021 also is for \$16.5 million with a \$2 million buyout. If that is exercised, the deal would be worth \$72 million over nine seasons.

Rizzo hit .293 with 27 homers and 94 RBIs this year, ending a streak of four 100-RBI seasons. He finished among the top four in NL MVP voting in 2015 and 2016.

Other AL winners were Mariners pitcher Mike Leake, Athletics first baseman Matt Olson, White Sox second baseman Yolmer Sanchez, Athletics third baseman Matt Chapman, and Indians shortstop Francisco Lindor.

Other National League honorees were Phillies catcher J.T. Realmuto, Cardinals second baseman Kolten Wong, Diamondbacks shortstop Nick Ahmed, Diamondbacks left fielder David Peralta, Brewers center fielder Lorenzo Cain, and Dodgers right fielder Cody Bellinger.

### **A closer look at Red Sox chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom**

Alex Speier

Words such as “challenging” and “daunting” almost invariably accompany the description of Chaim Bloom’s first opportunity to lead a baseball operations department. The new chief baseball officer of the Red Sox faces several potentially unsavory responsibilities, possibly including hacking roughly 20 percent from the team’s payroll — a task that could force the team to contemplate trading franchise icon Mookie Betts.

Bloom confronts a tightrope in his new position, yet he describes the task not as imposing but instead energizing. In doing so, he speaks from experience. As much as the Red Sox face roadblocks in their attempt to regain their footing after a 2019 fall from championship grace, they hardly compare to those that the 36-year-old confronted 14 years ago in a position of little distinction yet enormous possibility.

In December 2004, Bloom — who was nearing the end of an internship with the Padres — met at the winter meetings for an interview with the assistant to baseball development for the Devil Rays. The Devil Rays, in their seventh year, had just completed their least awful season, a 70-91 campaign that finally elevated them from last in the American League East to fourth place.

But for Bloom, the record was less meaningful than the opportunity. The Rays represented the opening of a door. He just didn’t realize during his interview with Andrew Friedman how wide or how quickly the portal was about to open.

“I was looking to work with any major league club that would ask me,” said Bloom. “I don’t think I realized the full extent of [what an internship with the Rays would entail] at the time, but it became clear very quickly that this was an organization that was starting to undergo some major transition, and because of that, there were going to be a lot of opportunities.”

Bloom’s entry-level position was not going to be defined narrowly. He was joining an organization with the smallest front office in the game, one about to endure a dramatic restructuring that Bloom didn’t merely get to witness but that he helped shape.

“I think it was probably the most advanced internship that anyone has had in this game,” said Friedman, who emerged after the 2005 season as the Rays’ executive vice president of baseball operations and is now the Dodgers’ president of baseball operations.

Friedman had read Bloom's articles on Baseball Prospectus, and in the interview, recognized the Yale alum as someone with "a hunger to make this his vocation." The curiosity and intelligence exhibited by Bloom represented what Friedman viewed as an ideal addition to an organization on the threshold of major change.

The 2005 season was to be the last under Vincent Naimoli as the managing general partner of the ownership group. A transition to Stu Sternberg as the principal owner was slated to occur after that season, with Friedman preparing for a role not just as a leader in baseball operations but in reshaping the department completely.

And so, when Friedman tabbed Bloom as an intern for the 2005 season, it wasn't for a copies-and-coffee role. Instead, when Bloom arrived in Tampa Bay in February, Friedman engaged him in discussions about how to redesign a baseball operations department from the ground up — a role that continued with Bloom's hiring to the full-time role of baseball operations assistant in October.

"He and I were meeting off site and talking through the vision for the department," said Friedman. "He was in on the ground floor of that. We subsequently hired a lot of other people who were instrumental in helping us achieve the success that we did, but Chaim was Employee 1 on that."

Given the particulars of Tampa Bay's organization, the position came with almost unrivaled access to the inner workings of a baseball organization for someone of Bloom's age (21 at the start of his internship, 22 when he started full time) and relative inexperience. The front office was, in the words of Gerry Hunsicker (who became Rays senior VP of baseball operations in November 2005), "bare bones."

The Rays had neither an international scouting nor pro scouting department. They had limited staff running other departments, from player development to amateur scouting and even major league operations. Most of Bloom's work came in player development and the farm system, but a willing, intelligent listener and eager volunteer for work had a chance to experience more in the first few months of his tenure than many young executives gain in years.

"From Day One, I was able to dip into just about all aspects of baseball operations because we did not have a lot of people and there was a lot of work to be done," said Bloom. "I always felt like I had a voice and my opinion was valued, that I had a chance to contribute. At the same time, I recognized that there was stuff I didn't know and I had a ton to learn."

That view endeared Bloom to virtually everyone in the front office — particularly Mitch Lukevics, the farm director. Lukevics had a long history in the game as a player (he was teammates with Tony La Russa in the White Sox farm system in 1975 and was eventually released by Dave Dombrowski in 1980) and in player development. He was director of minor league operations for the Yankees in the early 1990s, as New York built the powerhouse that fueled their dynasty of the late '90s.

In Bloom, Lukevics found an eager student whom he wanted to help in any way possible, and one with a disarming demeanor and baseball intelligence that rendered irrelevant any skepticism that might be directed towards a Yale grad with a degree in Classics. In Lukevics, Bloom found a mentor.

Related: Is Chaim Bloom the next Theo Epstein?

"A lot of who I am as a baseball person, I think I owe to him — not only baseball philosophy but the values," said Bloom. "I was fortunate to end up working closely with him."

Lukevics describes Bloom as a "surrogate son" — one who quickly came of age while working in the Rays organization. Lukevics was impressed by Bloom's innate ability to communicate with equal ease with in-uniform baseball lifers and those who came from a more quantitative perspective.

He communicated with all sides of the organization and sought differing perspectives, helping to blend the best of traditional methods with innovation. In so doing, even early in his Rays career, Bloom became a critical voice — a "ringleader of collaboration," in the words of Lukevics — in a culture that demanded

creativity and novel methods to overcome resource disadvantages in the AL East and emerge as a regular contender starting in 2008.

“We created a think-tank mentality. In some ways, we were all leaning on each other and trying to learn from each other to come up with the best possible solutions,” said Hunsicker. “It was obvious that he was a bright young man with a very creative mind and fit very well into the Rays culture of thinking outside the box.”

Even as the front office staff grew, and even as the team transitioned from doormat to contender, the spirit of innovation and collaboration remained central tenets of how the Rays operated. Bloom was both a reflection and agent of that culture.

He was the person entrusted with contributing to and then distilling the conversations between Friedman, Lukevics, Hunsicker, former manager Joe Maddon, and others about the organization’s player development principles and then translating them into written form for the “Rays Way,” the team’s player development manual. That was merely one instance among many of how Bloom, by his mid-20s, had helped define how the Rays operated.

“His fingerprints were all over what we ultimately set up and how we grew and evolved,” said Friedman.

Friedman made sure to expose Bloom as well as Erik Neander, now the Rays’ GM, to every aspect of the game — including involvement in advance scouting reports that distilled data and analytics for game-planning purposes to ensure a precise feel for the game at field level. By the time Friedman left to run the Dodgers after the 2014 season, Bloom, at age 31, had already done nearly everything possible inside of an organization.

“I joked with both him and Erik about my leaving, how it was almost necessary for them to continue to be able to grow and develop, and that both were vital in the success that the Rays had, and both were going to go on and be really successful GMs,” said Friedman. “It was just a matter of when, not if.”

Now, the “when” has arrived. After interviews in recent years to head the baseball operations departments of the Phillies, Twins, Mets, and Giants, Bloom has his shot with the Red Sox.

Those who saw his growth with the Rays believe that he’ll galvanize the same sort of collaborative and creative culture that put Tampa Bay on the cutting edge. Though he has never had the title of the head of a baseball operations department, his résumé with the Rays is such that the Sox didn’t need to interview anyone else once they talked to Bloom.

“Obviously I’m biased, but I think he was the most talented executive in the game without that title,” said Friedman.

A future as a GM has been evident since Bloom’s earliest days as an intern, when he emerged as a difference-maker long before most have a voice in an organization. The experience of participating in the transformation of a franchise informs how Bloom views the sense of possibility with his current opportunity.

“That early mind-set of being really curious, being willing to take a fresh look at what’s being done, I think that became part of my DNA. I think the training from Day One, being able to contemplate a wide variety of areas throughout baseball ops rather than focused on one thing is really helpful for a job like this,” said Bloom. “We ended up working together [in Tampa Bay], being able to do some things that when we started we probably couldn’t have imagined. That’s pretty inspiring in any situation. We have a chance to do something [with the Red Sox] we can’t even contemplate right now.”

With Bloom at the helm, those who know him best likewise see a sense of possibility for the organization.

“I said, ‘Dammit, anywhere else but the freaking Red Sox!’ But I love him like a son,” chuckled Lukevics. “I was with the Yankees with [Derek] Jeter. You knew he was going to be a good player, but you didn’t know he’d go on to become a Hall of Fame player. With Chaim, same thing . . . You knew he was going to be good [as an intern], but you didn’t know how good. This is no surprise. This is not like, ‘Oh my God, I can’t believe it.’ It’s no surprise.

“If anyone can handle it, it’s Chaim. He’s ready.”

### **Nationals rode their rotation to World Series title**

Peter Abraham

The Washington Nationals were a team with a high payroll built around a particularly expensive rotation. They played in a hotly competitive division and got off to a slow start amid high expectations.

Does that sound familiar, Red Sox fans?

The Nationals were 19-31 after 50 games and 10 games out of first place in the National League East. The Red Sox were 27-24 and six games out at the same juncture.

But as manager Alex Cora often said, the Sox never got on a sustained run. The Nationals were 69-36 starting June 1. Only the Astros had as many wins during that stretch.

“These guys, we stuck together. They believed in each other. I believed in them,” manager Dave Martinez said after the Nationals won the World Series by beating the Astros in seven games. “This year, I can honestly say nothing would have surprised me. I mean, from where we started, getting booed, you name it. We’ve been through a lot.”

Martinez could have been a day or two away from being fired in May. But general manager Mike Rizzo stuck to the idea that he built a good team that would find its way.

“Pretty much everybody eliminated us from the season in May,” catcher Kurt Suzuki said. “Basically you’ve just got to go out and play. You can’t worry about what’s at stake and this and that. You try to play it as much as possible as another baseball game.”

The Red Sox rotation broke down outside of Eduardo Rodriguez, but the Nationals got what they expected from Patrick Corbin, Anibal Sanchez, Max Scherzer, and Stephen Strasburg.

Martinez then followed the lead of Cora and the 2018 Red Sox by relying heavily on his starters in the postseason.

Corbin, Sanchez, Scherzer, and Strasburg accounted for 107⅔ innings, 70.4 percent of what Washington needed in the postseason. They made seven relief appearances.

The Red Sox used Nathan Eovaldi, Rick Porcello, David Price, Rodriguez, and Chris Sale for 99 innings in the 2018 postseason, 66 percent of the innings. They made 15 relief appearances.

“We sat them down before the wild-card game and told them we’d need them out of the bullpen. They all raised their hands,” Washington pitching coach Paul Menhart said. “They were all in from the start of this. They bought into what we wanted to do.”

The Red Sox had a huge lead in the division a year ago and were able to give their starters extra rest leading up to the postseason, a big advantage. They also played only 14 postseason games.

The Nationals were fighting for position through the end of the regular season and ended playing 17 postseason games.

Related: Old-school Nationals, at last, are first

We all saw how the extra month of work affected the Red Sox starters the following year. How the Nationals adjust next season will be worth following.

“I’ll worry about that when the time comes,” Menhart said. “We’ll sit down and talk about it.”

The Nationals also survived five elimination games and all the emotion that goes into that.

“It’s almost like we’ve done it so many times that we have to get punched in the face to kind of wake up,” Strasburg said. “I think it’s just the M.O. We don’t quit. We never quit throughout the season despite kind of everybody saying that we were done.”

It wasn’t the same, of course. But the Nationals winning it all felt a little like the 2004 Red Sox in that Washington had gone decades without a championship.

“You could feel the people get on our side all summer,” third baseman Anthony Rendon said. “I think that helped us.”

Some other World Series takeaways:

- It was great to see Nationals special assistant Bob Schaefer earn his first World Series ring after starting in pro ball as a player in 1966. Schaefer, 75, played at the University of Connecticut and was with the Red Sox from 1993-98 as director of player development. He is from Putnam, Conn., a little more than an hour from Fenway Park.

- The Nationals and Astros share a spring training complex, the Ballpark of the Palm Beaches in Florida. The first two games next season are Nationals at Astros on Feb. 22 and Astros at Nationals on Feb. 23. They are scheduled for six games in all.

- Astros manager A.J. Hinch stood tall in losing, representing the team well during the controversy about assistant general Brandon Taubman making crude remarks to several women reporters after Game 6 of the ALCS.

Hinch seems to actually enjoy the back and forth with reporters and talking about the game and his thinking in different situations.

He also defends his players while at the same time holding them accountable for their mistakes. That can be a fine line.

- The Nationals are scheduled to visit the White House on Monday. It’s a smart move to get that done quickly. The Red Sox spent six months being asked about who would go, whether they should go, etc.

I never got the sense it was a distraction or contributed to their slow start. But it was an unnecessary annoyance.

- That the Nationals won the Series after Bryce Harper left as a free agent and signed a 13-year, \$330 million deal with the Phillies should give hope to Red Sox fans that losing Mookie Betts to trade or free agency at some point in the next year won’t be the end of the world if it happens.

The Nationals were sixth in the majors in runs without Harper. Betts is a better all-around player than Harper to be certain, but good, well-managed teams can always find a way.

- Menhart became pitching coach of the Nationals in May after Derek Lilliquist was fired.

He played for Fitch High School in Groton, Conn., graduating in 1987 before going to play at Western Carolina and then for parts of three seasons in the majors.

I covered his last game in high school as a first-year reporter for the Norwich, Conn., Bulletin. We caught up in person for the first time since before Game 1 of the Series.

Baseball can be a really small world sometimes.

#### ASKING AN EXPERT

Former Yankee is high on Liu

The Red Sox made an under-the-radar move last month when they signed Taiwanese righthander Chih-Jung Liu for \$750,000. The 20-year-old drew the interest of several teams, the Diamondbacks and Phillies among them.

To gain some insight on Liu, I texted a few questions to former big leaguer Chien-Ming Wang. The sinkerballer won 55 games and had a 4.16 ERA for the Yankees from 2005-09 after signing out of Taiwan.

“He has velocity,” said Wang, who had worked a little with Liu. “But MLB hitters are used to dealing with that. He needs to improve his slider and splitter to have a good out pitch.”

Liu was initially on the roster for Taiwan’s team in the Premier12 tournament, an Olympic qualifier.

But he withdrew last week citing fatigue after helping Taiwan win the Asian Games.

“He’s bright,” Wang said. “He seems to be able to adapt to new environment quickly. The challenge may be the difference of the training and workload for a professional player and a student-athlete.”

Liu was overworked as a high school player in Taiwan and enrolled in college rather than playing professionally.

Coaches there used him as a shortstop and only recently did he return to pitching.

His fastball hit 98 miles per hour and the Sox moved quickly to sign him. They want to develop Liu as a starter. He’s likely a few years away from the majors.

“He needs to build up his arm strength and pitch count,” Wang said. “He wants to learn the sinker from me. He looked at me for a while and then he popped the question.”

A few other observations on the Red Sox:

- New chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom is the first head of baseball operations the Red Sox hired directly from another team since Dan Duquette left the Montreal Expos for Boston in 1994.

Duquette took over for Dave Dombrowski with the Expos and now Bloom takes over for Dombrowski with the Sox.

- The Red Sox activated Dustin Pedroia off the 60-day injured list on Thursday, which returns him to the 40-man roster.

There seems to be little chance Pedroia will play again following a series of surgeries on his left knee. But he is signed for two more seasons at \$13 million (2020) and \$12 million (2021).

At the moment, the Sox have 35 players on the 40-man roster. If it gets to the point of needing a spot on the roster, the Sox will have to consider releasing Pedroia and paying off his deal.

The Mets faced the same dilemma with David Wright in 2018 and released him on Jan. 7, 2019 with two years and \$27 million remaining on his deal.

Worth remembering: Wright and Pedroia have the same agents, Sam and Seth Levinson. They've handled this delicate situation before.

- World Series Most Valuable Player Stephen Strasburg was 2-0 in two appearances and allowed four earned runs over 14½ innings.

David Price was 2-0 in three appearances in the World Series last season and allowed three earned runs over 13⅔ innings. But Steve Pearce was named MVP.

Pearce had three homers and eight RBIs. Anthony Rendon had three doubles, two homers, and eight RBIs this season. Winning is what matters, not who was MVP. But Price should have been the MVP in '18. It was obvious a year ago and even more so now.

- Brian Butterfield, who was on the Sox coaching staff from 2013-17, followed Joe Maddon from the Cubs to the Angels and will coach third base. Next season will be Butterfield's 24th coaching in the majors and 42nd in professional baseball as a player, manager or coach.

- When Michael Brantley struck out to end the World Series on Wednesday, Tyler Kepner of the New York Times pointed out it was the first strikeout to end a World Series Game 7 since Marty Barrett went down swinging against Jesse Orosco in 1986.

- Former Sox reliever Takashi Saito was recently named pitching coach of the Yakult Swallows in Japan.

ETC.

A shift in this stat formula

Defensive Runs Saved is an easily understood statistic. It accounts for how many runs saved (or cost) a fielder is worth on a cumulative basis and is derived by employees of Baseball Information Systems who watch each play and break them down.

BIS will now incorporate pre-pitch infield shifts into its formula. Basically, a player won't lose points for being out of his position if he was purposely out of position.

Those hits will be attributed to the team.

DRS will now be based on positioning, range, throws, and balls in the air.

Extra bases

How's this for cold-blooded: An Astros staffer asked Gerrit Cole if he would speak to reporters after Game 7 of the World Series. "I'm not employed by the team," said Cole, who became a free agent when the season ended. Cole grudgingly agreed to the interview but first put on a cap with the logo his agent, Scott Boras, uses for his company. Cole prefaced his answer to the first question by saying, "I guess as a representative of myself . . ." That said, all 30 teams would take Cole in a second . . . A lengthy search process by the Mets resulted in Carlos Beltran being named manager, and it's a wise choice. Beltran is smart, commands respect among the players (and media), and is schooled in analytics after playing for the Astros in 2017 then joining the Yankees as an adviser. He's also familiar with the pitfalls of working for the Mets after playing for them from 2005-11. It's a bold call by general manager Brodie Van Wagenen, choosing another first-time manager after Mickey Callaway lasted only two seasons. If Beltran doesn't work out, the spotlight will be on Van Wagenen. The easy way out would have been to hire Joe Girardi, who went to the Phillies . . . The Rays are not planning to hire from outside the organization to replace Chaim Bloom. Two staffers promoted to vice president have Boston-area connections: Tufts graduate Peter Bendix and Boston native James Click . . . A very happy 68th birthday to the great Dwight Evans, who played 19 seasons for the Red Sox and won eight Gold Gloves along with hitting 379 home runs. From a statistical standpoint, Evans compares very favorably to Hall of Famers Tony Perez, Al Kaline, and Billy

Williams but has so far been shut out of Cooperstown. Dewey remains active with the Red Sox and seeing him around spring training wearing No. 24 is always a highlight. Happy birthday as well to former Sox relievers Paul Quantrill (1992-94) and Alex Wilson (2013-14). Quantrill is 51 and Wilson is 33.

Important offseason dates

Sunday: Rawlings Gold Gloves announced. Andrew Benintendi, Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr., and Christian Vazquez are finalists.

Monday: Deadline for J.D. Martinez to exercise his opt-out clause. Deadline for teams to make \$17.8 million qualifying offers to free agents. BBWAA awards finalists are announced. Hall of Fame Modern Baseball Era Committee Era ballot announced.

Wednesday: Major league free agents can start signing.

Thursday: Silver Sluggers are announced.

Nov. 11-12: GM meetings in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Nov. 11: BBWAA Rookies of the Year announced.

Nov. 12: BBWAA Managers of the Year announced.

Nov. 13: BBWAA Cy Young Awards announced.

Nov. 14: BBWAA Most Valuable Players announced. Deadline for free agents to accept qualifying offers.

Nov. 18: BBWAA Hall of Fame ballot announced.

Nov. 19: Edgar Martinez Outstanding DH award announced.

Nov. 19-21: Owners meetings in Arlington, Texas.

Nov. 20: 40-man rosters must be set.

Dec. 2: Last day to offer contracts to unsigned players on the 40-man roster.

Dec. 8: Hall of Fame Modern Baseball Era Committee vote announced in San Diego.

Dec. 9-12: Winter meetings in San Diego.

Dec. 10: J.G. Taylor Spink Award winner will be announced at the winter meetings. The late Nick Cafardo is one of the finalists.

Dec. 11: Ford Frick Award winner announced at the winter meetings.

Dec. 12: Rule 5 draft.

Jan. 10: Salary arbitration figures exchanged.

Jan. 21: BBWAA Hall of Fame voting announced.

Feb. 3-21: Salary arbitration hearings in Phoenix.

**Joe Castiglione once again nominated for Hall of Fame's Frick Award**

Peter Abraham

Three broadcasters with close ties to the Red Sox — Joe Castiglione, Ken Harrelson, and Ned Martin — are among the eight finalists for the Hall of Fame's Ford C. Frick Award.

The 2020 winner will be announced Dec. 11, after voting by a panel of former winners and historians, and honored on July 25 in Cooperstown during induction weekend.

Castiglione has spent 40 years calling major league games, the last 37 as the lead voice for Red Sox on radio. He punctuated the Sox winning the 2004 World Series, to end their 86-year drought, with "Can you believe it?"

Harrelson is best known for his 33 seasons calling White Sox games, but "Hawk" played for the Red Sox from 1967–69, finishing third in AL MVP voting in 1968. He started his broadcasting career in 1975, calling Red Sox games on Channel 38, heading to Chicago after the 1981 season. He retired in 2018.

Martin, who died in 2002, was one of Harrelson's first partners. He called Red Sox games on television and radio from 1961–92. He often punctuated notable plays by saying, "Mercy."

The other finalists are Jacques Doucet, who broadcast Montreal Expos games for the totality of their existence and still does the French call for the Blue Jays; Tom Hamilton, part of Cleveland's radio team since 1990; Pat Hughes, who's called Twins, Brewers, and Cubs games in a nearly 40-year career; Mike Shannon, a former St. Louis Cardinal who's called their games since 1972; and Dewayne Staats, an MLB announcer since 1977 and Tampa Bay's TV play-by-play man since the franchise's inception in 1998.

### **Will the Red Sox truly let Chaim Bloom do the job?**

Christopher L. Gasper

The Red Sox once tried closer by committee and found out the hard way that while that's sound in theory it isn't manageable in reality in this market. Let's hope the Sox aren't repeating that miscalculation by adopting baseball operations decision-maker by committee.

The Sox made an inspired hire importing 36-year-old Chaim Bloom from the resource-deficient but resourceful Tampa Bay Rays. The Rays made the playoffs this past season with Major League Baseball's lowest Opening Day payroll, while the Sox sat out the postseason with MLB's highest. The Sox ventured outside of their organization and circle of influence to tap into another organization's intellectual launch angle.

Bloom is the right man for the job at this juncture as the Sox seek a more cost-effective, sustainable model of contention than the one featured by Million Dollar Dave Dombrowski.

The biggest concern isn't Bloom's pedigree, age, or résumé. It's that Bloom, bestowed with the technocratic title of chief baseball officer, isn't being properly empowered like his predecessor as whatever you care to call the job customarily known as Red Sox GM. Is Bloom being empowered to put his stamp on the organization and implement his ideas and processes? Or does he sit as part of some sort of baseball politburo at Fenway Park with the quality quartet of holdovers in baseball ops that principal owner John Henry (you know what else he owns), chairman Tom Werner, and president and CEO Sam Kennedy professed their admiration for during Bloom's introductory news conference last Monday?

Turning that Gang of Four into a Party of Five is not a recipe for success or sustainability. The buck has to stop with Bloom. If he's going to be asked to own the decisions publicly then he should be making them. He has a challenging enough job trying to provide flexibility and depth to a roster that had too many overpriced, overaged, or underperforming players this past season without having his authority challenged.

The reality is that Bloom's arrival has the feel of an arranged marriage. The Sox married the Gang of Four that ran the team following Dombrowski's early September ouster — Brian O'Halloran, who has been

promoted to GM, assistant GM Eddie Romero, assistant GM/analytics guru Zack Scott, and senior vice president of major and minor league operations Raquel Ferreira — together with Bloom in a wedding of collaborative convenience. They figured they'll get to know whether they're meant to be together later.

“We have been very open that we hold existing baseball ops in very high regard, but we've also made it clear that Chaim is in charge,” said Kennedy. “Our hope and our goal is that the group will work very well together. But you never know until you get into things. Time will tell. We'll only know as we get into the day to day.”

Henry said last Monday the team was enamored with the job the foursome did and wanted to find someone “who supplements them or can lead.” Supplementing and supervising aren't the same job.

If the Gang of Four wants to go in one direction and Bloom wants to go in another, his voice and his vote should outweigh theirs. Otherwise, why is he here?

Collaborative sounds good on paper. Bloom was part of a collaborative approach with the Rays where he shared responsibility and authority with Erik Neander, Tampa Bay's senior vice president of baseball operations. It's part of what the Sox found attractive about the Yale alumnus. In an ideal world, the Sox end up with the best practices from their shop and that of a ceaselessly creative competitor.

But with too many voices “collaborative” can devolve into an unclear power structure or worse a power struggle.

Kennedy pledged that won't be the case.

“We have that clear structure and reporting lines where Chaim is in charge of the department and will be making the final decisions,” Kennedy said.

Hopefully, everyone else in baseball ops sees it that way. This is too important and too complex an offseason for the Sox to be feeling out and figuring out how crucial decisions will be made while devising a path forward — and back below the luxury-tax threshold. There could be conflicts in a potential reset season.

Debate is healthy and helpful. But at the end of the day, it should be Chaim's way or the highway. The job right now isn't about institutional knowledge or World Series rings. It's about forging the future at Fenway and figuring out who is part of it.

It was hard to judge by the introductory news conference whether the current baseball operations holdovers would be working for Bloom or whether he would be working for them.

It's unusual that Bloom's ostensible subordinates were allowed to interview him for the job of their boss. Their feedback and impressions were welcomed by Kennedy and ownership after a series of one-on-one meetings between them and Bloom during the interview process. It was like the old “Sox Appeal” dating show for front office folk. (Romero and O'Halloran already knew Bloom.)

“It was a little unusual,” acknowledged Kennedy. “But we felt it was really important from a culture perspective to ensure there was a chance for this baseball ops personnel to meet in advance with Chaim because we value their opinion, and we knew each of them would be a huge part of the operation and the leadership structure moving forward. So, we wanted to engage them as a part of the process.”

It's apparent that the Sox wanted to get away from the more insular approach of Dombrowski and empower some of the talented folks they already employed in baseball operations. All roads led to Dombrowski during his tenure. Remember, the Sox' original plan in hiring Dombrowski was to retain then-GM Ben Cherington with Dombrowski above him as president of baseball operations. Cherington balked and walked.

The pendulum can't swing back too far in the other direction. There must be a chain of command and a commander in chief. Whatever new-age title Bloom has everyone should recognize he's The Baseball Ops Boss.

The Sox got the right guy. Now, they just have to let him do the job.

### **David Ortiz commands red carpet at Pedro Martinez gala**

Julian McWilliams

Manager Alex Cora said last season that David Ortiz is like a rock star. When the former Red Sox slugger walks in a room, he commands it.

Cora's illustration certainly fit Friday evening as Ortiz made his way through the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in downtown Boston. His peers already had conducted their media availability some 30 minutes prior. Ortiz, on the other hand, was fashionably late and had the red carpet to himself. Indeed, he commanded it.

Friday marked the fourth Pedro Martinez Foundation Gala that supports at-risk youth. Martinez, Ortiz, Jason Varitek, veteran outfielder Carlos Gomez, the Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero, the Indians' Corey Kluber, the Rays' Willy Adames were among current and former players in attendance. Despite Ortiz's tardiness, it was an event Ortiz and others vowed not to miss.

"Pedro has always been like my big brother," Ortiz said. "He loves giving back to the community and that's what we do."

"This event is for the kids," Adames said. "Obviously, you're never going to say no to an invitation from Pedro Martinez. He's still a role model for us. For kids in the Dominican Republic."

All proceeds from the event go to children the foundation supports in Latin America and the United States.

"I'm excited about making a difference," Martinez said. "I know because of what we do, we're actually offering opportunities that I never got."

Ortiz just finished covering the World Series for Fox, something his Red Sox squad missed in 2019, but he's confident the club can turn it around. He said they may need another pitcher or two. With trade rumors surrounding the team's superstar, Mookie Betts, Ortiz hopes he's still a part of the fold come next season.

"Hopefully he stays around," Ortiz said. "Mookie is part of the engine that we are always going to need. Hopefully, him and the front office and owners straighten things up and so we can have a longer run."

Red Sox ownership said at the end of the season they don't think they can afford to keep both Betts and J.D. Martinez, who has an opt-out in his contract that he'll have to make a decision on by Monday.

When asked what he thinks J.D. is going to do, Ortiz said he didn't know, but he did offer that the team needed him, too.

The man in charge of this is new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom. Adames had experience with Bloom with the Rays.

"He's a great person," Adames said. "He was a great guy to talk to over there. He's really smart and we're going to miss him. He's really important for us. He was always there for us, available for us in any moment we needed him. The Red Sox got a great one and I know he's going to do a tremendous job here, too."

Bloom preached having open communication with the entire staff. He brings more of an analytical-type approach than former president of baseball operations, Dave Dombrowski.

“It’s exciting,” said Varitek. “It brings an innovative way to skin the same cat. Things have been done certain ways. Chaim’s has been one. It’s about creating dynasties over time.”

The dynasty the Sox hope can be built around Betts, but Martinez — who knows a thing or two about being traded — said it’s business in the end.

“Sometimes getting rid of a player or adding a player, it can be the best for the business part of the team but for the player, it doesn’t work out,” Martinez said. “I was actually one of those examples where I didn’t feel like I didn’t need to leave Boston but it was better for Boston to get rid of me or Nomar at one point.

“For Mookie, a franchise player, or J.D. Martinez, players that are so significant, they are the difference-makers.”

The Washington Nationals are champions, now, and the Red Sox are on the clock to try to get back to their franchise standards.

“The team is not that bad,” Ortiz said. “We ran out of gas for a minute last year. Hopefully this year everybody stays healthy and things work out differently.”

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

### **Red Sox would benefit if J.D. Martinez opts out of his contract**

Jason Mastrodonato

Would Scott Boras risk taking J.D. Martinez into free agency again, this time two years older, his back limiting him defensively and the market for designated hitters shrinking?

We’re about to find out.

Monday, the Red Sox could receive their first gift of the fast-approaching holiday season if Martinez opts out of the remaining three years and \$62.5 million on his contract.

The benefits to the Red Sox of Martinez opting out would seem to out-weigh the rewards of him staying, especially at a time when the Sox are entering what appears to be, and probably should be, a bridge year in 2020.

The three high-paid starting pitchers are all coming off injuries. The bullpen needs reinforcements. There are holes at first base, second base and, if Martinez opts out, designated hitter.

Meanwhile, the Red Sox are trying to cut nearly \$30 million in payroll to get back under the luxury tax threshold of \$208 million, which would reset their snowballing penalties (financial and strategic) and get into position to enter 2021 with the same freedom that allowed the Yankees to be aggressive after resetting their tax structure heading into 2019.

Losing Martinez’ \$23.75 million (though there is a \$2.5 million buyout) would save them \$21.25 million against the threshold this year, and another \$19.375 million in 2021 and 2022.

Given they’d surely issue him a qualifying offer, which he’d obviously reject, they would also net draft pick compensation (as many as two picks, none occurring before the second round).

The Red Sox could thank Martinez for two outstanding years, pundits could slap former boss Dave Dombrowski (and current general manager Brian O’Halloran) on the back for a contract well-structured and everyone goes home happy.

But it's a tricky situation for the 32-year-old DH.

On the one hand, any chance to enter free agency after a strong season is usually a good thing. Martinez hit .304, cranked 36 homers and drove in 105 runs. His .939 OPS was tied with Xander Bogaerts for 13th among qualified major leaguers.

One would think he'd get a solid deal in free agency.

Except that the Red Sox were so concerned about his lingering back spasms that Martinez appeared in just 38 games in the outfield in 2019, down from 57 games in the outfield one year earlier.

Manager Alex Cora said he was trying to be careful with Martinez' playing time on defense.

"I don't want to push him out there and all of a sudden his back starts acting up and we lose him for a long period of time," Cora said mid-year when Martinez' back was acting up again.

Martinez missed 16 games in total this year but still collected 657 plate appearances. His durability isn't the biggest question.

The concern for prospective teams is that he hasn't been sharp on defense, nor does it make a lot of sense to test him there when his bat is what makes him so valuable.

So his market is immediately cut from 30 teams to 15.

Start combing through the depth charts of American League teams and it would appear only the Indians, Orioles, Mariners, Rangers, Rays, Royals and White Sox would have room for a full-time DH.

The Orioles, Rangers and Royals are rebuilding. The Rays don't spend big on DHs.

Would Martinez' market be limited to just the Mariners (who are kind of rebuilding, but could reasonably compete) and White Sox?

Other top-DHs aren't making Martinez-money anymore. Nelson Cruz had his \$14-million option with the Twins picked up. Edwin Encarnacion had his \$20-million option with Yankees declined.

And what Martinez does – .300 and 30 homers every year – isn't as rare as it once was.

At the heart of the steroid era in 1999 and 2000, there were 45 and 47 players who hit 30 home runs, respectively.

In 2019, there were 58 players with 30 homers.

There were 10 guys with 30 homers and a .300 average. Not since the steroid era has there been that many.

And while most hitters in the league saw their home run totals spike with the "juiced" baseballs, a term coined by Justin Verlander, Martinez saw his home runs drop from 43 to 36, his average drop from .330 to .304.

It's not that Martinez wouldn't make the Red Sox better. He obviously would. But to opt in to his \$23.75-million salary for 2019 undoubtedly makes things more difficult for a team with too many holes to fill and not enough money (or near-ready prospects) to fill them.

They'd need no fewer than a dozen scenarios to unfold perfectly for them to be a World Series team in 2020.

Martinez opting out of his contract on Monday isn't one of them. But it sure helps them get better in 2021 and 2022.

And as new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom indicated during his introductory press conference, the Red Sox are moving away from the win-now model and onto a new one.

The goal, he said, is "sustained, long-term success to compete for championships year in and year out."

### **Pedro Martinez, David Ortiz share thoughts on Mookie Betts' future with the Red Sox**

Jason Mastrodonato

Moving on without Mookie Betts is not the ideal scenario for the Red Sox, but at least three advisors in the front office understand that it's a possibility.

Speaking at the fourth annual Pedro Martinez Foundation Gala at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on Friday night, Martinez, David Ortiz and Jason Varitek were asked about what the future holds for Betts, a free agent after the 2020 season who could be traded this offseason. All three are currently listed as special assistants in the front office.

"It's just part of the cycle of baseball," said Martinez, who was raising money toward bettering the lives of children in the Dominican Republic and the United States. "There's a business part of it, an athletic part of it and a personal way of viewing you and a personal way of viewing an athlete. You have to respect every one of them.

"The business part of it you cannot mingle with the personal side of it. Sometimes what's convenient for a team trying to make money and save money and execute different ideas is not probably the way players think about what should happen for them."

After helping the Red Sox win a World Series in 2004, the Red Sox granted Martinez free agency before he signed with the New York Mets.

"I was actually one of those examples where I didn't feel like I didn't need to leave Boston, but it was better for Boston to get rid of me or Nomar at one point," he said. "For Mookie, a franchise player, or J.D. Martinez, players that are so significant, they are the difference-makers... I hope we can keep every player we have and add more, but unfortunately baseball has a dark side and the dark side is the business part of baseball."

Varitek, 47, hasn't played since 2011 but often travels with the Red Sox in a coaching role and works hands-on with the players at the field level.

"Mookie is technically here," Varitek said. "There's speculation about what happens to J.D. and everybody else. It's just like the trade deadline. They want to know what will happen, but they're not paid to make those moves and do those things. Right now they're starting to dive into their off-season programs and prepare for a championship run."

Asked if he was interested in the pitching coach vacancy recently filled by the hiring of Dave Bush, Varitek said he's still defining his role with the Red Sox and feels proud of his behind-the-scenes contributions.

Ortiz was the only one of the three to suggest the Red Sox lock up Betts to a long-term contract.

"Hopefully he'll stay around," Ortiz said. "Mookie is one of the engines that we're always going to need. Hopefully him and the front office, the owners, (come to a deal) so we can have him around longer."

Ortiz said he hopes Martinez re-negotiates his deal with the Red Sox and "retires here in this organization just like I did."

Martinez has until Monday to decide if he'll opt out of the remaining three years of his contract.

Also attending the foundation gala Friday night were current MLB players Carlos Gomez, Willy Adames, Vladimir Guerrero Jr., Jose Reyes and Corey Kluber.

"I want to help the kids too," said Adames. "You're never going to say no to an invitation from Pedro Martinez. He's still one of the role models for us, the kids in the D.R. and a lot of kids in the United States."

Adames, the Rays shortstop, said he worked closely with new Red Sox chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom while Bloom was still with Tampa Bay.

"He's a great person," Adames said. "He was a great guy to talk to over there. He's really smart and we're going to miss him. He's really important for us. He was always there for us, available for us in any moment we needed him. The Red Sox got a great one and I know he's going to do a tremendous job here too."

Martinez expressed disappointment that Dave Dombrowski was fired because the two had a close relationship.

"But I'm looking forward to establishing my relationship with Chaim Bloom," he said.

In Tampa, Bloom was the senior vice president in the front office, but Adames said Bloom spent a lot of time around the players.

"He was just cool," Adames said.

Asked if he was frustrated the Red Sox hired him away from Tampa, Adames said, "Yes, but I feel like the Rays always find another guy to do kind of the same stuff. It's a little frustrating because sometimes you have a veteran guy help you a lot to grow as a baseball player and a person off the field. When you lose a guy like that, obviously it's frustrating, but we always adjust."

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

### **Boston Red Sox free agency: 6 players Chaim Bloom has traded for or signed who are available on this free agent market**

Christopher Smith

Chaim Bloom could make franchise-altering decisions in his first offseason as Red Sox chief baseball officer. The biggest decision he'll make is whether or not to trade Mookie Betts who is eligible for free agency after the 2020 season.

Bloom must decide whether to re-sign J.D. Martinez or let him leave in free agency if the designated hitter opts out of his contract's remaining three years, \$62.5 million. Martinez needs to let the Red Sox know of his decision Monday.

Bloom will need to sign or acquire a fifth starter and add a reliever. He also must figure out who will start at second base and first base.

He'll need to add an outfielder or DH if Martinez leaves or if he trades Betts or Jackie Bradley Jr., who is eligible for free agency after the 2020 season.

Bloom has familiarity with several free agents on this year's market from his time working in the Rays organization. Below are six players who he previously traded for or signed who he might again have interest in as he builds the 2020 Red Sox roster.

Avisail Garcia, outfielder

Bloom signed Garcia to a one-year, \$3.5-million contract Jan. 18, 2019. The 28-year-old right-handed hitter batted .282 with a .332 on-base percentage, .464 slugging percentage, .796 OPS, 20 homers, 25 doubles, two triples and 72 RBIs in 125 games (530 plate appearances) for the Rays.

He has a .296/.352/.456/.808 career line in 825 plate appearances vs. left-handed pitchers.

Bloom will need to add an outfielder if he trades Betts or Bradley.

Corey Dickerson, outfielder

Bloom's Rays acquired Dickerson in a trade with the Rockies on Jan. 28, 2016. They sent German Marquez and Jake McGee to Colorado for Dickerson and Kevin Padlo.

Dickerson belted 51 homers combined for the Rays in 2016 and 2017.

Bloom then traded Dickerson to the Pirates on Feb. 22, 2018, for cash, minor leaguer Tristan Gray and Daniel Hudson, who closed out the 2019 World Series.

The 30-year-old Dickerson's 2019 season ended prematurely because of a foot fracture. The 30-year-old left-handed hitter has a career .832 OPS. He posted a .304/.341/.565/.906 line in 78 games during 2019 for the Pirates and Phillies.

Daniel Hudson, reliever

Bloom acquired Hudson and Tristan Gray for Dickerson on Feb. 22, 2018. He then released Hudson on March 28, 2018.

That, of course, wasn't Bloom's best decision as Rays VP of baseball operations. Hudson recorded a 3.10 ERA in 119 innings in 2018 and '19 for the Dodgers, Blue Jays and Nationals.

Hudson will turn 33 in March. He posted a 2.47 ERA and eight saves in 73 innings for the Blue Jays and Nationals in 2019, then recorded four saves during the postseason.

Steve Cishek, reliever

Bloom acquired Cishek from the Mariners on July 28, 2017, in exchange for Erasmo Ramirez.

The Falmouth, Mass. native, posted a 1.09 ERA and 0.81 WHIP in 24  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings for the Rays.

The 33-year-old righty recorded a 2.52 ERA in 243 innings the past four seasons. He had a 2.95 ERA in 64 innings for the Cubs during 2019.

Sergio Romo, reliever

Bloom acquired Romo from the Dodgers for cash July 22, 2017. He then re-signed the right-handed reliever as a free agent Feb. 13, 2018.

Romo, who turns 37 in March, posted a 3.31 ERA and 25 saves in 98 outings (98 innings) for the Rays in 2017-18.

He finished with a 3.43 ERA and 20 saves in 65 outings (60  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings) for the Marlins and Twins in 2019.

The Red Sox should feel confident with Brandon Workman as the closer heading into 2020. But Bloom also might want to add another reliever who brings at least some closing experience in case Workman falters.

Hudson, Cishek and Romo all have experience closing.

Travis d'Arnaud, catcher

The Mets released d'Arnaud on May 3, 2019, the Dodgers signed him May 5, and then Bloom's Rays purchased his contract May 10. Good decision by Bloom and the Rays front office.

d'Arnaud, who turns 31 in February, enjoyed his most productive major league season with a .263/.323/.459/.782 line, 16 homers, 16 doubles and 67 RBIs in 92 games (365 plate appearances) with Tampa.

Signing d'Arnaud seems unlikely. But Bloom might want to upgrade the catcher position by non-tendering Sandy Leon.

Christian Vazquez and d'Arnaud would make for a versatile tandem at catcher. d'Arnaud played 21 games at first base in 2019.

Vazquez made 103 starts at catcher, 11 starts at DH, seven starts at first base and one start at second in 2019. He appeared in four games at third base.

### **Boston Red Sox's Mookie Betts wins fourth straight Gold Glove; Jackie Bradley Jr. finishes behind Kevin Kiermaier**

Christopher Smith

Red Sox right fielder Mookie Betts won his fourth straight American League Gold Glove.

Rawlings Sports announced the winners Sunday. Betts was the only member of the Red Sox to receive a Gold Glove.

The 2018 AL MVP finished second among all major league right fielders in Defensive Runs Saved (15), per Fangraphs.com. He trailed only Dodgers' Cody Bellinger (19), who won the NL Gold Glove for right fielders.

Jackie Bradley Jr. was one of the three finalists for the AL center field Gold Glove, but he failed to win his second straight. Kevin Kiermaier took home the award.

Royals' Alex Gordon won for AL left fielders, beating out finalist Andrew Benintendi. Indians' Roberto Perez won for AL catchers, finishing ahead of finalist Christian Vazquez.

### **Rusney Castillo opts into final year of Boston Red Sox contract, will make \$14.271M**

Christopher Smith

Rusney Castillo has opted into the final year of his seven-year, \$72.5-million contract with the Red Sox, per the Associated Press.

The Red Sox will pay Castillo \$14.271 million in 2020.

The 32-year-old outfielder from Cuba hasn't played in the major leagues since 2016. He has a .262/.301/.379/.679 line in 99 big league games (337 plate appearances).

Castillo slashed .278/.321/.448/.769 with 17 homers, 25 doubles, one triple and 64 RBIs in 120 games (493 plate appearances) for Triple-A Pawtucket in 2019.

His contract's \$10.36 million average annual value doesn't count toward the Red Sox's Competitive Balance Tax because he's not on the 40-man roster.

The 2017-2021 Collective Bargaining Agreement requires contracts of outrighted players to continue to count toward the CBT. Castillo wasn't on the 40-man roster when the new Collective Bargaining Agreement came into effect though. So he's grandfathered in under the previous rule as long as he continues to remain off the 40-man roster.

**J.D. Martinez's opt-out: Would Boston Red Sox's Chaim Bloom try to re-sign slugger in MLB free agency if he opts out of contract?**

Christopher Smith

J.D. Martinez must let the Red Sox know Monday whether he plans to opt out of his contract's remaining three years, \$62.5 million.

Martinez's contract, which is front-loaded, also includes opt-out clauses after the 2020 and 2021 seasons. So he could remain with Boston, earn \$23.750 million in 2020 and opt out next offseason before his salary decreases to \$19.350 million in 2021.

But it makes more sense for Martinez to enter free agency now at 32 years old rather than at 33 or 34. Why wait another year and risk potential injury? Martinez has dealt with back spasms the past few years, but his production hasn't dropped as a result.

If Martinez elects for free agency, would new Red Sox chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom try to re-sign?

New York Post national baseball writer Joel Sherman made an interesting point this past week. He wrote, "The sense will be that an analytic executive such as Bloom would prefer not to have the DH filled by a single, inflexible player. But the Rays, within their limits, tried to sign Nelson Cruz last offseason. Martinez was \$22 million annually toward the tax, Cruz was \$14 million and I would suspect Bloom feels Boston could add a bat (Edwin Encarnacion? Hunter Pence?) for even less than that."

Red Sox chairman Tom Werner has met with super agent Scott Boras to talk about Martinez's future, principal owner John Henry said. But as of this past Monday, the Red Sox had not made a new offer to Martinez that would restructure (add additional years/money) to his current contract.

The Red Sox want to keep their 2020 payroll below the \$208 million Competitive Balance Tax threshold. Boston's payroll already is approaching \$218 million before any offseason transactions. The Red Sox still need to add a starting pitcher, reliever and figure out who will start at second base and first base.

Martinez will count \$23.75 million toward the Competitive Balance Tax in 2020 if he opts in and stays. And so it seems logical for the Red Sox to let him leave without attempting to re-sign him if he opts out, right?

J.D. Martinez

Sox shouldn't make same mistake with Martinez they made when failing to replace Ortiz

The Red Sox kept their payroll below the Competitive Balance Tax threshold in 2017 because they chose not to sign a replacement for DH David Ortiz after he retired following 2016.

Not necessarily.

The Red Sox always could re-sign Martinez and trade Mookie Betts this offseason. Betts, who is eligible for free agency after the 2020 season, is set to make as much as \$30 million in salary arbitration in 2020. He has expressed zero interest in signing a contract extension. Trading him could help improve Boston's farm system, which Baseball America ranks 22nd.

Sherman brings up an interesting point about whether Bloom might “prefer not to have the DH filled by a single, inflexible player.”

Bloom could look to replace Martinez with Edwin Encarnacion, another single, inflexible player. But Encarnacion represents a cheaper alternative who could serve as a short-term stopgap in the middle of the lineup. He’d demand fewer years and less money than Martinez.

Encarnacion belted 34 homers and posted an .875 OPS in 109 games during 2019. The Yankees declined his \$20 million option for 2020, making him a free agent.

David Ortiz said Friday, “We need J.D. He’s like the base of the lineup. He helps out all the guys. He’s good. He’s good for the ballclub and good for everything. Hopefully he’ll retire in this organization just like I did.”

Ortiz is right about the impact Martinez has had on the entire lineup.

The Red Sox offense took a gigantic step back in 2017 after Ortiz retired. Boston chose to stay under the CBT in 2017 instead of replacing Ortiz.

With Ortiz in 2016, the Red Sox led the major leagues in batting average (.282), on-base percentage (.348), slugging percentage (.461), OPS (.810), doubles (343), runs (878), total bases (2,615) and extra-base hits (576).

In 2017 without Ortiz or any adequate replacement, the Sox finished 13th in batting average (.258), 11th in on-base percentage (.329), 26th in slugging percentage (.407), 22nd in OPS (.736), seventh in doubles (302), 10th in runs (785), 22nd in total bases (2,305) and 22nd in extra-base hits (489).

Boston’s offense then returned to the top of the league in 2018 with Martinez.

### **MLB offseason calendar 2019-2020: All the key dates before Opening Day**

Chris Cotillo

The World Series has concluded and the Nationals have celebrated their first title in franchise history, meaning its time for the Major League Baseball offseason to begin. Here’s a look at the key dates between the end of the postseason and Opening Day, especially pertaining to the Red Sox:

Oct. 31: Players can begin filing for free agency.

Nov. 3: Gold Glove winners announced.

Nov. 4: J.D. Martinez’s opt-out deadline ♦ Five day free-agent quiet period ends, meaning players can officially sign with any club ♦ Deadline for teams to issue the qualifying offer (1 year, \$17.8 million) to their own free agents ♦ BBWAA award (MVP, Cy Young, Rookie of the Year, Manager of the Year) finalists announced.

Nov. 7: Silver Slugger winners announced.

Nov. 10-14: GM Meetings in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Nov. 11: Rookie of the Year winners announced.

Nov. 12: Manager of the Year winners announced.

Nov. 13: Cy Young winners announced.

Nov. 14: MVP winners announced.

Nov. 14: Deadline for players to accept or reject qualifying offers.

Nov. 18: Comeback Player of the Year winners announced.

Nov. 19: Designated Hitter of the Year winner announced.

Dec. 2: Non-tender deadline. ♦ Deadline to protect players from the Rule 5 draft by putting them on the 40-man roster.

Dec. 9-12: Winter Meetings in San Diego, California.

Dec. 12: Rule 5 draft.

Jan. 10: Deadline for teams and players to exchange arbitration figures.

Jan. 24-26: Red Sox Winter Weekend at MGM Springfield.

Feb. 3-21: Arbitration hearings in Phoenix, Arizona.

Feb. 10-12 (estimate): Pitchers and catchers report to Fenway South in Fort Myers, Florida.

Feb. 21: Spring training opener vs. Northeastern at JetBlue Park.

### **Boston Red Sox power prospect Bobby Dalbec bashes grand slam for Team USA**

Christopher Smith

Boston Red Sox power-hitting prospect Bobby Dalbec bashed a grand slam in Team USA's 9-0 victory over Netherlands in the WBSC Premier12 tournament Saturday.

Dalbec, who played first base, went 2-for-4. He also singled.

C.J. Chatham, another Red Sox prospect, went 1-for-4 with one run. He played second base for the United States.

Baseball America ranks Dalbec the No. 83 prospect on its top 100 list.

The 6-foot-4, 234-pound slugger, who turned 24 in June, batted .239 with a .356 on-base percentage, .460 slugging percentage, .816 OPS, 27 homers, 19 doubles, two triples and 73 RBIs in 105 games at Double-A Portland and 30 games at Triple-A Pawtucket combined.

He crushed seven homers in 123 plate appearances for Pawtucket.

The Red Sox are expected to add both Dalbec and Chatham to their 40-man roster this month to protect them from the Rule 5 Draft.

### **David Ortiz, Pedro Martinez discuss Boston Red Sox's future: 'Baseball has a dark side and it's the business part of it'**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Even some of the best players in recent Red Sox history are caught wondering how much turnover might exist within the organization before Opening Day.

Pedro Martinez, David Ortiz and Jason Varitek appeared at a gala to raise money for Martinez's foundation Friday night at the Mandarin Oriental hotel. All three Red Sox Hall of Famers are special assistants with the club and said they're looking forward to getting to know new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom, who was hired earlier this week.

"It's exciting," Varitek said. "It brings an innovative way to skin the same cat."

Bloom faces many tough decisions in his first winter at the helm of the Sox, who are trying to cut their payroll to get under the \$208 million competitive balance tax threshold before Opening Day. That goal means it's unlikely both Mookie Betts and J.D. Martinez will remain on the roster, with Martinez having the ability to opt out of his contract by Monday and Betts, who is a year away from free agency, looking like one of the top potential trade candidates in baseball.

Pedro Martinez, who spent seven years with the Sox before leaving for the Mets in free agency in 2004, believes it's important for teams and players to separate personal relationships from the business of baseball. That separation has been key to his relationship with the Red Sox remaining strong over the last 15 years.

"Sometimes getting rid of a player or adding a player, it can be the best for the business part of the team but for the player it doesn't work out," Martinez said. "I was actually one of those examples where I didn't feel like I didn't need to leave Boston but it was better for Boston to get rid of me or Nomar (Garciparra) at one point."

The Hall of Famer referred to Betts as a "franchise player" and, like Ortiz, is hopeful the Sox will find a way to keep both Betts and Martinez on the roster for 2020.

David Ortiz, Mookie Betts

David Ortiz hopeful Boston Red Sox will keep Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez: 'We need J.D... Mookie is one of our engines'

Ortiz discussed Boston's offseason at an event Friday night.

"Whatever we do in the future really dictates how much we think Mookie and J.D. and Eduardo (Rodriguez), David Price, Chris Sale -- what they all mean to the team," Martinez said. "You just don't mingle the business part of baseball with the personal side of baseball. I hope we can keep every player we have and add more, but unfortunately baseball has a dark side and the dark side is the business part of baseball."

In the mid-2000s, the Red Sox faced many situations in which key players departed the organization. As veterans like Martinez, Garciparra, Johnny Damon and others left Boston,

"They want to know but they're not paid to make those moves and do those things," Varitek said. "Right now they're starting to dive into their offseason programs and prepare for a championship run."

Ortiz, making one of his first public appearances in Boston since recovering from a June shooting, watched the Sox closely during his recovery and sees a lot of promise in the roster despite a disappointing 2019 season.

"The guys are not too far away from winning another championship," Ortiz said. "It's about getting a couple of pitchers. The team is not that bad, just ran out of gas last year. A lot of injuries also. That doesn't help. Hopefully this year they stay healthy and things work out differently."

Over the next weeks and months, all three advisers will be tasked with getting to know Bloom and helping -- in their own ways -- shape the Sox' future. But Friday night, their focus was on Martinez's charity, which works to help underprivileged children in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

“I’m excited about making a difference,” Martinez said. “I know because of what we do, we’re actually offering opportunities that I never got. Even though I never got those opportunities, I was able to do something to make a difference as an athlete and as a human. I want to serve others so they can have an easier path to do what they want to do, whatever they want to do.”

### **Boston Red Sox ‘got a great one’ in Chaim Bloom, says Rays’ Willy Adames**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Rays infielder Willy Adames has nothing but respect and admiration for new Red Sox chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom.

Adames, in town for the Pedro Martinez Foundation Gala on Friday night, has spent most of his professional career in the same organization as Bloom, who was Tampa Bay’s senior vice president of baseball operations before being hired by Boston earlier this week. Adames believes the hire was a savvy one for one of the Rays’ divisional rivals.

“He’s a great person. He was a great guy to talk to over there,” Adames said. “He’s really smart and we’re going to miss him. He’s really important for us. He was always there for us, available for us in any moment we needed him. The Red Sox got a great one and I know he’s going to do a tremendous job here too.”

Adames was originally signed by the Tigers as an amateur before being sent to the Rays in a July 2014 trade for now-Red Sox lefty David Price. He spent parts of five seasons in the minors with the Rays before making his big league debut in 2018.

In that half-decade, Adames spent plenty of time interacting with Bloom, who focused on player development before his promotion to senior VP in 2016.

“He was just cool. He was always there trying to help us, trying to make us better, trying to give us advice,” Adames said. “He was always accountable. That’s the thing I appreciate about him.”

Bloom joins a long list of Rays executives, players and coaches to leave Tampa Bay for a bigger market elsewhere. Though Adames sometimes finds that discouraging, he has faith that one of the league’s most innovative organizations will find ways to keep up.

“I feel like they always find another guy to do kind of the same stuff,” he said. “It’s a little frustrating because sometimes you have a veteran guy help you a lot to grow as a baseball player and a person off the field. When you lose a guy like that, obviously it’s frustrating, but we always adjust to those kind of movements.”

### **David Ortiz hopeful Boston Red Sox will keep Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez: ‘We need J.D... Mookie is one of our engines’**

Chris Cotillo

BOSTON -- Count David Ortiz among those who are hopeful the Red Sox will be able to keep both J.D. Martinez and Mookie Betts on their roster moving forward.

Mookie Betts, J.D. Martinez, Chris Sale

Boston Red Sox: ‘challenging, difficult’ to have J.D. Martinez, Mookie Betts both on 2020 roster and keep payroll under \$208M

The Boston Red Sox's goal in 2020 is for the payroll to be under the \$208 million threshold.

Speaking before the The Pedro Martinez Foundation Gala at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on Friday night, Ortiz spoke highly of both sluggers. He's particularly close with Betts, who is a trade candidate due to his reluctance to sign a long-term extension a year before hitting free agency coupled with Boston's goal to trim payroll for 2020.

"Hopefully, he stays around," said Ortiz, who also works as a special assistant to the Red Sox. "Mookie is one of the engines that we're always going to need. Hopefully, him, the front office and the owners straighten things up so we can have him around longer."

Betts' future might be directly dependent on Martinez, who has until Monday to opt out of his contract. Martinez can either return to the Red Sox for a \$23.75 million salary in 2020 or hit the free agent market.

"They'll probably offer him a couple years on top of the one he has and keep on rolling. Hopefully," Ortiz said. "We need J.D. He's like the base of the lineup. He helps out all the guys. He's good. He's good for the ballclub and good for everything. Hopefully he'll retire in this organization just like I did."

The Red Sox made their first major move of the offseason earlier in the week, hiring Chaim Bloom as their chief baseball officer. Ortiz, who spent October as an analyst for FOX on its postseason coverage, has not yet met Bloom but is eager to get familiar with the new top executive.

"It's part of the game," Ortiz said. "We had (former president of baseball operations) Dave Dombrowski who won a World Series. Look, he's gone now. Now you're going to have another guy who maybe makes something different to get in the mix and help you win championships. It's like a secret box. You never know what's going to end up happening."

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

### **Betts in elite crowd with 4th straight Gold Glove**

Thomas Harrigan

Fenway Park has some of the more difficult right-field dimensions in all of baseball, but that hasn't stopped Red Sox superstar Mookie Betts from becoming the American League's defensive standard at the position in recent years. The 27-year-old was recognized with his fourth straight American League Rawlings Gold Glove Award on Sunday, topping the Angels' Kole Calhoun and the Astros' Josh Reddick for the honor.

Betts is one of three Major Leaguers to win a Gold Glove Award in each of the past four years, joining Rockies third baseman Nolan Arenado and Astros pitcher Zack Greinke, who won again in the National League after spending much of 2019 with the D-backs.

Betts, the 2018 AL MVP, finished seventh among outfielders and tied for 10th overall among all MLB players with 15 Defensive Runs Saved in '19. He has recorded a big league-leading 98 DRS since the start of 2016, topping the next closest player (Andrelton Simmons) by 13.

Betts also tied for 10th among AL outfielders in Statcast's Outs Above Average metric, posting +7 OAA, and he continued to combine his great range with a strong throwing arm, notching 10 outfield assists.

All three of Boston's starting outfielders were Gold Glove Award finalists for the second straight year, but Jackie Bradley Jr. -- last season's AL winner in center field -- finished as a runner-up to the Rays' Kevin Kiermaier, who is now a three-time winner. Meanwhile, left fielder Andrew Benintendi lost out to the Royals' Alex Gordon, who won for the seventh time. Catcher Christian Vázquez was a finalist as well, but the award went to the Indians' Roberto Pérez.

Betts became just the fifth Red Sox player to win at least four Gold Glove Awards, along with second baseman Dustin Pedroia (four), and outfielders Dwight Evans (eight), Carl Yastrzemski (seven), and Fred Lynn (four).

As one of the AL's nine Gold Glove winners, Betts is now eligible for the Platinum Glove Award, which is given to the best defensive player from each league. Voting for the award, which was established in 2011, is open at [rawlings.com](http://rawlings.com) and will continue until 11:59 p.m. ET on Thursday. The two league winners will be announced on Friday.

### **With eye on payroll, tough calls await Red Sox**

Ian Browne

BOSTON -- The offseason is underway for the Red Sox, and it's going to be an interesting one.

Ownership has stated there is a goal -- not a mandate -- to get the payroll below the first luxury-tax threshold of \$208 million. Boston's payroll was approximately \$240 million in 2019.

How the club will get there remains to be seen. Here are the issues -- in FAQ format -- it faces in the meantime.

Which players are free agents?

RHP Rick Porcello, 1B Mitch Moreland, 1B Steve Pearce, INF-OF Brock Holt, RHP Andrew Cashner and RHP Jhoulys Chacín.

Are any of them likely to receive qualifying offers, and when would they have to make that decision?

If J.D. Martinez exercises his opt-out clause and becomes a free agent, the Red Sox are sure to make him a qualifying offer to insure that they get Draft compensation should he sign somewhere else. With the qualifying offer at \$17.8 million this offseason, it's hard to imagine Boston will extend one to any of its other free agents, particularly when you consider the organizational goal is to trim payroll. The deadline for making qualifying offers is Monday.

Which free agents are most likely to come back?

Invaluable utility man Holt has not only been a rock for the Red Sox on the field, but he's also their leader in the community. The Sox would like to keep Holt if it is financially feasible, and Holt lives in Boston year-round. Ultimately, however, it will come down to a business decision for both the player and the team. Moreland is another respected veteran who might return if the price is somewhere around the \$6.5 million salary he received in each of the last two seasons.

While it initially seemed a foregone conclusion that Porcello would be gone, the fact he had the worst season of his career at least creates the possibility he could return on an incentive-laden, short-term deal. Pearce -- the 2018 World Series MVP -- mentioned last month he might retire. Either way, he doesn't fit into Boston's future.

Which players have options, what's the dollar figure and impact on payroll, and when does it need to be decided upon?

Martinez can opt out of his contract by Monday or after next season, and his decision could have a huge impact on how the rest of the offseason plays out for Boston. Martinez is on the books for \$23.75 million for 2020, and he will get a \$2.5 million buyout if he opts out.

If Martinez "opts in," the Red Sox will face a difficult challenge in also carrying the salary of superstar Mookie Betts next season. The four-time All-Star avoided arbitration last offseason by agreeing to a \$20 million deal and is expected to get a raise via arbitration for the upcoming season. Team president/CEO Sam Kennedy acknowledged last month that "there is a way" to keep both star hitters, but it would be difficult. There's also a chance Martinez could be traded if he opts in.

Who might be a non-tender candidate, and when does the club have to make that decision?

The Sox must tender offers to all arbitration-eligible players by Dec. 2. Catcher Sandy Leon hasn't given the Red Sox much of anything offensively for three straight seasons, so the club could definitely elect to non-tender him after he made \$2.475 million in 2019.

The one possible stunner on the non-tender front would be Jackie Bradley Jr., who made \$8.5 million in 2018 and is expected to get a raise via arbitration for the upcoming season. Bradley remains an enigma on offense but a gem on defense. If the Sox need to get his salary off the books, it seems more likely they would trade him than non-tender him. Righty Heath Hembree, who missed a big chunk of time with right elbow issues, could also be non-tendered.

What kind of help do they need and will they be active in free agency? Who might they target?

Needs will have a lot to do with how things play out with existing players. In other words, if Martinez leaves, that means the Sox need a run producer. For sure, the Sox need to fortify a pitching staff that struggled mightily in 2019, particularly in the starting rotation. This will be challenging when you consider that Chris Sale, David Price and Nathan Eovaldi are set to earn a combined \$79 million next season. One thing to keep an eye on: If the Sox can trade a couple of players who are on big salaries, could they make a blockbuster with the Mets for Noah Syndergaard? Though the bullpen stabilized in the second half, the Sox will still be on the hunt for some late-inning options.

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

### **Mookie Betts wins Gold Glove for fourth straight season**

Rob Bradford

The reminders regarding Mookie Betts' talent keep rolling in.

For the fourth consecutive season, the Red Sox outfielder was named the Rawlings Gold Glove winner for his work in right field.

This is the first bit of news in an offseason that figures to include numerous mentions of Betts considering his contract situation. He is heading into the final season of arbitration-eligibility, with MLB Trade Rumors projecting the outfielder to make \$27.7 million.

The following information was released by the Red Sox:

Betts joins Nolan Arenado and Zack Greinke as the only major leaguers to win a Gold Glove Award in each of the last four years (2016-19). Betts is only the fifth Red Sox player since the award's 1957 inception to be recognized as many as four times, joining second baseman Dustin Pedroia (4) and outfielders Dwight Evans (8), Carl Yastrzemski (7), and Fred Lynn (4). Betts and Evans (1981-85) are the only Red Sox ever to win a Gold Glove Award in as many as four consecutive seasons. Betts—who turned 27 years old on October 7—is the only player in team history to win as many as four Gold Glove Awards at the age of 27 or younger.

In 132 games (126 starts) in right field and 17 games (16 starts) in center field, Betts recorded 10 assists and was charged with only two errors in 2019. According to FanGraphs, he led American League outfielders with 15 defensive runs saved and ranked second with a 12.6 ultimate zone rating. On September 23 at Tropicana Field, Betts threw out Avisail García at third base in the sixth inning with a throw that traveled an estimated 305 feet in the air. In the past four seasons (2016-19), his 37 outfield assists rank second in the AL behind only Jackie Bradley Jr. (38). During that same four-year span, Betts' 98 defensive runs saved lead the majors at all positions.

The Gold Glove Award honors the best defenders at each position in each league. Major League managers and coaches, voting only within their league and unable to vote for players on their own teams, account for 75 percent of the selection process; the SABR Defensive Index statistic accounts for the other 25 percent.

### **The Sunday Baseball Column: So you want the Red Sox to be the Rays? Let's start here.**

Rob Bradford

“It’s a very strong organization. I think in the last dozen years we have probably won two and a quarter more games than they have. They do everything right. They don’t get supported but they do everything right.” - John Henry on the Tampa Bay Rays.

The Red Sox principal owner was right. With the last game in the decade officially completed the numbers are in. From 2008-19 the big, bad team from Boston won a total of 1,062 regular-season games. The Rays? Just 21 fewer.

Enter Chaim Bloom.

Henry and Co. were well aware that during that run Bloom was in the middle of the decision-making process in one capacity for the whole ball of wax. That’s a big reason why the 36-year-old is now running a Red Sox team which boasts a payroll almost four times the team left behind.

While there is far from one absolute key ingredient that Bloom might be bringing over from Tampa Bay’s secret sauce, one piece of the puzzle should offer more intrigue than most - analytics.

Even with one of Major League Baseball’s lowest payrolls Tampa Bay has always been known to have one of the largest analytics departments. For more than a few years, it was a reality some in the Red Sox organization looked at with envy. But the true difference isn’t so much about counting the employees in each department but rather how the Rays have gotten these analytics to translate onto the field.

“My sense is that everyone is trying to do the same stuff,” said Red Sox assistant general manager Zack Scott, who is in charge of the team’s analytics department. “I do a lot of research, as much as I can, to see what people are doing and I don’t mean spying or anything. I talk to counterparts and I can tell they have a lot of the same challenges we have. I can tell from people who have left the game who worked in robust analytics departments I know what they have been doing there. Every time I get that information I feel good about what I’m doing because you’re always worried you’re falling behind. I think where we have lagged our competition is on the implementation side of things and not the analytical work. Because that’s just part of it.

“You need to build all the analytical tools to do all the research, identifying the insights. But if you can’t deliver them effectively and implement them and get buy-in and educate and all the things that come with it ...”

This is a very real problem teams like the Red Sox have found themselves facing while highlighting how far ahead a few select organizations like Tampa Bay reside.

The disconnect is — and should be — one of the most powerful talking points when figuring out the evolution of baseball.

While the Red Sox were trying to keep up with the baseball elite in large part by writing checks — coming away with a World Series title in 2018 followed by a disappointing 2019 — they found themselves actually spending the last two years playing a frustrating game of catch-up.

They were, and are, chasing the Rays.

“We really ramped up on kind on implementing throughout the whole organization throughout the last year or two so that’s not much time. It takes time,” Scott explained. “Alex (Cora) wanted to do the major leagues and we really weren’t doing any of that before so we had to really ramp those efforts up and when you try and move fast it makes it harder. You’re going to hit some bumps in the road. We dealt with that. Player development, amateur scouting or wherever we’re trying to fully integrate the analytical work to work with the other stuff we’re doing in those departments there is a learning curve. (The Rays) have been doing it for much longer and they still have had implementation issues.

“For me there needs to be a clear vision organizationally. Here’s what we’re about, here’s what we’re going to do across the board and here’s now we’re going to execute it. And be clear with everyone and transparent with everyone. That’s where it really needs to start. When you try and do things the way we did where we were kind of late to the game in increasing our analytics staff, do good, quality work and move quickly, I don’t think we started well enough with that kind of ... We didn’t have as clear a vision because we were still doing discovery. We were still doing expiatory analysis to figure out what we were learning and kind of doing it on the fly. It’s just a process. The teams that are regarded elite in terms of integration with analytics have been doing it longer. That’s really the big advantage. And even some of my counterparts with those teams have expressed to me challenges that they’re still kind fo banging heads against the wall to figure out the right way to strategically communicate it. We’re trying to how to effective deliver this. Where it’s simplified, not intimidating. We’re not being heavy-handed with it.”

Heading into the 2018 season the Red Sox started the process of trying to get into the same analytical conversation as teams like the Rays, Astros, Yankees and Dodgers. It took halfway through that season to truly start seeing some of the work take root, with some obvious payoffs in that postseason.

The Sox increased their analytics department to 15 employees (still well short of the Rays), while hiring Jeb Clarke to travel with the team as a representative of the group in order to answer any on-site questions the player or coaches might have. (Tampa Bay’s version of Clarke is process and analytics coach Jonathan Erlichman, who is actually in uniform.)

All of it still left the Red Sox wanting -- and needing -- more.

While the information has been more abundant, getting it to translate remains the issue.

The conversations about the conversations have already begun between Scott and his new Chief Baseball Officer. ("He has expressed his excitement to see what is under the hood. I said, ‘Yeah, I’m excited to hear your feedback because I know you guys have been doing good work over there and to see how it compares.’ I’m sure he will bring ideas and perspective that will help us," the Red Sox assistant GM said.)

Now comes the hard part: Getting the message across the right way ... some would say the Rays' way.

"A human being can’t process the amount of information we have, and this is any human being, not just players or coaches," Scott said. "So we tend to over-simplify a complex problem because we look for the simple solution but the reality of is that it is way more complex. I think we can utilize the analytical techniques to help process so much information to get to a better starting point.

"It helps them prepare more easily without thinking of 50 different variables. We want them to do the thinking and prep before. We don’t want them to do too much on the mound. If you’ve done all the work before you’ve gotten out there you can use your athletic ability to execute the plan."

## AN INTERESTING DAY IN MEXICO

Day 1 of the WBSC Premier 12 Tournament in Mexico Saturday offered a few eyebrow-raising items.

C.J. Chatham started ... as a second baseman. Chatham's existence at the position throughout his time in the Arizona Fall League (along with a few games at Triple-A Pawtucket) and now in this tourney is something to keep an eye on while the Red Sox try to figure out both their second base and utility infielder spots.

Noah Song pitched an inning of perfect relief, continuing to impress while staring at an uncertain future thanks to his Naval commitment. (He is still slated to head report to Pensacola for training after the international competition.)

It's hard to think about Song without remembering the answer Lowell pitching coach Nick Green gave when asked if the fourth round pick reminded him of anyone.

"There is a name that comes off the top of my head but I don't want to make any comparisons," Green said with a smile. "I had the pleasure in 2015 to work with Michael Kopech. That's an elite arm. That's the most elite arm I've ever worked with. At that time he was touching 100. Not saying he's going to be, but the first time I stepped behind him made me have flashes of a Kopech-like fastball. ... It's the whip. The way it comes out of his hand."

Then there was Bobby Dalbec.

Playing for the first time since going through a two-week crash hitting course behind the scenes with the major league team in Sept. the first baseman blasted a grand slam run Team USA's 9-0 win over the Netherlands.

Remember the words from former Red Sox assistant hitting coach Andy Barkett when talking about the progress made by Dalbec during that two-week stint with the big league staff ...

"We got to spend so much time on him, one-on-one time. He's a really smart kid and communicates really well so in that time you're able to go back and forth and talk through things. The adjustments he made when he was here was really cool. Tim, him and I started a texting thread and so we're going to keep in touch throughout as he prepares for the Premier 12. But I thought it was huge.

"These were like private lessons every day. It was a week's worth of Bobby Dalbec and us. Spring training it's transient. You have one guy in and one guy out. This was complete focus and we were able to prepare for it before he got here."

There was a second grand slam hit Saturday hit by a semi-familiar name: Estaban Quiroz. He is the second baseman traded by the Red Sox to San Diego in exchange for Colten Brewer. The diminutive infielder managed a solid 2019 in Triple-A, hitting .271 with a .923 OPS and 19 homers.

#### SOMETHING TO KNOW ABOUT BLOOM'S ROSTER

One of the issues the Red Sox' ownership identified when talking about its search for Dave Dombrowski's replacement was the organization's lack of depth at the big league level.

That's why one tidbit surfaced by Bloom at his introductory press conference should have stuck out: the fact the 2019 Rays used 57 players. That is a team-record 57 who pitched in to make the postseason with 94 regular-season wins.

What really jumps out is a look at where those players came from. A whopping total of 31 came via trades.

The number speaks to two things: 1. The Rays' confidence to do something more and more front offices in baseball aren't, have the confidence to take a chance and move on from their own guys; 2. Draft well enough to have players other teams want.

And just in case you were craving a list of the Rays' 57, here you go:

Mike Zunino: Trade

Ji-Man Choi: Trade

Brandon Lowe: 3rd round pick, 2015

Austin Meadows: Trade  
Avisail Garcia: Free agent  
Tommy Pham: Trade  
Kevin Kiermaier: 31st round, 2010  
Yandy Diaz: Trade  
Cole Sulser: Trade  
Wily Adames: Trade  
Travis d'Arnaud: Purchased  
Joey Wendle: Trade  
Daniel Robertson: Trade  
Guillermo Heredia: Trade  
Matt Duffy: Trade  
Nate Lowe: 13th round, 2016  
Mike Brosseau: Amateur free agent  
Eric Sogard: Trade  
Jesus Aguilar: Trade  
Christian Arroyo: Trade  
Michael Perez: Trade  
Erik Kratz: Trade  
Kean Wong: 4th round, 2013  
Andrew Velazquez: Trade  
Nick Ciuffo: 1st round, 2013  
Anthony Bemboom: Free agent  
Johnny Davis: Free agent

Charlie Morton: Free agent  
Blake Snell: 1st round, 2011  
Yonny Chirinos: Amateur free agent  
Tyler Glasnow: Trade  
Ryne Stanek: 1st round, 2013  
Brendan McKay: 1st round, 2017  
Emilio Pagan: Trade  
Diego Castillo: Amateur free agent  
Colin Poche: Trade  
Chaz Roe: Purchased  
Adam Kolarek: Trade  
Ryan Yarbrough: Trade  
Jalen Beeks: Trade  
Oliver Drake: Purchased  
Andrew Kittredge: Trade  
Austin Pruitt: 9th round, 2013  
Jose Alvarado: Amateur free agent  
Hunter Wood, 29th round, 2013  
Trevor Richards: Trade  
Nick Anderson: Trade  
Casey Sadler: Trade  
Wilmer Font: Trade  
Peter Fairbanks: Trade  
Jake Faria: 10th round, 2011  
Anthony Banda: Trade  
Jose De Leon: Trade  
Hoby Milner: Purchased  
Aaron Siegers: Purchased  
Ricardo Pinto: Waivers  
Ian Gibaut: 11th round, 2015

So about making those trades (and tough decisions) in a place like Boston. Bloom addressed when appearing on OMF:

"I do think if you stay true to who you are and how you believe in treating people then a lot of good things will follow from that. Sometimes our jobs do involve tough decisions that we do get scrutinized for. That's just part of the business. It comes with the territory. As long as we feel like we have vetted that decision and we've come together to a good decision we have to be OK with that scrutiny. If you feel good about your process getting there then you ought to be comfortable with it."

#### HOW THE NEW GUY VIEWS MOOKIE

There was a lot of talk about just how much the Red Sox' approach toward Mookie Betts and the last year of his contract was mentioned in Bloom's interview. Here is what he said on WEEI:

"We obviously talked extensively about a number of things but it wasn't really discussing what course you chart as much as it was covering the different challenges and decisions that are on the horizon. I can't say in the interview process we got too deep into it, nor would I think it would have been right to because there is a lot about the situation that I as an outsider until today don't know. And it would be irresponsible to have really strong opinions on it without knowing all the information, even information that we'll get as the winter goes on. These decisions are tough. Mookie, you guys have seen him first-hand for a long time that he is a phenomenal player. I have heard that he is a really good guy. I'm looking forward to getting to know him. At the end of the day we're going to have to look at all the factors before we figure out how to go forward. Recognizing it is a big decision, that makes it even more critical for us to really factor in everything that we need to."

The initial takeaway from this response? By all accounts, both the chief participants in these negotiations -- Bloom and Betts -- are bottom-line guys. History suggest they approach these sort of situations in very similar ways: They dig in exactly what they think is right and move forward accordingly, without letting emotion or public perception sway the approach. The guess is that because of these mentalities Betts' future with the Red Sox will be defined sooner rather than later.

#### SOME OTHER THOUGHTS ...

- When Rusney Castillo signed with the Red Sox some in the organization used Shane Victorino as a comparison to what the Cuban outfielder could be. As it turns out there was only one similarity: How much money each would make for their Age 32-year-old season. Castillo's predictable decision to exercise his player option for 2020 (pretty much guaranteeing one more full year in the minors due to luxury tax ramifications) he will make \$13.5 million. Victorino was at the same age Castillo will be next season when he inked his free-agent deal with the Red Sox, paying him \$13 million. It already goes without saying that it is a good bet Victorino's contributions to that 2013 team will far surpass what Castillo will offer in 2020.

- Great point by Dan O'Mara on Twitter regarding the now iconic sound made by Howie Kendrick's Game 7 off the foul pole. It was such an underrated aspect of the moment, while also offering the reminder of another clang ...

- Speaking of Kendrick, he's a free agent. Despite being five years older than Brock Holt, he is a guy whose market Holt should be paying attention to. The guess is that even with the age difference Kendrick -- who totaled a .888 combined OPS over the last three seasons -- will manage to eclipse the two-year, \$7 million deal he was playing under with Washington. If not? It might be a rough offseason for utility guys.

- New Red Sox reliever Josh Osich is an intriguing addition. Why? He is one of five current big leaguers to share my birthday (Sept. 3). Only a select few can understand what it was like to have their birthday fall on what is often times the first day of school.

**\* *NBC Sports Boston***

## **It's time for J.D. Martinez to decide his opt-out, and the direction of the Red Sox offseason with it**

John Tomase

J.D.-Day has arrived for the Red Sox.

Slugger J.D. Martinez has until 5 p.m. on Monday to opt out of the final three years and \$62.5 million remaining on his contract and become a free agent. If he declines, he'll remain in Boston for at least another year and make \$23.75 million in 2020.

The Red Sox and new chief baseball officer Chaim Bloom cannot begin to plan for their offseason until Martinez makes his decision, which will significantly impact their payroll. Martinez is the first and in many ways most important domino that must fall, and what happens next could spider in countless directions. So let's break it down.

If Martinez opts in, the offense will be guaranteed a centerpiece slugger who can join Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts in one of the most potent 2-3-4 combos in baseball. Martinez has hit .317 and averaged 40 homers and 118 RBIs in his two years with the Red Sox. He's also comfortable being the focal point of opposing pitching staffs, providing the same type of presence as future Hall of Famer David Ortiz.

The problem with Martinez staying is it greatly increases the likelihood that defending MVP Mookie Betts will be shipped out. Betts, who on Sunday won his fourth straight Gold Glove, is entering the final year of his contract and will make close to \$30 million in arbitration.

Which team would be best fit for Martinez fit if he opts out?

If the Red Sox are serious about dropping below the \$208 million luxury tax threshold — sorry if we're skeptical about their wish-not-a-mandate spin — then that task becomes borderline impossible with Betts and Martinez on the roster, barring a trade of a starting pitcher.

In Betts, Martinez, David Price, Chris Sale, and Nathan Eovaldi alone, the Red Sox will have roughly \$130 million committed to just five players. Add Bogaerts and Dustin Pedroia, and we're talking \$165 million for seven players, one of whom is effectively retired.

An argument can be made that the Red Sox can't afford Martinez or Betts if they want to drop below \$208 million. So if the former stays, it sure feels like the latter is gone.

If Martinez opts out of his deal, a giant hole just opened in the middle of the lineup that won't be fully appreciated until he's gone. Remember 2017 when virtually every young hitter took a giant step back in the team's first season without Ortiz? Bogaerts hit 10 homers. Andrew Benintendi posted a .776 OPS. Betts followed an MVP runner-up campaign by hitting just .264. That's the potential future the Red Sox risk returning to without Martinez locking down the heart of the order.

While there's always a chance he examines the market and strikes a deal to return to Boston, it's telling that the Red Sox haven't made him an offer beyond what's left on his contract. In different circumstances, with more payroll flexibility, it would be easy to envision the Red Sox ripping up the final three years of his deal and either bumping his salary to \$25 million annually or giving him a fourth season.

In all likelihood, if Martinez opts out, that will put the Red Sox in the market for a new cleanup hitter, because there isn't one on the roster. Maybe it's veteran slugger Edwin Encarnacion, who just topped 30 home runs for the eighth straight season, but didn't have his option picked up by the Yankees. Maybe it's a scrap heap selection who surprises, as routinely occurred in Tampa under Bloom. Whomever it is will almost certainly be a downgrade.

Martinez's absence would increase the odds of keeping Betts, however, since Martinez's money could be used to absorb one more year of Mookie. It doesn't change the fundamental issue of whether the team can

afford Betts long-term, but it at least creates the possibility of making one final run with the star right fielder.

None of these dominoes can fall until Martinez makes a decision, however, and that day has finally arrived.

### **MLB Rumors: Rangers have had 'internal discussions' about trading for Red Sox starter**

Michael DePrisco

The Chaim Bloom era has begun in Boston, and if Red Sox ownership is determined to cut costs on its roster and build a sustainable contender, one team may be able to help them out.

According to a story by Evan Grant of the Dallas Morning News, the Rangers have had 'internal discussions' about pursuing one of the Red Sox' top starting pitchers in a trade.

Grant notes the Rangers' need for starting pitching and the fact that they have money to spend, assuming they don't get Gerrit Cole or Stephen Strasburg in free agency. Given Boston's hopes to cut payroll and rebuild their farm system, the Rangers could be a natural match.

Dave Bush hired as the Sox new pitching coach

He also speculates that the two pitchers Texas could target are David Price and Nathan Eovaldi, who the Red Sox owe a combined \$147 million to over the next three seasons. It's hard to imagine Bloom getting a substantial return for either of them if he's cutting a good chunk of the payroll, but Bloom made a name for himself finding value on the margins in Tampa, especially with pitchers.

The Red Sox still have to see what J.D. Martinez decides to do. He has the ability to opt-out of the remaining three seasons of the five-year, \$110 million deal he signed two years ago. If he opts in or signs a new deal with the Red Sox, Bloom might have to trim money off of the Red Sox payroll sooner rather than later.

Dave Dombrowski delivered a World Series in his time as President of Baseball Operations, but he certainly left a mess that Bloom now has to clean up to keep this team in contention for years to come. It all starts this winter, where fans will get a good idea of what the direction of the franchise will be, and it might start with some trade talks with the Rangers.

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

### **MLB Notebook: A look at some low-cost free agent possibilities for Sox; J.D. Martinez thoughts**

Sean McAdam

So far, there's been far more focus on the Red Sox' ability and willingness to retain two of their current stars — J.D. Martinez, who can opt out of his deal Monday, and Mookie Betts, who is under control through the end of next season.

Those are huge storylines, of course, since they involve, arguably, the two biggest forces in the Red Sox lineup. If Martinez walks and/or Betts is traded, the 2020 Red Sox will have a much different look.

What happens with that duo will impact the rest of the winter, since there's a lot of money involved. If both leave — Martinez via free agency and Betts via trade — the Sox will have shaved about \$47 million from their payroll.

But at some point, regardless of the fate of Martinez and Betts, the Red Sox will have to do some adding.

For this offseason, we can rule the Sox out on some big-ticket items. Barring some sudden and dramatic reversal, they'll not be in on Stephen Strasburg or Gerrit Cole, even though either would be a welcome addition to a rotation very much in need of upgrades.

Instead, the Sox will be shopping for less expensive options to address roster holes.

Here's a look at some needs and potential low-cost solutions:

Second base: It's possible that the Sox could fill from within here, with some combination of Michael Chavis and Marco Hernandez. But the former may be better utilized at first base and the latter, frankly, hasn't yet demonstrated that he can be an everyday player.

Brock Holt, himself a free agent, could return here in some scenarios. But the feeling is that Holt would like a multi-year deal for some security, which may not fit with the Red Sox' plans. And the Sox have to ask themselves whether they'd be comfortable with Holt playing every day since he gives them virtually no sock (career slugging percentage: .374; .402 last year).

There are some veteran free agents who could provide some pop at the position (Brian Dozier, Starlin Castro, Jonathan Schoop), but each would be looking for more money (say, \$7-9 million) than the Sox would be willing to spend.

One possibility is Wilmer Flores, whose option for 2020 was declined by Arizona. Flores had an .848 OPS last year, but is viewed as below-average defensively.

Other low-cost veteran options include Jason Kipnis and Scooter Gennett.

Starting pitcher: For now, the Sox have one opening in the rotation, though that could change if they pay down the salary of someone like David Price and shop him around.

Tanner Houck waits in the wings, but without so much as an inning of big-league experience, it's difficult to envision him making the rotation out of spring training. In the meantime, the Sox need a veteran back-end starter, someone willing to take a one-year deal.

There's no shortage of potential candidates, including Homer Bailey, Tanner Roark and Ivan Nova, any one of whom could help out as a No. 5 starter for at least the first half of the year, until such time as Houck or perhaps Bryan Mata is ready to contribute in Boston.

Reliever: Despite the struggles of the bullpen — especially in the first half — the Red Sox are actually situated pretty well here.

They return Brandon Workman, Matt Barnes, Josh Taylor, Marcus Walden and Darwinson Hernandez, and should he be tendered a contract, Heath Hembree. That's not a bad group, especially with the expectation that Hernandez will improve and with a more structured set-up in place with Workman returning as the de facto closer.

But they can always use more established options here. Righty Joe Smith, at 35, may be an intriguing option, giving the Sox a different look with his sidearm delivery. It helps that he's had plenty of postseason experience with both Cleveland and Houston, though coming off a two-year, \$15-million deal, he could be a little pricey.

Craig Stammen has been a consistent late-inning performer for the Padres, demonstrating excellent command and at 35, could be relatively affordable.

Jeremy Jeffress could be an attractive buy-low candidate on the market. He's just a year removed from a season in which he posted a 1.29 ERA with a 0.992 WHIP. If the Sox aren't scared off by his mysterious downturn (5.02 ERA), he could represent an excellent gamble.

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A few thoughts on J.D. Martinez, as we await the white smoke to billow out of the Scott Boras Corporation's office in Newport Beach, Calif., Monday:

As the Sox wait, it's worth asking why teams in general — and the Red Sox two years ago, in particular — are willing to give opt-outs in the first place. It's one thing when a free agent has several suitors and agreeing to an opt-out is one thing that could separate one team from others. But you'll recall that the Sox were the only team bidding on Martinez in February of 2018 — or at least, the only one willing to do a multi-year deal — and still, agreed to include three different opt outs: this one, another after 2020 and yet another after 2021. Why? A baseball source said recently that Martinez was adamant about the one after 2020 to give him some flexibility, and that other two (this one and the one after 2021) came about in exchange for the Red Sox getting additional injury protection language in the deal.

While some fans complain about the Red Sox aiming to get their payroll below \$208 million next year so as to re-set their CBT (Competitive balance tax), here's one more reminder of the "hidden" costs of going over the threshold. The Sox will, of course, extend a qualifying offer to Martinez should he opt-out, and just as surely, Martinez will reject. That will entitle the Sox to a compensation pick, but instead of it coming after the second round, it will come after the fourth — because the Sox went over the \$206 million (first threshold) in 2019.

Can't see the Yankees being a potential destination for Martinez. They're already sorry they have to deal with the bloat of Giancarlo Stanton's contract and have shied away from those big long-term free-agent deals in recent years. And despite the struggles the Yanks had with runners in scoring position in the ALCS, the offense isn't in need of an upgrade. If they do anything bold from a position player standpoint, I would expect that it might revolve around a shortstop and/or a center fielder, with Aaron Hicks scheduled to miss the first half of the season recovering from Tommy John surgery. But not a DH.

On the subject of the Yankees, Edwin Encarnacion is now a free agent, and the man who David Ortiz tried to hand-pick to replace him after 2016 has already been linked to the Sox as a potential Martinez replacement. Again, not sure that makes a lot of sense. Encarnacion, who had a \$20 million option for 2020, is probably going to be looking for an AAV in the neighborhood of \$15-16 million — minimally. Add in the \$2.5 million buyout the Sox will have to pay Martinez as part of a buyout and pretty soon, you're nearly up to what they would be paying Martinez (\$23.5 million) if he stayed. Not much payroll reduction at work there.

Look for Bloom to instead seek a lower-cost option at DH, while perhaps offering Alex Cora the flexibility of rotating a few position players through the DH spot.

Leftover thoughts from the World Series:

The debate surrounding the baserunner interference call against Trea Turner in Game 6 served to remind one and all that there's something to be said for controversial calls ginning up talk and creating interest among fans. That one play created more discussion about the Series than anything else and helped build momentum for Game 7 the following night. It also served as a reminder that the chances for such moments dwindle as baseball introduces more and more replay into the game. Yes, there's something to be said for getting the call right, but when the decisions are ultimately being made by a crew in a TV studio in lower Manhattan, those arguments — and subsequent debates — are lost.

That's why I remain opposed to the use of robotic umpers calling balls and strikes. First, a 96 percent success rate on pitches is close enough for me. And if the idea is that the home plate umpire can overrule the robot's call, well, then what's the point in the first place?

The month of October should squash, once and for all, any suggestion that Strasburg is somehow not mentally strong. That had dogged Strasburg since he was held out of the 2012 postseason in his first season since undergoing Tommy John surgery, then re-introduced when he came close to missing another post-

game start because of illness in 2017. Strasburg was a bulldog, never more than when he gave the Nats 8.1 innings in Game 6.

So much for the Astros' dynasty. Sorry, winning one World Series and losing another doesn't qualify a team to take its place among the all-time teams. Yes, Houston has been an excellent club for the past three years, and even though they're about to lose Cole, it wouldn't be shocking to see them win another pennant next year. But until they win at least one more title, they'll be relegated to a class of super teams who never could put it all together in October. The Baltimore Orioles from 1969-1971, perhaps the most complete and well-balanced team of my lifetime, were similarly cursed, winning three straight pennants but claiming only one Series.

Media critic time: I'm aware that this puts me in the minority, but I'm fine with Joe Buck as a play-by-play man. He has the gravitas and poise to handle the big moments. And while I generally like John Smoltz's work as an analyst, is it too much to ask that someone with Fox remind the Hall of Fame pitcher: "John, 'one of the best third basemen (sic) in the league,' is not close to being proper English." Meanwhile, ESPN Radio's Dan Shulman remains a treasure. He, along with partner Chris Singleton, kept me informed and entertained during a long car ride in the pivotal Game 6.

Overall, the World Series was pretty mediocre for one that lasted seven games. From early in Game 2 through the end of Game 5, there wasn't a single lead change. And three of the first five games were decided by at least six runs. The final two games went a long way toward making the Series interesting.

## **\* *Associated Press***

### **Castillo declines to opt out of Red Sox contract**

BOSTON (AP) — To the surprise of no one, outfielder Rusney Castillo declined to opt out of his contract with the Boston Red Sox and will remain in their minor league system.

Castillo agreed to a \$72.5 million, seven-year contract in 2014 and has not appeared in a major league game since 2016. He could have voided the final season of his deal, which calls for a \$13.5 million salary, and become a free agent.

Now 32, Castillo hit .278 with 17 homers and 64 RBIs this year for Triple-A Pawtucket.

He batted .262 with seven homers and 35 RBIs over 99 games for the Red Sox from 2014-16, then was sent outright to Pawtucket in June 2016. Because Boston removed him from the 40-man roster, Castillo's salary didn't count toward Boston's luxury tax payroll. Under a change in the labor contract agreed to after the 2016 season, Castillo's salary would count toward the tax payroll if Boston put him back on the 40-man roster and later sent him outright to the minors again.